

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

PayPal

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

A table of contents for *Journal of the Transactions of the Victoria Institute* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_jtvi-01.php

JOURNAL OF
THE TRANSACTIONS
OF
The Victoria Institute,
OR,
Philosophical Society of Great Britain.

EDITED BY THE SECRETARY.

VOL. XLI.



LONDON :

(Published by the Institute, 1, Adelphi Terrace House, Charing Cross, W.A.C.)

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

1909.

NOTE ON DR. SCHOFIELD'S PAPER ON "SCIENCE
AND THE UNSEEN WORLD."

COMMUNICATED BY THE REV. A. IRVING, D.Sc., F.G.S.

The paper by Dr. Schofield is interesting and valuable to the great majority of us, who are debarred from the same extensive observation of psychological phenomena as falls in his way as a professional man. The first part of the paper leaves upon one's mind the impression that in his use of the term "Science" its connotation is mainly restricted to the science of the human *microcosm*, almost oblivious of the vastly wider *cosmos* to which science in the larger sense extends its investigations. It is surely within the range of human consciousness that we find the borderland, where things which are matters of revelation and things which are matters of scientific investigation—"the things which are unseen and eternal" and "the things which are seen and temporal" (to use the Pauline dictum) not only meet but coalesce. I cannot therefore follow the learned author when he says that "their spheres scarcely ever touch." A truer philosophy surely teaches that they both centre in God, and are not therefore in the last resort diverse. Again when we are told that science may "postulate" an omniscient mind we are on a different line to that of Lord Kelvin's dictum (which I heard him utter), which affirms that science can (and, if thoroughgoing enough, must) infer the existence of God. It is the function of philosophy to unify the two spheres of thought and belief; and their differences arise not only from "the character and object of the two" (p. 49), but also from the difference of the faculties called into play. The fundamental difference is that the one field of thought requires the purely intellectual faculties; the other appeals to the intuitive and perceptive faculties, to all that constitutes spirit (volition, emotion, etc.) and requires the "venture of faith," which may and does challenge the test of experience in its results, even as scientific theory does in another way. There are some excellent remarks on this point in *Thoughts on Religion* by George Romanes, no mean scientist; and it is urged in the New Testament *passim*.

In the second part of the paper Dr. Schofield seems to me (as a layman) to present us with a pretty complete outline map of the ground which the modern science of psychology in its present inchoate stage is attempting to explore. There occur, however, in it several expressions which seem to carry to the mind of a student

of more exact science a certain looseness of thought. Thus on p. 56, we are told that the apple fallen from the tree may be caught in the hand or made to rise to a height greater than that from which it has fallen "by a force which reverses the law of gravitation." Here the *effect* of gravity is intercepted, but by the expenditure of the energy required to intercept it; and a little thought will show that gravitation in this way takes its toll, just as much as if it continued to act as an accelerating force upon the falling pome. And that remark about the coconut "climbing up into the tree against all laws of gravitation" is, to say the least, a tax upon one's patience. Everyone knows that it was made where it grew by the combination of forces employed in the physiology of the life of the tree, some more, some less amenable to the laws of gravitation. The fiction of the "Divine arm" holding the axe-head up in the water, smacks too much of the crude "carpenter theory" of Creation, and is altogether unscientific. Such *lâchetés* do not strengthen the claim of Psychology to be considered a true Science.