

**THE SCIENTIFIC VALUE OF TRADITION: A
CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN LORD
ARUNDELL OF WARDOUR AND
MR. E. RYLEY; WITH A LETTER FROM THE
REV. H. FORMBY ON THE CHRISTIAN
SCIENCE OF TRADITION**

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E. RYLEY & JOHN FRANCIS ARUDELL & H. FORMBY

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I Correspondence

BETWEEN

LORD ARUNDELL OF WARDOUR AND MR. E. RYLEY.

WITH A LETTER FROM THE

REV. H. FORMBY

ON

THE CHRISTIAN SCIENCE OF TRADITION.



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PREFACE.

THE Letters which I venture to present to the public so fully disclose their own secret, that additional words in form of Preface would almost seem to be superfluous; and moreover, as my correspondence with Mr. Ryley has continued intermittently during several years, it would be difficult to trace the stages through which the correspondence gradually expanded into dimensions which we thought might warrant a venture into the open sea. I must add, that I have taken this step in absolute reliance upon the mathematical precision of my correspondent's compass.

In the circumstances of the correspondence a certain resemblance will be detected to another correspondence published during the past year, under the title of *Proteus and Amadeus*.* This resemblance may possibly give rise to the impression that the present correspondence was suggested by the former. This really was not the case, as a comparison of dates will show. I feel bound to add, so far as I am personally concerned, that I suggest no resemblance in respect of the charm and elegance of style. Moreover, the former are written from a different point of view.

* *Proteus and Amadeus*, with an Introduction by Mr. Aubrey de Vere, 1878.

Since our correspondence went to the press the Rev. H. Formby has contributed a valuable letter to the short series now offered to the public, and has most usefully directed attention to the dissertations of the late Professor von Lasaulx and the works of Dr. Sepp. The intervention of the thoughtful and erudite author of *Monotheism the Primitive Religion of Rome*, and of *A Compendium of the Philosophy of Ancient History*, will, I do not doubt, be welcomed by the reader.

As the term, Science of Tradition, is, I believe, used in this correspondence for the first time,* I feel bound to

* In *Tradition, principally with Reference to Mythology, the Law of Nations* (Burns & Oates 1872, p. 118, 119), I wrote as follows: "This inquiry might so doubt form a department either of scriptural exegesis, universal history, or of ethnological research; but, in point of fact, its scope is too large practically to fall within such limits; whereas, if it were recognised as a separate branch of study, it would, I venture to think, in the progress of its investigation, bring all these different branches of inquiry into harmony and completeness. And I further contend, that the conclusions thus attained are as well deserving of consideration as the conclusions of science from the implements of the drift, or as the evidence of "some bones, from the pliocene beds of St. Prest, which appear to show the marks of knives" (Sir J. Lubbock, Introduction to Nilsson's *Stone Age*, xii.), which are adduced in evidence of a Palaeolithic age. So that, when on one side it is said that science (meaning the science of geology or philology, &c.) has proved this or that fact apparently contrary to the scriptural narrative, it can, on the other hand, be asserted that the facts, or the inferences from them, are incompatible with the testimony of the science of tradition. The defenders of Scripture will thus secure foothold on the ground of science, which, when properly intrenched, will stand good against the most formidable assaults of the enemy.

† I cannot help thinking that some such thought lurks in the following passage of Cardinal Wiseman's *Second Lecture on Science and Revealed Religion* (fifth edition, p. 73): "Here again I cannot but regret our inability to comprehend in one glance the bearings and connections of different sciences; for, if it appears that ages must have been required

state at once that I only use the term comparatively—*i.e.* that we have as much right to speak of a science of tradition as Mr. Max Müller, for instance, has to speak of a science of religion.

I find in a recent work, *Education as a Science*, by Alexander Bain, LL.D., Professor of Logic in the University of Aberdeen (C. Kegan Paul, 1879, p. 148), the following classification of the sciences: 'In reviewing the sciences in order, we may divide those relating to the outer world under these groups: Mathematics, as representing Abstract and Demonstrative Science; the Experimental Sciences—Physics, Chemistry, and Physiology; and the Sciences of Classification, commonly called Natural History. The Science of Mind will be taken apart.'

to bring languages to the state wherein we first find them, other researches would show us that these ages never existed; and we should thus be driven to discover some shaping power, some ever-ruling influence, which could do at once what nature would take centuries to effect; and the Book of Genesis hath alone solved this problem."

'No doubt a greater general acquaintance and power to grasp—or better still, an intuitive glance—with which to comprehend "the bearings and connections of different sciences," would tend to circumscribe the aberrations of any particular science; but the special intervention which appears to me destined to bring the various sciences into harmony will be the elevation of the particular department of history or archaeology which has to do with the traditions of the human race as to its origin into a separate and recognised branch of inquiry; and I am satisfied that if any portion of that intellect which is cunning in the reconstruction of the mastodon, from its vertebral bone, had been directed to the great lines of human tradition, that enough of the "reliquiæ" and vestiges of the past remain to establish their conformity with that "which alone has solved this problem—the Book of Genesis;" and which, apart from the consideration of its inspiration, will ever remain the most venerable and best attested of human records.'

It seems to me that a much more simple classification would be, sciences which do, or which profess to, attain to metaphysical certainty; sciences which attain to mathematical certainty; and sciences which can arrive only at moral certainty; and it is in the latter category that we would place the Science of Tradition. I am prepared to allow that these sciences of moral evidence can only by courtesy be termed sciences;* but I shall have to contend, in the course of these Letters, that the sciences of Geology, Philology, Ethnology, &c., also come under this description, and stand on the same ground.

The reader is requested not to neglect the evidence in the Appendices.

* This was written previously to the publication of the *Month* for March 1879. *Vide* p. 374, 375.

WILLIAM PALMER, M.A.

In Memoriam.

ON the eve of publication I have read the sad announcement of the death of Mr. William Palmer, whose work, *Egyptian Chronicles*, will be frequently referred to in this Correspondence. I wish to say that, if in these references there is sometimes a shade of difference of opinion indicated, the argument was advanced, on my part, in the expectation that it would have encountered his keen and penetrating scrutiny, and, I may add, principally with a view of eliciting a further exposition of his theory.

It is to be hoped that his works will not be 'interred with him.' His valuable work on Egypt had a limited circulation, and after an interval his publishers informed him that it lay heavy on their shelves. He accordingly disposed of the whole edition at Messrs. Sotheby & Wilkinson's. I rarely see it crop up in any catalogue, and I apprehend there may be some danger of its dying out of existence altogether. I believe he was engaged until within a few days of his death upon a Latin summary of this work.

It occasionally happens that the works of an author,