

V.

REJOINDER ON AUTHORITY IN MATTERS
OF OPINION.*

1877.

1. HAVING long believed that no small mass of opinion was in this our day running very wild on the subject of Authority, both in itself and in its relation to human thought and action, I thought myself fortunate in being able, four months ago, to invite public attention to a work by Sir George Lewis, which had never obtained the amount of attention it seemed to me to deserve.

2. It was, I believe, with surprise and a startled emotion that many readers found themselves confronted with an adverse witness, whom they had counted as, by a kind of presumptive right, their own; and I could not have complained, if it had been their first thought that I had been purloining the aid of his calm and weighty judgment.

I am therefore pleased to find that Sir James Stephen, who has grappled more methodically than others (as far as I know) with my statements, finds it only difficult to agree with me that Lewis has written this and that, and mainly relies upon the proposition that he ought not to have so written; that the passages I have cited are in direct opposition to "a great number of other passages" which lay deeper in his mind, and which ought to overrule hasty expressions into which he had been casually betrayed. I think myself to be thus possessed of an advantage over my

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courteous though formidable antagonist, in that he is compelled in a measure to assail the consistency of Sir G. Lewis, and to show that, for once, he did not duly measure the sense of the words he used ; whereas I am able to acknowledge that he is thoroughly coherent, and pay to his work, which I only seek further to develop, a tribute of less reserved admiration.

3. The principle of authority I take to be this : that the mass and quality of prior assent to a proposition in some minds may be, without examination of the grounds, a legitimate ground of assent for other minds, in matters of knowledge, and in matters of voluntary action.

The definition of authority cannot perhaps be better given than in a passage near the end of the work of Lewis. It is "the influence which determines the belief without a comprehension of the proof."*

Although Lewis is limited by his title to matters of opinion, his definition † includes "principles and rules of human conduct, and all matters about which a doubt may reasonably exist ;" consequently, all fairly disputable matter of fact. His work is, therefore, largely conversant with the sphere of action ; and, though his title is accurate, it will not, without due attention to his definition, be accurately understood.

It excludes, on the one hand, matters of certainty ; on the other hand, matters of compulsion. In matters of certainty (whether they are few or many, I do not now inquire, but I believe them to be few), authority passes out of view ; and in matters of compulsion, opinion need not be considered.

4. Authority, however, is not an ideal or normal, but a

* Essay, p. 359.

† *Ibid.* p. 3.

practical or working, standard. It may be thought, in the case of a being whose nature is based on intelligence and freedom, to present an anomaly: it certainly presents a limitation. But not (in mathematical phrase) a constant limitation. There is no point, at which we may not throw back the boundary, and enlarge the sphere of direct knowledge, and of conviction and action founded thereupon. There is no point, at which we ought not to so throw it back, according to our means and opportunities. Life should be spent in a strong continuous effort to improve the apparatus for the guidance of life, both in thought and action. We must ever be trying to know more and more what are the things to be believed and done. In pursuing the end, the exercise of free intelligent thought may, indeed, greatly enlarge the sphere of authority. For example, in learning facts of physical science, as when we inquire about the results obtained by the 'Challenger'; or in becoming more largely acquainted with the laws of health from the mouth of a judicious physician. This duty, however, is covered and overlapped by another duty: the duty of constantly endeavouring, within the limit of our means, to corroborate or test authority by inquiry, which finally means to supplant trust by knowledge. And this duty is supreme. But it is insidiously dogged by the danger of mistaking the limit of our means, and thus supplanting trust, not by our knowledge, but by our ignorance dressed out in the garb of knowledge.

5. Some advantage has been taken of my having compared authority to the crutch* which we use as a substitute for a missing or a halting limb; on the ground that the man must himself move the crutch. My antithesis, how-

* *The Nineteenth Century*, p. 293.

ever, is not between the crutch and the man, but the crutch and the limb. To place the antithesis between the crutch and the man is the reintroduction of that old "confusion of thought" which places reason in antagonism to authority, and which Lewis has endeavoured to explode. If we resolve the figure into fact, reason is the man; and the question is whether, in the absence or imperfection of his limb, which is knowledge, and which alone expresses the fullest development of his nature, he shall use his crutch, which is authority.

6. Or, varying the illustration to meet the taste of the objector, I may compare authority to a carriage in which we may properly take our places to perform long distances that we cannot achieve on foot. But, of course, there is excess as well as defect in the use of authority; and of this excess we are guilty when we suffer the love of knowledge to grow cold, when we cease to court the genial warmth imparted by a real basking in the sun of Truth, and when we are satisfied with a lazy, servile acquiescence in the opinions of other men. The proper function of authority is to enlarge, not to contract, our horizon. It is the function of a telescope, which enables us to see what without it we could not see at all; but what, if we could see it with the naked eye, we should, I suppose, see better.

7. While authority, as between men and man, is in the nature of a substitute for observation and reflection, the two methods are likewise susceptible of combination in every varying degree. Much knowledge, which we have erroneously believed to be complete, proves itself, in process of time or thought, to be incomplete; but authority, resting as a stay behind it, may bring the aggregate of evidence up to the point which justifies or requires

belief or action as the case may be. And, on the other hand, where authority by itself reaches a certain way, but is not so clear or constant as to supply a full-formed motive, an independent examination, in itself partial, may supply confirmatory considerations which fill up the void. Evidence ought to be sufficient, but need not be homogeneous. It may be made up of direct and indirect; the direct evidence of inquiry, which places us mentally in contact with the thing to be received, or the indirect evidence of authority, which gives a mediate contact with it, through the minds of others. In all these modes and shapes of the question, it is implied that ~~the~~ knowledge is not perfect, and that the authority is not absolute. Even in their combination, they will commonly form no more than a preponderance of reason on behalf of what is proposed for our acceptance. But this preponderance is all that can generally be had; in other words, we fall back upon the great dictum of Butler, that probable evidence is the guide of life.

8. As by the conditions of our nature we can rarely (at most) have access to absolute knowledge, so we have in this inquiry no concern with absolute authority. The only absolute authority, as between men and man, is that which commands and enforces action, for example, that of the State. And we are not now contemplating that absolute authority over the mind, which lies not between men and man, but between God and man. For whatever Revelation and Inspiration be, we of this day do not claim to be in the condition of their immediate receivers. The mode of our own personal access to what they have conveyed must be considered as subject to the general laws which govern the attainment of knowledge and the direction of conduct. It may be that the hindrances

offered to the entry of truth into the mind by selfishness, prejudice, and passion are such as to require a divine influence for their removal. But that divine influence is not to be supposed to operate in derogation of regular mental laws. It may be needed to remove barriers out of their way, and to open up the field for their action; for these laws do not of themselves carry and impart the capacity or disposition to obey.

In these remarks I have dealt with authority at large, and irrespective of its application to any particular subject-matter. Let me now approach the contested part of the inquiry, as it has been handled by Sir J. Stephen.

9. He begins with a summary of my summary of the work. I must, for my own safety in waiving a detailed examination, make a general remark. He disputes the accuracy of my account, rather than attempts to disprove it. He supports* his impeachment by reference to the difference between my habits of mind and those of Sir George Lewis; might he not better have withheld the assignment of a cause until he had verified, from Lewis's text, his allegation of the effect? I will make no retaliatory references to habits of mind. There is no profession, for example, more liable, as Mr. Burke has noticed, to entail peculiarities of mental habit, than the distinguished and noble profession of an advocate; but without doubt Sir James Stephen has taken care to purge himself of all these peculiarities. I therefore simply decline to acknowledge this general portraiture of the summary as corresponding with my original. Fortunately for our readers, they have now the means of judging the plea and the counterplea, by that resort to the work on

* Pp. 270-1.

their own behalf which it was my "general object"* to suggest.

10. Farther on,† Sir James Stephen becomes more definite in his criticism. He places in parallel columns the admirable passage, with which Lewis opens his fourth Chapter, and the lines in which I have endeavoured to compress that passage into about one-fourth of its length. In passing from the one to the other, I am indeed painfully conscious of descent, but my opponent holds:—

(a). That I seem to miss the point of the passage, which is written to contrast the growth of scientific with the growth of religious opinion.

(b). That I likewise add to the passage, by imputing to Lewis the notion that "the mere gradual growth" of "traditive systems" invests them with "trustworthy authority."

11. On reference to the page,‡ the reader will see that for neither of these allegations is there any real ground. Lewis does not here say a word of the contrast between two kinds of growth, scientific and religious. He describes the conditions of scientific growth, and these alone, from a state of crudity to a state of maturity. The forms of this growth, stated in eighteen lines, I have indicated, and could do no more than indicate, in two, as "collection, purgation, adjustment, and enlargement or advance." He then says: "A trustworthy authority is thus at length formed." And then we arrive at the important passage: "This description, however, is not applicable to religion, or at least is only applicable to it within certain limits." That is to say, having described the true conditions of scientific growth, he must, in due

* P. 270.

† P. 275.

‡ Essay, p. 66.

order, proceed to consider whether at all, and if at all how far, these conditions are found in the case of religion. But up to this point the description is absolutely general; it might have been written by St. Thomas Aquinas, or it might have been written by John Stuart Mill: of either comparison or contrast there is not a trace in the passage.

12. Next, with respect to the second criticism. I have pointed out that Lewis here shows authority to be not that of individuals only: as if with a provision that he would, in the vicissitudes of time, be handled by writers who treat the vast and varied subject of mental and moral evidence as if it were confined within the close and pew-like barriers of evidence merely legal; and handle authority at large as if it were only and always the testimony of A, B, and C, or even of A only, in a witness-box. Instead of which, it sometimes is like the cairn, made of stones varied in shape and size, that represent the contributions of hands unknown and innumerable; contributions, of which many are in themselves insignificant, while their aggregate is broad, solid, lofty, and defies the storm. Or, again, it is the solemn psalm, or, if this be too theological, the united shout of a vast congregation of men, in which the value of the several voices is infinitely diversified, but the few thoroughly discordant notes are lost and neutralised in the unison of the loud acclaim.

13. In the passage cited, I describe the growth of traditive systems, without specifying that I mean only such traditive systems as are scientific. Accordingly my opponent steps in and says I have ascribed authority to "the mere gradual growth" of traditive systems. With all respect, I have done no such thing. My passage is short; but the patience of my critic, I fear, failed him before he had arrived at the end. Lewis, having at the outset

supplied the needful limitation of his meaning to such systems as are scientific, concludes with saying "a trustworthy authority *is* thus at length formed." I, not having in my very brief abstract previously supplied that limitation, supply it in giving the conclusion, and say "a trustworthy authority *may* at length be formed." There is no more vestige, therefore, here of "mere gradual growth" than there was under the former head of an imaginary contrast; and both my addition to Lewis and my deviation from him have, as I think, vanished away.

14. Still, as we are now at close quarters, and it is a question of modes of interpreting the language and representing the thoughts of others, I must follow my opponent himself into these rather slippery departments; I hope without departing in any way from the tones of equity and kindness, which he has invariably maintained.

TEXT OF REPLY, p. 272.

NOTE ON TEXT OF REPLY, p. 273.

"Fact is defined" p. 1. (*i.e.* in the work of Sir Geo. Lewis): "Anything of which we obtain a conviction from our internal consciousness, or any individual event or phenomenon which is the object of sensation."*

"* This exactly corresponds to the definition of fact given in the Indian Evidence Act, s. 1:

"'Fact' means and includes,
1, any thing, state of things, or relation of things capable of being perceived by the senses.
2. Any mental condition of which any person is conscious.

"I am responsible for this definition."

15. Now here I am willing to join issue. Instead of an exact correspondence, I propound that there is here a striking, nay a glaring, and a scarcely measurable difference. My opponent limits fact, when not capable of being perceived by the senses, to "a mental condition of

which any person is conscious." He seems to be entangled in that which was the contracted philosophy of Locke, the *nihil in intellectu quod non prius in sensu*, with no other supplement than that charitable addition which appeared to some to be sufficient, the *nisi intellectus ipse*. The function of the individual mind, when not concerned in dealing with what the senses have imported, is limited to the perception of itself, in its various parts, and in the interaction of those parts. There is either no spiritual or no material world, apart from sense, or, if there is, we have no faculty of perceiving it, or at the least of perceiving it in such a way and with such evidence as to promote any of its phenomena to the high dignity of fact. If this be the true theory of metaphysics, then indeed I cannot wonder at any amount of struggle to get rid of authority as applicable to religion; but those who may succeed in the attempt will, I apprehend, get rid of a good deal besides authority, and even of a good deal besides religion.

16. When I turn to the definition of a fact as it has been given by Lewis, I read it in a very different sense. A fact, apart from sensible fact, is "anything of which we obtain a conviction from our internal consciousness." Has not Sir James Stephen been misled by the mere use of the word consciousness? When Lewis wrote these words, did he mean that there was no one thing of which we could obtain a conviction from our internal consciousness excepting of some form of our own mental condition individually? And this, be it recollected, as a privilege reserved to each man for himself. It is only within himself, and of himself, that, according to this singular theory, he can have what I may call fact-knowledge. For, so soon as he attempts to convey this knowledge to another,

the thing reported loses caste, and cannot rise above the order of an image, a rumour, a conjecture, or a dream. Within each man, and as to what forms part of himself, there is a true objectivity; but to any other man this becomes merely subjective, for of the mind of another we can have no fact-knowledge. The narrow store of mental facts allowed to us is given only for our own enjoyment, like the miser's hoard. There is no free trade in this kind of facts, no exchange of them free or otherwise, and what we see in ourselves we cannot verify by observation of others, for we have no faculty wherewith to observe what is beyond our minds.

17. The very form of Lewis's expressions seems to me to show that he had no such limitation in his view. It would surely have been inaccurate, almost absurd, to speak of "anything" thus at large, of which we obtain a conviction from our consciousness, if our consciousness were something that could have no object except itself. Plain enough, then, in the particular passage, his meaning becomes plainer still from a comparison of two passages in p. 72. He speaks, in one of them, about our experience as limited to things "derived either from internal consciousness or external sensation." But immediately before he speaks of matters "within the subjects of consciousness or intuition, not within the range of the senses;" and the context renders it indisputable that the compass of the two passages, the one affirmative in form and the other negative, is identical. Dealing then with them as with an equation, we find that he sometimes speaks of intuition as a faculty co-ordinate with consciousness, and sometimes, in language of insufficient precision, uses consciousness in a wider sense for mental perception at large, and makes it cover both.

18. But Sir James Stephen seems to pass by Lewis's reference to intuition as of no account. It is only by this Draconic process of annihilating intuition that he is enabled to raise an inference in favour of his doctrine of conflicting passages, and thereby to extinguish Lewis's declaration that his principle of authority legitimately embraces the being of God, and the acceptance of "Christianity." But it is surely better to abide by all his own words, and find him coherent, than, by shutting some of them out of view, to convict him of inconsistency.

19. Sir James Stephen proceeds to say:—"The two passages quoted from Sir George Lewis by Mr. Gladstone do not state in terms the propositions to which Mr. Gladstone considers them to be equivalent, but they do hint at and suggest them."

The reference seems to be not quite accurate. There are no two passages "quoted" by me, and considered to be equivalent to two propositions of Lewis. I have quoted one passage, and have made out another piecemeal. With this preface, Let us consider the question of equivalence.

20. (a). We have in the 'Essay,' p. 69, the passage which I quote. After citing, with manifest approval, a passage from Bishop Burnet, beginning with "That there is a God," and after admitting many diversities both among the philosophers and in the popular systems of old, Lewis says:—"In the substantial recognition of a Divine Power, superhuman and imperceptible by our senses, all nations have agreed."

The discussion thus closed by himself, I sum up as follows, in the strictest conformity (I believe) with the

rules of Lewis in the 'Treatise':*—"The consent of mankind binds us in reason to acknowledge the being of God."

Under this head all that is allowed me by my critic is that Lewis's proposition "hints and suggests." This is a scanty—shall I say stingy?—admission. Allowing for brevity, which was an object all through, my proposition is a simple reproduction of the proposition of Lewis, together with its contextual matter. If so, he does not hint or suggest, but asserts, what I have asserted. In his analytical table of contents † his own summary is: "All nations agree in recognising the existence of a God."

21. (b). The second proposition relates to Christianity. Here I have made not a quotation, but a construction, out of the text of Lewis. On referring to it again, I see that, so far from having exaggerated, I have erred rather by enfeebling the text. It is fairly represented by the following, which I present as an alternative form:‡—"All the civilised nations of the modern world agree, not merely in believing in the existence of a God but in recognising some form of the Christian religion. . . . That is to say, all nations whose agreement on a matter of opinion has any real weight or authority." My summary§ is:—"The consent of mankind similarly binds us to the acceptance of Christianity."

Apart from the meaning of the word Christianity, which I proceeded to define and discuss, I again say that my short proposition is a short, clear, irrefutable, and inevitable reproduction of the longer form in which Lewis has stated the proposition; and that he does not hint or

* P. 9.

† Essay, p. vi.
§ P. 9.‡ *Ibid.* p. 69.

suggest, but in stringent terms asserts, that which I have undertaken to assert for him.

22. And now we come to the real gist of Sir James Stephen's paper. All that has gone before, all attempts to establish that my account departs from the sense of my author's words, are (in military language) so many feints; and I cannot blame nor wonder at any amount of anxiety to avoid losing the benefit of a great "authority in matters of opinion." We now come to the true attack; and it is really not an attack upon my commentary, but upon the text of Lewis. Sir James Stephen proceeds as follows:—

"They (the passages) are, however, if taken as asserting what they suggest, inconsistent with the general spirit of the book, and with many other passages contained in it. If, therefore, Mr. Gladstone wishes to follow Sir G. Lewis, he ought to reject, or at least to qualify, these passages, instead of extending them to other subjects than those to which their author in terms applied them."

23. Before considering the "other passages," this is the place to remark that there is a third doctrine laid down by Lewis, which, if rather less important, is hardly less remarkable than the other two. It is the doctrine that a Church, being more competent than the individuals who compose it, has authority over its members. There is, of course, no technical or scientific peculiarity of sense in his use of the word Church. He seems to mean nothing Catholic or Apostolic in particular, but simply an organised society of Christians. He has not formulated this opinion in a summary proposition which can be cited as at once fully and succinctly expressing it. But it is, as I have already pointed out,* a subaltern, an indeterminate,

* P. 9.

authority which he claims for religious societies over their own members. Yet it is a real one.

"In all controversies and discussions carried on between members of the same Church, the works of the received text-writers, and leading divines, of their Church will be referred to as a common authority and standard of decision."*

24. These then are the three propositions upon which, according to Lewis, proceeding always upon scientific rules, the principle of authority embraces the subject-matter of religion: 1. The being of God; 2. The acceptance of Christianity; 3. The authority of a Church over its own members. The third head may require explanation and development before it can be exactly apprehended. For example, if a Church does not claim final authority, but acknowledges subordination to a larger combination, questions may arise for its members between the subaltern and the superior tribunal, which may, in the first instance, have to be decided by the individual judgment. But this head is not in dispute, and need not now be dwelt on. Upon the first two heads, says my opponent,† one who wishes to follow Lewis ought "to reject or at least to qualify" what I say the Essay asserts, and what he does not dispute that it hints or suggests.

25. And now let us see why. Sir James Stephen gives us‡ an abstract of the work of Sir G. Lewis, in which he mixes together at the most important points his argument on the text and on my view of the text. Then, at the close of the abstract, he begins his argument anew. There arises from hence a certain complication of the

* Essay, p. 102; see also p. 97.

† P. 277.

‡ Between pp. 272 and 281.

subject. He here, however, defines for himself three heads of inquiry : *

- (a). Has Lewis said what I allege ? †
- (b). Is what I allege consistent with the rest of the book ?
- (c). Are my extensions of it warrantable ?

26. For greater order and clearness, I will here try to dispose of the resumed argument on the first head † before passing to the second. It is urged that the consent about the being of a God is only stated by Lewis as a fact. I answer, the consent indeed is stated as a fact, but in direct connection with the whole argument of the work that such consent binds. It is "conjectured" that he only meant that the consents were "as far as they went, and to some extent," evidence in favour of the doctrines. I answer, that Lewis takes no note here of doubtful *πίστεως* at all ; but only of the question how far there is in religion a binding authority, and that any gloss which substitutes another meaning, besides making the whole Chapter void of sense, wholly destroys the force of the contrast drawn between "Christianity" and the disputed doctrines of Churches, as to which last Lewis broadly holds that no such authority exists. But, in truth, these little pleas are but expiring efforts of argument :

"The bubbling cry,
Of some strong swimmer in his agony." ‡

27. And it is high time to pass to the serious contention, the real attack, which is directed against the consistency of the passages with the general strain of the book. This consistency is impugned by the following arguments :—

- (a). To be a trustworthy authority, "a man should have

* P. 281.

† P. 282.

‡ 'Don Juan,' c. II. 53.

devoted much study and thought to the subject,"* should be competent in power, and free from bias. Few fulfil, with regard to the being of God or the acceptance of Christianity, any of these attributes, and the few differ irreconcilably.

Now, whether this be a confutation or not, it is not a confutation from the book of Sir George Lewis. Be it what it may, it proceeds from the brain of Sir James Stephen. Sir George Lewis does not say either that few competent men have inquired, or that those few have differed. He says, as to the Divine Power, there is a "substantial recognition," and "all nations have agreed" in it. No doubt he includes eminent individuals, but he does not recognise in them a monopoly, whereas Sir James Stephen still seems to be dealing with a list of witnesses in a box. Lewis has nowhere said that in a case of this kind the reasonings of the very select few are incapable of deriving corroboration from the many. A broad line does not separate in this matter the few from the many; as if we were separating witnesses for the prosecution from witnesses for the defence. Indeed, defining too rigidly the qualifications of the few, we shall make them not few, but none at all. Who is there that, in such a subject-matter, combines perfect assiduity with perfect competency, and both with perfect freedom from bias? Who is there that has perfect competency? In the contact between the mind of man and such a subject as the being of God, the best men are not like the poppies in Herodotus, towering far above the grain; they are but as blades of grass, of which no one is greatly taller than his nearest fellows. The different elements of competency are, in different subjects, differently combined; and their

* P. 282.

distribution oftentimes corroborates their force. There is here, too, a competency of the race as well as of the individual: the greatest can know but little, the smallest may know something, and perhaps in a different way.

28. These are topics, I admit, little applicable to judicial proceedings; but there are questions larger than a trial in a court. They are appropriate, I think, in all questions where we have to deal with the broader human interests; for instance, in all great political causes, convictions, and attachments. It would be deplorably irrational to say that the utmost amount of authority they can carry is the authority of A, B, and C, even though these three be the Horatii or the Curiatii of the land. Parliamentary tradition hands down the saying of a singularly acute observer,* often commended by others not less competent, "that the House of Commons was greater and wiser than any individual within it." It is not possible to reduce to philosophic *formula* that principle, which at some epoch of the middle ages took popular form in the cry "Vox populi, vox Dei;" but the human race will be poor indeed when it is denied every mental possession, except such as can be reduced to philosophic *formula*.

29. All this is, I grant, commentary of mine, for which the text of Lewis is in no respect responsible. I think, however, it unfolds some part of the meaning of that text, in a case where Lewis himself has not fully developed it. For the immediate purpose of the particular argument it is enough to remark this: Lewis has not stated that the competent inquirers were few, nor that the results were conflicting. He says that the results agreed, and that the inquirers were all nations, and all Christian nations,

* Mr. Robert Percy Smith, familiarly known as Bobus Smith.

respectively; and he seems to have thought, not unnaturally, that the adhesion of the inferior minds, even if it added but little to the common stock, certainly neither destroyed nor impaired the authority of those minds which were superior. In saying that all nations agreed, Lewis says *ipso facto* that the competent men of all nations agreed. And our author is not inconsistent, even if he be wrong, simply because his critic argues that they differed: an argument, indeed, of the greatest moment, but one into which it is no part of my present purpose to enter.

30. The next argument of Sir James Stephen is this: * "The recognition of a Divine Power, superhuman and imperceptible by our senses," which he grants only "for argument's sake," really amounts to nothing. Three men, believing in the Trinity, Allah, and Nirvana respectively, are like three men who agree that they saw something at a given time and place, but one says it was a man, one a horse, one a bird.

I observe, in answer, first that this argument is really irrelevant to its purpose. The purpose is to show that two statements made by Lewis, or imputed to him, are inconsistent with other and over-ruling portions of his book. The argument is on the first of those statements, and goes to show that it has no substantive meaning, and is, therefore, valueless. True or false, it fails to impeach Lewis's coherence.

31. Secondly, I question its premiss. Neither the statement of facts nor the application seems to be accurate. That third of the human race who are set down as believers in Nirvana, if they so believe, have no colour of agreement with the Theists at all, and are not within the

* Pp. 282-3.

scope of the reasoning. According to such information as I possess, Buddhism, in the mass, with very partial exceptions, has long lost sight of the very abstract notions and atheism of its founder,* and is now for the most part a mixture of polytheism and saint-worship, for which I will not undertake to find an exact definition. Next, as to the application. Doubly it fails to touch Lewis. The discord of Mahometan and Christian turns not upon the question whether there is a living God, but whether the one Deity has a plural "personality." But, first, on this question, Lewis has nowhere affirmed a concord. Secondly, he is in no way bound to take cognisance of Mahometans or Buddhists; for his starting-point is that Christendom of itself constitutes a binding authority; although in this matter he takes in other nations as supererogatory allies, believing, and I apprehend rightly, that they, as he understands the phrase, agree with Christendom.

32. The next argument † carries us over to the second proposition, that relating to consent in the acceptance of Christianity. Paley, Wesley, and De Maistre, it is urged, were all Christians; but "their fundamental assumptions differed utterly." To say they agreed in any definite system, because they were all Christians, is like saying that red, orange, and green resemble each other, because they are all colours.

I confess that to my mind the argument (which has nothing to do with Lewis's coherency) and the illustration are alike unhappy. For red, green, and orange, I apprehend, do, and very substantially, resemble each other in this, that they are (considered objectively) so many portions

* See for example Dod's 'Mahomet, Buddha, and Christ,' pp. 279-85,

† P. 283.

of decomposed and refracted light. Thus I believe the ruby, the sapphire, the oriental emerald, and the oriental topaz, though different stones, have one and the same base. There is room then for much resemblance, together with much difference. And the main proposition will surely not bear the scrutiny of a moment. Paley, Wesley, and De Maistre would each have repeated the Nicene Creed, and they would have repeated it in the same sense throughout, except that they would have given possibly two meanings, and at any rate more than one shade of meaning, to the single article which expresses belief in the Church as One, Catholic, and Apostolic. It would be far nearer the truth to say that in all fundamental assumptions they agreed, while in secondary tenets they differed; but, as Lewis assumes no agreement beyond the acceptance of Christianity, he manifestly stands unharmed.

33. Having thus disposed of persons who had "given much thought" to the matter, my opponent shows that Lewis, among the conditions of competency, requires "mental power adequate to the task of comprehending the subject." What class of persons, he then asks, "comprehend" the doctrine of the Trinity? Again I am glad to see that Lewis lies comfortably in the dead water, while my opponent and I are in the stream. I answer by asking, is there not among civilised men a solid and established (though it may be limited) concurrence of judgment upon many questions (for example) of human character; upon the characters, say, of Phocion, of Catiline, of Saint Louis, of Washington, of Wellington, of Mrs. Fry? Is that argument worthless or visionary? No; yet is there any one of us so presumptuous, so irrational, as to say that he has every really comprehended any single human character? Can we deal with its subtle ingredients as the

scales of Zeus weighed the contending fates of Hector* and Achilles, and determine once for all what shall descend and what shall kick the beam? I will go farther and say, can we completely judge any single human action? Nay, passing into the region of nature with its boasted certainty, do we "comprehend" the growth of a single blade of grass in a single field on the surface of the earth?

34. Yet one step further. The mathematician has a formula which asserts that nothing divided by nothing, or rather which has zero for numerator and zero for denominator ($\frac{0}{0}$), is equal to anything. He abides by this formula: he finds it verified by results. But may it not be permitted us to doubt whether, in the strict sense of the term, he "comprehends" it: whether it does not descend into the region of the infinitesimal farther than human wit can follow it? The truth is, as far as experience and reflection have enabled me to grasp it, that small indeed is the number of subjects or ideas which, in the sense of absolute comprehension, mankind have ever comprehended; that what is given to us, as a general rule, is comprehension in degree¹—comprehension by contact with a subject at certain of its points, which in a manner give the outline, as the naturalist constructs the creature from the bone—comprehension not absolute, but relative to our state and wants; limited, and thus teaching humility, but adequate to establish reasonable conclusions, and to work out those laws of probable evidence which, sustained by our experience of their operation, fit it to be the guide of life. In this, the old Christian reading of the laws of knowledge, our intellectual discipline is every-

* 'Iliad,' xii. 210.

where intertwined with moral teaching, and the employments farthest from the direct subject-matter of religion minister to its highest purposes, like the Queen of the South bringing her choicest gifts to the elect King of the people of God.

35. While Lewis speaks of "mental powers sufficient to comprehend a subject," he has not, to my knowledge, supplied an explanation of his language directly available for the present purpose. It appears to me that "the subject" to be comprehended is whether this or that proposition should or should not be accepted; for instance, whether we ought to believe that the grass grows; and not whether the entire meaning of each of the terms of the proposition lies within the compass of the understanding of the individual whose assent is in question.

36. Sir James Stephen next argues * that, like the first and the second, so neither can the third condition of competency be fulfilled: namely, disinterestedness. Neither Bossuet, nor Voltaire, nor Butler, to whom I rejoice to see that the masculine understanding of Sir James Stephen pays due honour, was, in his opinion, impartial.

Lewis, however, does not require the absence of interest as an essential condition of competency. He allows a substitute to be introduced; and it is that there shall be a capacity to rise, above the interest which tends to bias us, and thus to escape all sinister control.†

* Of the three eminent men here quoted, I should have said that Butler was the only one who could be considered to possess the judicial quality, and that he possessed it in an eminent degree. It may still be true that his argument (in the 'Apology') is the argument of an advocate; not,

* P. 284.

† Essay, p. 27.

however, in the sense of suppressing or evading objections, but in this sense—that, after having judicially concluded which cause is the right one, he uses all his resources to set it forth.

37. But the question of religion in its elementary principles, like that of morals, is pre-eminently one in which human nature at large is entitled, with due consideration of degree, to be heard. And, therefore, it is less important to consider what was the bias in A or B—a question in most cases very hard to determine—than what is the bias of mankind at large, under the actual circumstances of their condition. It appears to be various. The many, to whom this world is a world of care and suffering, may seem likely to have a bias towards a world beyond. But these are mostly they, who live and die in silent obscurity. If I am to look for a community living on a high level of general intelligence, I should incline to seek it in Attic Greece; and the history of the religious principle among the Athenians, not as a speculation, but as a power, tends to the belief that the natural bias, among those who form opinion and tradition, is to dwell on and magnify things seen, to overlook and undervalue things unseen.

38. Often, in considering the enormous share pre-occupied, and as it were mortgaged, to the senses in the sphere of life, it seems to me wonderful that faith should be able to do battle at all against sight, that remote wants should at all assert themselves against immediate, refined and ethereal desires against desires coarser and more earthy. Fear and superstition may have often propped the belief in a Divine Power; but their action is for the most part occasional, and it does not go to form the tradition of the intelligent. It is this tradition on which Lewis relies, and as to which I here venture to

observe, that a true intelligence is found not only in masses like the rock, but in fragments like the pebble. Under this head of bias, I am prepared to contend that, upon the whole, religion lies under an actual prejudice; that the balance of forces, acting upon man otherwise than through his intelligence, is an adverse balance; that, but for the struggle of reason against bias, we could scarcely have had that authoritative consent which Lewis has recorded in the first two propositions.

39. I must concede to my opponent that the general *dicta* of the Sixth Chapter of the Essay, in favour of the few and against the multitude, sound as if they were in his favour. But I entreat him, in dealing with our author, to be like Lancelot and like Arthur, each of whom,

"In open battle or the tilting-field,
Forbore his own advantage,"

and to give due weight to what I shall now point out.

The work of Lewis is an Essay, and not a strictly scientific treatise, or handbook of instruction. It contains many excellent and careful definitions; but it is, for the most part, a commentary clothed in at least semi-popular phrase. He does not, therefore, in every sentence guard himself against every other sentence; but trusts to an impartial collection of his general view. In general terms, he broadly distinguishes the *turba* from the few; as he limits the competency of the few each to his own branch.* It is plain also to the impartial observer, that his book deals mainly with secular knowledge. The Chapter on Religion is fitted into it with care; but outside that Chapter religion hardly appears, and in the

* Essay, p. 167.

entire work the great subject of morals, with all that borders on it, is but slightly touched.

40. In this Sixth Chapter, on which Sir James Stephen relies, Lewis begins by setting out a number of subjects*—science, arts, history, general literature, law, medicine, architecture, navigation, &c.; and my opponent will hardly say that religion and morals were in this *et cetera*. In none of these subjects does he mention the “consent of nations”; but in touching on religion he does. Again he specifies “questions of morality”† among those on which the judgment of the public is “more correct” than on “questions of speculation and abstract truth.” So that we have a wider basis laid, by Lewis himself, for authority in religion and morals, than in ordinary sciences. And this assumption is surely conformable to the nature of things. Science is made for few men; but duty is the mistress of all men: they cannot be men without it; and, small as is the space which its twin pillars, religion and morals, occupy in the Essay, he has admitted in his treatment of these two a modification of his phraseology that breaks down the hard line of exclusion between the few and the many, applicable more strictly to all kinds of knowledge and pursuits that are not the universal and personal concerns of man.

41. He seems to me, I say, to treat both religion and morals as belonging to the common patrimony of mankind, and as having appropriate modes of recognition accordingly; wherein, though the few lead, the many also have a share. My opponent appears anxious to obtain the aid of Lewis in support of the doctrine that there may be a consent as to morals, while there is none as to religion.

* Essay, p. 169.

† *Ibid.* p. 174.

Accordingly we find it said :* "He contrasts the diversity of Christian Creeds with the 'nearly uniform standard of morality, which prevails throughout the world.'"

42. But he has here fallen into a serious error of citation ; for the expression of Lewis is not, throughout the world, but "throughout the *civilised* world." † And he has before supplied the definition of this phrase by saying that "all the civilised nations of the modern world" ‡ accept Christianity. All, therefore, that he asserts is that, while Christian doctrines greatly vary, Christian morality is nearly uniform : that is to say, that Christian consent in morality is more extended and emphatic than Christian consent in religion. A highly suggestive proposition, which I cannot now examine ; but not one that denies, though it abridges, consent in religion.

43. I will only say that, if morality is either wholly or in great part the fruit of religion, then it may take a long time for a religion, slowly, very slowly, percolating through society, effectually to reconstruct its morality. But the morality so reconstructed may wholly or in part survive, if not permanently, yet for a time, the parent stock. I submit that the existing unity, such as it is, of morality, is greatly due to the remaining unity of religion. And it may also be, that the indubitable present excess of moral consent over religious consent may be a survival from the operation of that wider religious consent, which for so long a time prevailed in the Christian world. This, however, I am aware, is suggestion and not proof.

44. In following my antagonist to this point, I have

* P. 278.

† Essay, p. 74.

‡ *Ibid.* p. 69.

not been able to disentangle his argument against my account of Lewis from his argument to show that Lewis is against himself. But I have still to deal with the citation of special passages which he has made in pp. 277-9, and which he thinks nullify the propositions that there is an authoritative consent as to the being of God, and as to the acceptance of Christianity. I must still contend, as well as I can, with an inconvenient mixture of the two subjects; but I will state, as briefly and fairly as I can, what I take to be the substance of the allegations I have to oppose. They are these:

(a). Lewis says there is an agreement of the civilised world "in recognising some form of the Christian religion." *

(b). But no such agreement "respecting the particular doctrines of Christianity." †

(c). A cause of this is that it "first assumed a dogmatic form in the hands of the later Greeks," ‡ who inherited and applied to the Christian religion, "a subtle, refined, and abstruse metaphysical philosophy." From them he passes to the schoolmen, and the Reformation.

(d). After pointing out these three great fountainheads of controversy, he assigns a cause overreaching them all: "That religion as such is conversant with matters which are neither the subjects of consciousness or intuition, nor within the range of the senses." §

(e). Hence, lines of difference have hardened; and the tenets do not coalesce, but continue to run in different channels.

(f). Finally, my opponent cites a passage which

* Essay, p. 69.

† *Ibid.* p. 70.

‡ *Ibid.*

§ *Ibid.* p. 72.

begins with the words: "There is no consent of competent judges over the civilised world."* But he omits to observe the sentence which precedes: "*No one Church* can justly make any claim to authority in matters of religious belief, upon the grounds on which opinions in matters of science require authority;" plainly showing that he refers to the matters disputed among Churches.

45. On these heads I have to point out:

(a). That my opponent annuls particular assertions of Lewis, on the ground of wide general propositions held to be inconsistent with them.

(b). That (as I think) he misapprehends, and overstates, the scope of these general propositions.

Now, on the first of these I hold it unsafe and unphilosophical to teach that deliberate particular assertions are, of necessity, to be overturned, on the ground that they fall within the sweep of some wide general proposition, which, if mathematically applied, would annul them.

46. The human mind is capable of taking a more close and accurate survey of a limited and homogeneous subject-matter than when it embraces at once a vast circumference, a magazine of *omne scibile*. Just as an artist, beholding a tree, has a more exact record of it on his brain, than he can receive when he gazes over an horizon, Lewis has attempted in an Essay to deal with all human knowledge and quasi-knowledge, except such as is taken to be already of absolute certainty. In so doing, he very naturally adapts his language, in the description of general rules and otherwise, to the subjects which form by far the greater part of that knowledge, the subjects in which the teachers and the taught are broadly separated.

* Essay, p. 97.

It is consequently less minutely applicable to the two great sciences of Duty, Religion and Morals, in which it may be popularly said all have something to teach, and all have much to learn. It is illusory, I think, and futile to argue on this account that Lewis could not have meant what he has deliberately said on either of those sciences.

47. It is not possible, with the utmost care, so to regulate diction in these matters, that it shall embrace every case alike, as if we were teaching from the text "action and reaction are equal, and in opposite directions." Nor is forethought often sufficiently alive, in dealing with generals, to make an entirely sufficient provision for every particular they may include. Take, for instance, the law of political economy, that the same article cannot be sold at two prices in the same market. Viewed as expressive of general or average results, this law is sound, and probably necessary; but, if taken as a literal statistical account of every exchange of commodities that happens, it is untrue, it is absurd. In describing the early stages of scientific growth, Lewis himself says* "there is much hasty induction from single facts, and partial phenomena;" and what is his own work but an initial effort towards laying the foundation stones of a science almost wholly new, the science of "Authority in matters of opinion"? Supposing that in an autobiography we found on one page "I do not catch cold from wet," and on another "Yesterday I got wet and caught a cold from it," with nothing in particular to discredit either proposition, which would be more rational; to cancel and disbelieve the particular proposition, or to

* Essay, p. 66.

hold that the broader assertion had not embraced every point in the experience of life, and that the rule did not exclude an exception?

48. I contend, then, that Lewis's declarations *—"All nations agree in recognising the existence of a God; all civilised nations agree in recognising some form of Christianity"—must stand even against abstract and general *dicta* inconsistent with them on the following broad ground: it is probable that an author has more exact knowledge of his particular proposition, than he could have of each and all the particulars comprised within the sweep of his general proposition.†

49. I, however, do not think that Lewis wants the succour of the plea which, after all, only human infirmity would supply. I contend that he has included nothing in his general *dicta* which militates against his particular propositions; and that the only fault, if fault it be, lies in this—that he has not verbally developed the method that secures their harmony.

50. Civilised nations, according to him, agree in accepting Christianity, but not any one form or mode of Christianity. He goes into reasons; and the passage which presses most on his consistency is evidently that in which he says that "religion as such" deals with matters neither sensible, nor "subjects of consciousness or intuition." It appears to me that my critic has overlooked the importance of the introduction in this place of the word intui-

* Essay, Table of Contents, p. 6.

† The reader of Aldrich will recollect the amusing logical fallacy: Epimenides the Cretan says that all Cretans are liars. Therefore Epimenides is a liar. Therefore the Cretans are not liars. Therefore Epimenides is not a liar. Therefore the Cretans are liars. And so on *ad infinitum*.

tion. It appears to me to establish a chasm between Lewis and the Lockian philosophy: between Lewis and Sir James Stephen. It is plain that he thought there is an office, and there are objects, of intuition both apart from sense, and apart from self-contemplation. Unless there be such a faculty of intuition, the whole science of morals vanishes, and leaves "not a wrack behind," except a debased materialising Hedonism. With virtue, truth melts away, and with truth beauty—I would almost add "and all that makes a man." What I am here concerned with is the undoubted fact that, according to Lewis, there are some objects of intuition. Yet he says, "religion as such" does not deal with them. Did he then mean to assert that there is no discernment of God by the mental eye and by spiritual experience? If discernment of God is founded neither on intuition, nor upon a just consideration and comparison of what we know by sense or by consciousness, how is the consent of nations in the being of God erected, as he tells us it has been erected, into an authority rationally binding on us?

51. The answer is, I think, perfectly simple for every unbiassed and careful reader of Lewis's forcible Chapter. It seems to me plain that the distinction is to be taken between belief in God, and attempts at scientific exposition in detail of that belief, and of the multitude of matters which may cluster round it: between acceptance of Christianity, and acceptance (as absolutely true) of any of the particular forms and modes of Christianity. And that when he speaks of "religion as such" he has in view, not the general forms of belief implied in his use of the words "God" and "Christianity," but religion as such when placed under scientific handling; the questions that at once arise, when we endeavour to clothe within

the narrow dimensions of our human speech truths that surpass all such limits; and of which I suppose every reasoning Christian would allow that some glimpses, and thin outlines, and faint shadows, are all that words can convey to us.

52. That Lewis is too parsimonious in his admissions as to religion, I have elsewhere argued; but he is perfectly consistent if, in construing his text, we give reasonable heed to his context. Throughout his detailed exposition of conflicts in theology, it will be found that he is speaking of the special matters in which Churches differ; but he has nowhere said there is nothing common to them in which they agree. He denies that any one of them is for mankind a complete authority; but in their aggregate they form a Christendom, and, in that character, establish the title of "Christianity" to acceptance. No one will suppose for a moment that he used that word as a mere counter. As a Theist, he did not recognise the Ark of the Covenant, but he recognised the Presence within it as true, though undefinable; while, as a Christian, he would not philosophically pronounce between one Church and another.

53. He did not allow (as I think he ought to have allowed) a place in a philosophic system to any documents of Christian theology; but, in the name of their reason, he demanded of all men that they should be Christians. And, though he has appointed no one his expositor, I think it not immoderate to say that by Christianity he meant clearly nothing less than this; a special agency, divinely organised for the deliverance, instruction, and elevation of mankind—an agency, at the least, giving scope for the prayer of Milton in his great exordium:

“What in me is dark,
Illumine; what is low, raise and support.”*

There is not, I believe, one line in the Fourth Chapter, which will not harmonise with these remarks, and thus establish the coherency of a singularly temperate, upright, and discerning writer.

54. I must say, however, parenthetically, that I do not undertake to stand by all that is contained in the six heads given above. I doubt whether I am, and even whether Lewis was, qualified by study to discuss all the topics they contain. I do not precisely know what persons Lewis means to indicate when he speaks of “the later Greeks.” His remark may have force in relation to Justin, Clement of Alexandria, and some other early Christian writers. But the material question is, whether it can justly be applied to those upon whom fell the arduous duty of giving verbal form to the Christian dogma. Now I have never learned (§ 3) that these Greek Fathers were hampered by any “subtle, refined, and abstruse, metaphysical philosophy,” or have imported it into the Christian creed. We are familiar, indeed, with an allegation of this kind in respect to some of the later Scriptures; but not from Lewis.

55. To me, viewing the matter from below and from without, it seems that the Greek Christian Fathers were guided to their ultimate results by a circumspection not less remarkable than their acuteness; that it is hard to trace in their dogmatic terminology the influence of any entangling philosophy whatever; that, upon the whole, they used the imperfect instrument of human language,

* ‘Paradise Lost,’ B. i.

moving as they did always *inter apices*, about as well as it could be used by man. What their difficulties were, may in some degree be gathered from that remarkable Treatise, Dr. Newman's *History of the Arians*. I do not speak now of criticisms, which may be suggested upon a comparison of some of the established Latin phrases with their Greek equivalents. Still less do I raise the question whether the Aristotelian philosophy has entered essentially, a thousand years later into some of the Tridentine definitions. But Lewis writes as if he had been led into error at this point by assuming a resemblance of basis between the Homocousion of the Greeks and the *substantia* of St. Thomas Aquinas; a supposition which I conceive to be altogether groundless.*

56. I think also that, if he had worked out more fully his two succinct comparisons between consent in religion and consent in morality, there would have been some valuable results. That comparison, indeed, is not stated by my opponent in a manner to which I can subscribe. Lewis certainly alleges a wider present consent in morality than in religion; but he asserts a consent of "all nations" in religion—namely, as to the being of God—whereas he only asserts a consent of all Christian nations in morality. I have said already that I do not deny the greater breadth of subject-matter embraced in this Christian consent as to morality, and I have even suggested one of the reasons for it. But I am inclined only to admit the fact itself in a certain sense, not universally. I submit that the consent as to morality is eminently a consent belonging to

* [That is to say: I apprehend that, in the Homocousion, the *on* expressed is the I am, the Absolute Existence: whereas in the *substantia* it is an assumed basis of being for conditioned and material objects.—W. E. G., December 1878.]

the popular Christian tradition, which stands, and has ever stood, in immediate relation to the Christian dogma. It is what I may term theological morality, with regard to which this consent may boldly and thankfully be predicated.

57. But when we come to philosophical morality, apart from the simple Divine command, it appears to me that we are all at sea. Is it governed by necessity or option? Is it founded in the will of God, or in His attributes apart from will, or in the nature of things apart from Deity? Is the ultimate criterion of actions to be found in goodness or in enjoyment? There are hardly two stones of the foundation, on the setting of which the philosophers are as yet agreed, or likely to agree. I know not what the future may have in store for us, but such is the upshot of the present and the past. Neither do I see much of that tendency to convergence, which my author and my critic are at one in justly noting as to the other sciences. Historically, the subsisting Christian agreement in the highest doctrines of religion seems to me far more remarkable, far more authoritative, than any philosophical agreement as to the basis of morality apart from religion. I am not, however, hereby driven to scepticism as to the reality and solidity of moral any more than of religious science; and I find an adequate explanation of the greater diversity of sense as to these, when compared with most other sciences, in the loftiness and profundity of their subject-matter, and in the terrible abundance and multiformity of bewildering, deadening, and misleading influences. But the lengthening shadows warn me to have done, and I shall deal briefly with the closing part of Sir James Stephen's article.

58. With a clearness which leaves nothing to be

desired, he contends* (1) that "authority is only another name for the evidence of experts;" (2) that assent upon authority is only warrantable when the assenting person has some knowledge of the principles of the subject and of the methods pursued; so that it is his knowledge, not his ignorance, which gives the evidence its value. Considered in respect to the subject at large, these assertions appear to me far too sweeping. Many persons, not without cultivation, are totally ignorant of the principles and methods of physics, but they may still act rationally in giving credit to a prediction by the storm-signal; or, even without view, to what Tyndall would tell them on the severance of heat and light, or Whitworth on his millionth of an inch. Or, again, to take Sir James Stephen's own illustration, they would reasonably assent to an astronomer predicting an eclipse; for they would know that he was acting within his own science, and without presumable cause of deviating from its laws, these laws being recognised by the general assent of the persons either specially or generally competent.

59. But his belief in an astrologer predicting a birth would be irrational; for neither the opinion of the instructed nor the opinion of mankind at large asserts or allows the existence of a science of astrology, and without it there cannot even be an expert. In every case where authority is to be pleaded, there must be a *primâ facie* case, a point of departure, involving certain conditions, of which the first seems to be that the existence of a subject-matter, of a possible science, should be recognised. Here there is no point of departure, no *primâ facie* case. It is true then, as my opponent asserts, that it is by knowledge

* Pp. 286-97.

and not by ignorance that we accept authority, but untrue that it must be a knowledge of the principles and methods of the particular subject. It may be a mediate, not an immediate knowledge, a knowledge of the general rules of good sense and experience, according to which an authority ought to know, and probably does know, and thus knowing supplies us with a ground of action or belief reasonable, and if reasonable then so far obligatory.

60. I have thought it a fundamental defect in my opponent's philosophy, that it does not seem to recognise the vast diversities which have place in the forms of evidence according to diversities of subject-matter. There are sciences in which light is entirely with the few whom we call experts; for example, pure mathematics, and I am disposed to add philology. There are sciences in which a little light is given to all, by all meaning always all such as are not without good sense: as such in the material order I might name medicine; still more, when we pass out of the material order, in the three great branches of politics, morals, and religion. In these branches of knowledge it is not possible to lay down a fast and clear line between experts and non-experts, more than between day and night. With mathematicians or philologists we are slow to interfere, but with those who teach in politics, in morals, or in religion, we interfere very freely. In these departments especially it is that ignorant self-assertion prevails, but in these also it is that the most fatal dangers attend upon an invasion of just liberty; and, as is common in human affairs, that which is in itself an excess counteracts or neutralises another and opposite excess, yet more injurious.

61. In the case of these subjects, I can approximate to

the two propositions of my opponent now under discussion. Here, too, there are experts, and there are non-experts : there is a line between them, as between day and night, real, though indeterminate. The non-expert of average qualities in modern Christendom has a general knowledge of the subject-matter, not in the scientific forms, but yet in the elementary notions which those scientific forms are intended to methodise, conserve, develop, and apply.

62. And woe were it to him, if he were not thus far at least equipped. For he has come into a world where he finds his life conditioned by the family and the State, by the Bible and the Christian Church ; which touch him at a thousand points, and take a large share in the government of his life. As food and liquids are a necessity for all, nature provides all with some knowledge how to eat and drink. As society, personal duty, and religion make urgent demands on him, some of which cannot be rejected, while the rest are not always easy to reject, nature does not leave him wholly destitute of the primary instruments for handling these subjects in the practical forms suited to his condition, and he is thus placed in more or less of possible relation to their more developed aspects. Such knowledge as he has of his own disposes and helps him to recognise authority, to recognise an authority that proceeds both from experts and from the race ; for few will assert that St. Augustine wrote nonsense when he wrote the remarkable, though indeterminate, words : *securus judicat orbis terrarum*.

63. I contend, then, that there is no reason why a trustworthy authority should not be generated, in an appropriate manner, for the benefit of mankind, in these matters of universal concern—politics, morals, and religion. As

to the limits of this authority in religion, I refer to my former paper, where this topic is partially considered. But I am anxious here to insist on the close analogy, which prevails between the three subjects. That analogy there seems to be, on the "other side" generally, an indisposition either to recognise or to deny. To assert a trustworthy authority in morals would sadly damage the argument, historical or philosophical, for denying a trustworthy authority in religion. To deny a trustworthy authority in morals would probably too much alarm the age. But Sir James Stephen justly observes upon the great progress of disintegration in religious thought during the twenty-eight years which have passed since Lewis published in 1849. In twenty-eight more years, perhaps, those of us who may be alive will have nerve to look in the face the proposal that the unreal theory, which separates religious doctrine and practice, shall be allowed to go the way of all flesh; and that the doctrine of a trustworthy authority in morals shall be abandoned, as well as that of a trustworthy authority in religion.

64. Using his happy faculty of illustration, Sir James Stephen closes with two parables.* In the latter, one of two seeing men lays claim to a superior kind of sight, called "intueing," and not possessed by all, which discloses to him what is passing in sun, moon, and stars. Such a parallel emphatically convicts pretenders to a transcendental faculty. But against those who take their stand, in good faith, on the general constitution, which God has given to His human creatures, it is really a pointless dart. There are some philosophies, which maim this

* P. 297.

constitution by declining to take account of some of its most important offices and organs. He who argues against the Hedonist, that there is such a thing discerned or discernible by men as good apart from pleasure, asserts nothing for himself which he does not assert for humanity at large. All or most faculties may indeed enlarge, multiply, and vary their powers by vigorous and judicious exercise; or may stunt and finally lose them by disuse. But the starting-point is the same if the goal is not, and the race is run along level ground on even terms. By intuition I only mean mental sight, the faculty common to us all. I do not ask how far it is an original power, or how far it is one trained or reached by the exercise of other powers. How we know God, this is hardly the place to inquire. But it may be the place to say I cannot assert any method of knowing Him otherwise than by operations in strict conformity with the general laws of our nature. I agree with the deceased Mr. Dalgairns, "that my knowledge of God is as real as my knowledge of man;" and bold, or more than bold, is he who affirms that his knowledge of man is limited to what his senses can discern in man.

65. The disintegration of belief, to which Sir James Stephen refers, is, I believe, very largely exaggerated in the estimates of some of these who have suffered it; but is yet in itself both remarkable and ominous. Among the special causes which have promoted or favoured it has probably, I admit, been that unusual rapidity of material progress, to stimulating which a great portion of my own life and efforts, in the line of my public duty, have been directed. In extremely kind terms, Sir James Stephen challenges me on this subject. I do not deny the fact, nor my own relation to it. I plead,

however, first, that whatever zeal I had in the cause was inspired by the hope, not of our increasing the wealth or weight of the wealthy, but of our bringing millions upon millions out of a depressing poverty into a capacity at least of tolerable comfort; and that, in acting otherwise, I should have been like a physician refusing to use the appropriate means for bringing back to health a patient of questionable habits, lest he should misuse the blessing when attained. There can be little doubt that, with this abnormal rapidity in the creation of masses of wealth, there has come a shock to moral and mental equilibrium, and a perceptible overweight of material objects and pursuits. Yet on the other hand it may be allowed us at least to hope that the effect of such a shock may pass away, like an atmospheric disturbance, when it has produced its proper amount either of discomfort or of mischief. But here again we stand at the door of a large subject, which it would be especially unsuitable to prosecute at the end of a paper already carried to an extent that may well have exhausted the patience of the most willing reader.

66. I shall close with a single remark on the celebrated dictum of Vincentius, *quod semper, quod ubique, quod ab omnibus*; on which Lewis has offered critical observations that, in their letter, it would be difficult to dispute. My remarks shall be not on its positive but on its negative value. It supplies, or ought to supply, an useful safeguard against the mental panic to which some give way when they perceive, or think they perceive, some violent rush of popular opinion. It is a good antidote against the sentiment, which has not yet assumed the form of a counter-adage, but which may be fairly expressed in the words *quod nunc, quod hic, quod a paucis*. It may supply

some fresh securities for our mental freedom against the hurried and crowded, and yet rather too imperious demands of our own day and place; and may remind us that the promises and purposes of the Creator are not for an age but for the ages, and not for a tribe but for mankind.