

**RELIGIOUS BELIEF; ITS DIFFICULTIES IN
ANCIENT AND MODERN TIMES
COMPARED AND
CONSIDERED: BEING THE DONNELLAN
LECTURE IN THE UNIVERSITY OF DUBLIN
FOR THE YEAR 1877-8**

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Religious Belief; Its Difficulties in Ancient and Modern Times Compared and Considered: Being the Donnellan Lecture in the University of Dublin for the Year 1877-8 by John Quarry

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JOHN QUARRY

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RELIGIOUS BELIEF;

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The Donnellan Lecture in the University of Dublin

FOR THE YEAR 1877-8.

BY

JOHN QUARRY, D.D.,

RECTOR OF DONOUGHMORE,
AND CANON OF THE CATHEDRAL OF CLOYNE.



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TO
THE REV. HUMPHREY LLOYD, D.D.,
PROVOST OF TRINITY COLLEGE, DUBLIN,

In Testimony of

ADMIRATION FOR HIS HIGH CHARACTER AND DEVOTED ATTACHMENT
TO THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION,

COUPLED WITH

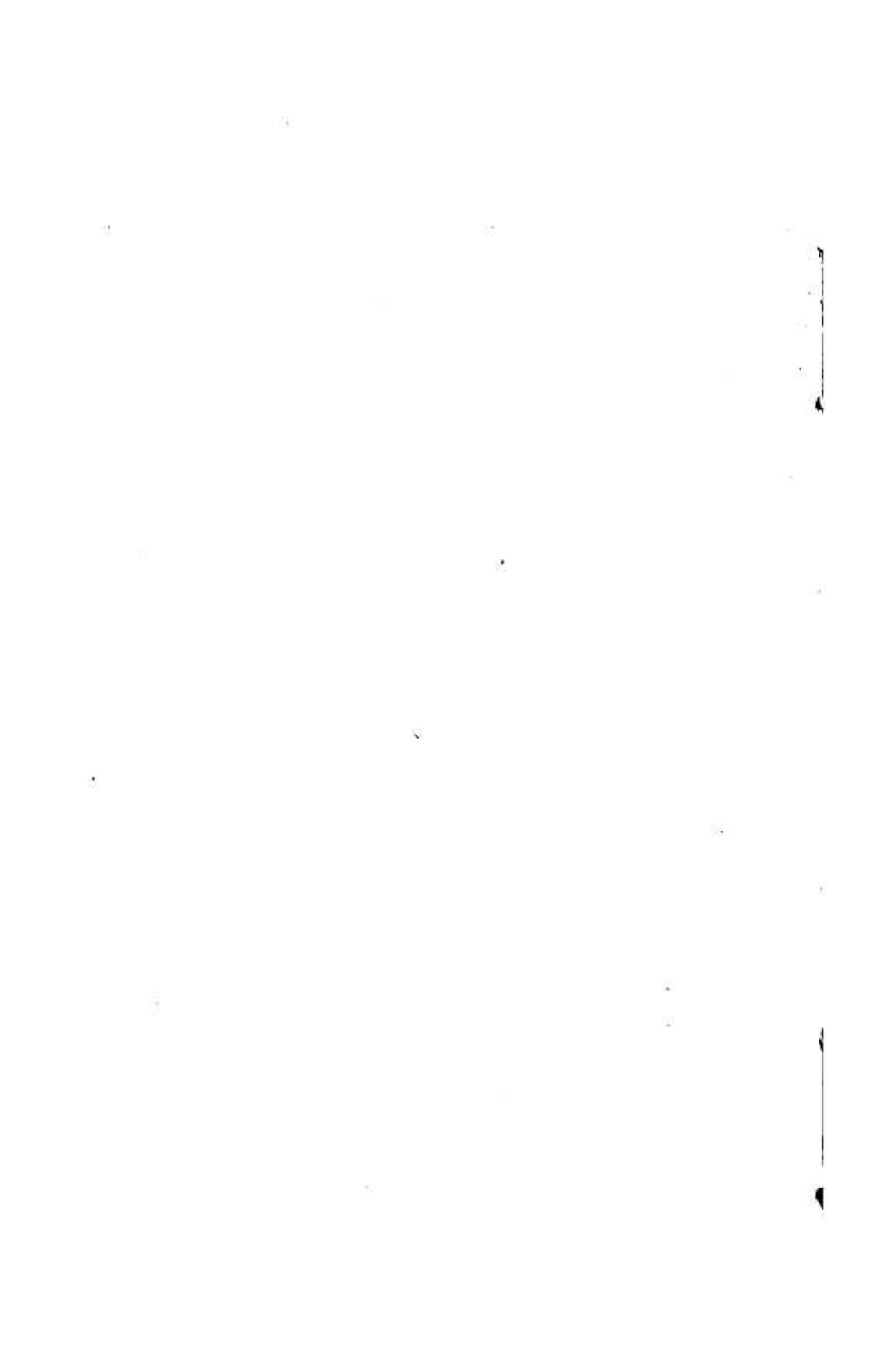
PURSUIITS WHICH HAVE PLACED HIM IN THE FOREMOST RANK
AS A MAN OF SCIENCE,

These Lectures

ARE, WITH HIS KIND PERMISSION, DEDICATED,

BY

THE AUTHOR.



PREFACE.

THE comparison of ancient and modern difficulties affecting the reception of religious belief, which is indicated in the title of this work, has been carefully kept in view throughout. It was necessary, however, in the earlier Lectures to make this comparison in a somewhat informal manner. The difficulties were akin, and often identical, arising from objections which ancient philosophy and modern science concurred in opposing to those fundamental principles of religious belief which fell in with the natural instincts, and found a response in the natural emotions of mankind in general. The subject of the two last Lectures rendered a separate treatment easier, and more needful. I have thought it desirable in these to consider first the modern difficulty felt in accepting a belief in any Divine interference in the production of miracles. As this affects the possibility of any reasonable belief at all in supernatural interferences, it seemed well in the first instance to lay a founda-

tion for that belief. Without this, a discussion of the difficulty felt in ancient times, in regard to the evidence afforded by miracles to Divine revelation, would have reference rather to a curious phase in the history of human thought, than to a matter of vital interest. Moreover, what I endeavoured to show in the former case was needful for the adequate consideration of the latter, the discussion of which is really complementary of the former.

Throughout I have endeavoured, as much as possible, to reason on the ground of the objectors, and I have tried to show that, admitting the truth of much of what is presented to us in modern scientific theories, we have still abundant reason for religious belief. The whole discussion has been conducted rather in a critical than a dogmatic spirit. Having great sympathy with scientific investigations, and being sensible of the force of much of those indications which have led many to adopt conclusions adverse to religious belief, I have felt it needful, not less for my own comfort than for the satisfaction of others, to find a way out of difficulty, on the supposition that these conclusions might yet offer themselves with such evidence as might suffice to produce a general conviction of their truth. But I would not be supposed, in consequence of this, to have given an unqualified acceptance to all that I have not thought it necessary to deny, though where I have felt the ground sure, I have not

hesitated to make my own opinion sufficiently clear. So many suppositions that were once thought fatal to religion, or at least to Christian belief, have since found universal acceptance, while yet the general belief in religion has remained unshaken, that it is well to endeavour to check the panic occasioned by opinions now regarded with like alarm. And I feel no doubt that when the novelty of these opinions has worn off, and people have had time for calm reflection, a satisfactory *modus credendi* will again be found, as has already been the case in regard to like occasions of difficulty at other times. In seeking for this it is far safer for us to look before than behind, and, in anticipation of what may yet turn out to be true, to occupy a position of security. Should the course of thought take a different turn, and, as may happen, revert to its former channels, the friends of religion will not find themselves worse off for having secured their position in view of what may turn out to be a false alarm. For every enlargement of thought, and every reconciliation of seemingly adverse opinion with an unshaken belief, is itself a safeguard against like alarm in the future. If older difficulties have vanished, so, I firmly believe, will those of the present day, though each time will no doubt bring its own trials. It is part of our probation here that faith should be maintained under difficulties, without which it might lose its vitality, or sink into superstition. If there is something beautiful in the innocent faith of the child,