

British scriptural geologists in the first half of the nineteenth century: part 5. Henry Cole (1792?-1858)

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Although numbered among the early 19th century Scriptural geologists, Henry Cole was largely ignorant of the facts of geology. But as a feisty Anglican clergyman, he was deeply concerned with defending the Scriptures and orthodox Christian faith. In 1834 Cole strongly opposed the teachings of fellow Anglican Rev. Adam Sedgwick, who was then the most honoured geologist at Cambridge University and a leading proponent of Lyellian uniformitarian geology. Cole was convinced that Sedgwick's influential ideas would be ultimately subversive to the Christian faith, not only among university students but also in the wider church. History has confirmed Cole's fears, even if they were not always expressed in the most winsome terms.

Biographical Sketch

Henry Cole was born in about 1792. Little is known of his early years. His schooling or lifetime of '*scholastic toil, trial and trouble*' began sometime in 1809.¹ He commenced university studies at Clare Hall, Cambridge, in March 1817. He left before completing his training, however, and was readmitted in January 1847, matriculating later the same year. He received the B.D. degree in 1848 and D.D. in 1854.²

On December 18, 1814, in Norwich, Cole was ordained a deacon, and four years later was made an Anglican curate. For several years up to 1823, he was 'lecturer of Woolwich, Kent.'³ Sometime before 1834 he took up residence in Islington.⁴ Though a comment in his 1834 book on geology suggests that he was still a member of the Church of England,⁵ shortly after moving to Islington he became the pastor of a Methodist chapel, the Islington Green Chapel, which in 1840 was taken over by Baptists, under a new

pastor, and renamed Providence Chapel.⁶ About this time, Cole returned to a clerical position in the Church of England and from as early as 1841 until 1857 he was the 'Sunday evening lecturer' and curate at the small St. Mary's Somerset Church, Upper Thames Street, London,^{7,8,9} a task which involved him in '*unceasing engagements in the instruction of youth*.'¹⁰ Cole certainly did not stay in this position so long for the financial benefit; the rector of St. Mary's during Cole's long curacy, J.S. Sergrove, had one of the lowest incomes in the diocese of London (£280 p.a.), out of which he supported himself and paid his curate.¹¹ After struggling for much of his life with ill health, Cole died in Islington on 28 June, 1858, at the age of 66, after two recent spells of paralysis.¹²

In addition to teaching and preaching for over forty years, he also wrote extensively. His works included a book in opposition to the 1829 emancipation of Roman Catholics to hold public office,¹³ two books of songs for public worship,^{14,15} a refutation of some of the Christological doctrines of Edward Irving,¹⁶ a book on essential Christian doctrines,¹⁷ another on ancient mythology,¹⁸ a pamphlet condemning the system of fattening animals to states of unnatural obesity for exhibition and consumption,¹⁹ another pamphlet criticizing some practices of dissenting churches,²⁰ and a sermon on the supreme authority of the Bible over science and religion.²¹ He also translated six works of Martin Luther^{1,22-26} and one each of Calvin²⁷ and Melancthon.²⁸ There can be little doubt that his translation work greatly contributed to his polemical writing style.²⁹ Most of his own works show him to be a man who was passionately committed to contending for the truth (as he saw it), especially the truth of the Gospel and the Scriptures, against all kinds of subtle perversions of it.

Of greatest interest is his 136-page 'letter' to Adam Sedgwick, entitled *Popular Geology Subversive of Divine Revelation* (1834).⁵ This was a response to Sedgwick's *Discourse on the Studies of the University*,³⁰ which along with extensive additional comments contained the sermon Sedgwick had preached in the chapel of Trinity College, Cambridge, in December 1832.

Writing Style

Cole expressed respect toward Sedgwick for his superior physical and mathematical knowledge,³¹ but Cole's writing style all but obscured this in many readers' minds. He called Sedgwick's ideas '*unscriptural and anti-christian*', '*scripture-defying*', and '*revelation-subverting*,' '*baseless speculations and self-contradictions*,' which were '*impious and infidel*' and would cause untold damage to the nation.³² Cole was confident that '*the heart of every one that fears the God of heaven, reveres his eternal Word, and favours his righteous cause*' would agree with his 'refutation' of Sedgwick's *Discourse* and he triumphantly but naively declared that his book would be the final and

sufficient response to the old-earth geological theories.³³ Typical of his style throughout is the following response to Sedgwick's statement that Scripture is silent about the time interval between the 'beginning' (Gen. 1:1) and the 'first day' of creation:³⁴

*As to the want of a scriptural connexion of "the beginning" with the "first day," and the silence of scripture on that point; — the heaven-given faith of Paul, Sir, found no such deficiency; no such silence; nor does any one of Wisdom's children ever find them; nor would the REV. ADAM SEDGWICK have thought of such deficiency, had not his Geological attainments cast off the fear of God, determined to pursue their man-applauded "nebulosities" in the very face of infinite Veracity. The deficiency pretended, Sir, is a willing ignorance which God himself has foretold should characterize the presumptuous "scoffers" of these "latter days" [quoting 2 Pet. 3:5].'*³⁵ (Emphasis added.)

It is not surprising that Cole was castigated by many contemporaries for this condemning tone.³⁶ In fairness to Cole we need to note, however, that he was very conscious of his style and the response it would receive:

*If I should be less courteous and disguised in my words and manner than you might have expected, you must not attribute it, Sir, to any undue personality. I know you not, save by eminent academic distinction: and it is not with you personally, as a Gentleman, but with your promulgated principles and doctrines, and the eternal honour of divine Truth as concerned in them, that I have to do: and when engaged in such a work, I ever wish to speak plainly, decidedly, and unmistakably. I cannot move according to perverted charity and compromising courtesy, which characterize the present day's treatment of divine and eternal things: for while the things of God are thus, in this day, sifted through the wires of prostituted courtesy, scarcely a grain of the divine truth in question is to be found in the sieve, and almost every error may be fangled out of the chaff upon the floor.'*³⁷

Contrary to the charge of a reviewer in the

Christian Observer,³⁸ Cole was not judging Sedgwick's motives or intentions:

*You will I hope, and doubt not, Sir, in a moment, disclaim all intention of setting your SERMON in opposition to the Word of God, and all thought of designing the subversion of that Word. But, though all must believe that you had no such appalling purpose in conscious view, yet the positions you took, and the doctrines you promulgated, have that direct and inevitable tendency.*³⁹

We must also contextualize Cole's style with some of the words used by Sedgwick against the Scriptural geologists, before Cole denounced him. It would be difficult to describe his language as any less abusive and condemning. Without qualifying his remarks in

relationship to particular Scriptural geologists,⁴⁰ he generalized in 1830 that they had promoted 'a deformed progeny of heretical and fantastical conclusions, by which sober philosophy has been put to open shame, and sometimes even the charities of life have been exposed to violation.'⁴¹ Early in 1834, he added that, 'They have committed the folly and SIN of dogmatizing,' and 'of writing mischievous nonsense';⁴² they have an 'ignorance of the laws of nature and of material phenomena'⁴³ and ideas 'hatched among their own conceits,' they 'have sinned against plain sense,'⁴⁴ display 'bigotry and ignorance,' and 'assail with maledictions and words of evil omen' because of the 'truth their eyes cannot bear to look upon;' so they invent 'an ignorant and dishonest hypothesis.'

So the debate was indeed heated, expectedly producing sharp words on both sides.

As harsh as Cole's words were, we have no reason to doubt his genuineness in the expressed pain he felt in criticizing Sedgwick's views:

Really, Sir, I feel myself engaged in a most painful task, as far as you are personally concerned; though quite happy in the work of everlasting Verity's vindication. But, as far as your eminently scientific, academic, and sacred station is involved, I feel myself in a situation of much pain; For I cannot help averring, that this is the deepest folly in a man of distinguished learning, — the greatest presumption in a fallen and fallible mortal, — and



Adam Sedgwick (1785-1873) was the first to use the term 'Cambrian' to refer to the notion of a period of time associated with particular fossils.

*the most dangerous instruction from a minister of divine Revelation, that either I, or I think few others, have witnessed in the days in which we live!*⁴⁵

Also, Cole was quite clear that he was not opposed to science generally or even to geology in particular, as human investigations of the physical world, but rather he objected to the speculative theories of origins and earth history which he believed were perverting science as well as being contrary to Scripture. He never called for an end to the study of geology or any other science. On the contrary, he said that *'geology is a legitimate science'*⁴⁶ and he believed that *'God has blessed the human race' with the various sciences and that 'surgery, chemistry, mechanism, and all branches of experimental philosophy, are advanced and pushed on to excellence ... by comparisons, classifications, and combinations of and improvements on, previous human productions.'*⁴⁷ What he wrote to criticize was Sedgwick's *'account of the Creation of the world, and of man, and all the creatures therein,' and 'the dreams,' 'principles,' and 'popular doctrines' of geology, and 'the infidel tendency of geological speculations' and 'the revelation-subverting deductions of the new science.'*⁴⁸

The relation between Scripture and science

Cole's argument was primarily based on Scripture and as such he devoted only a few pages to discuss geological methods for dating the strata. To Sedgwick's assertion that the Bible is not and does not pretend to be *'a revelation of natural science'* but only *'a rule of faith and life'* and *'a record of our moral destinies'*⁴⁹ Cole retorted that this was a *'palpable evasion'* of the truth of the Word of God for

*'the Scriptures do not, indeed, pretend to be a Revelation, or a rule, of all the pursuits and experiments of all natural science and philosophy; but, Sir, deeply and sacredly remember, that they do pretend to be, and are designed to be A REVELATION OF THE CREATION OF THE WORLD! With that Revelation the Book of God opens; and there is no other record of the World's Creation but that Revelation: and it is the express design of the Creator that there never should be any other.'*⁵⁰ (Emphasis added.)

He added that God never led any of the Scripture writers to any source about Creation other than Genesis. *'The denial of Revelation, therefore, Sir, as a history of the Creation, is an infidel refuge, and an open war of science with the God of everlasting Truth.'*⁵¹ Consequently Cole charged that for Sedgwick to say, as he did, that Scripture was silent about the time between the first creation of earth and the creation of man, was a case of deafness caused by wilful ignorance (in fulfilment of Peter's prophecy in 2 Peter 3:5) of what the Bible

plainly taught on the subject, which Cole claimed to be setting forth.

On geological theory

In his *Geology*, Cole addressed the three main points of Sedgwick's *Discourse*: Sedgwick's geological theory of earth history, his view of natural theology/religion, and his ethics.⁵² I will focus primarily on Cole's remarks on geological theory. Cole first began with a brief summary of Sedgwick's theory of the earth by quoting extensively from the *Discourse*. He rightly said that Sedgwick believed in the nebular hypothesis for the origin of our planet,⁵³ the recency of man, and many divine interventions to create new forms of life during the course of the *'evolution of countless ages'*⁵⁴ on earth before man appeared.

In reference to the recency of man, Sedgwick had said this was proved geologically, *'independently of every written testimony'*⁵⁵ This was the phrase that really lit the fire in Cole and he repeatedly referred to it in his book. He interpreted it to mean that Sedgwick was declaring his independence from Scripture and Cole reacted to the evidence of this independence which he saw not only in Sedgwick's geological theory, but also in his ideas about natural theology and ethics.⁵⁶ Cole argued fiercely that the whole Bible, the historical as well as the moral and theological parts, was equally inspired. Therefore, Scripture gives us a *'simple, plain, divinely majestic, and self-explanatory (as to the main facts)'* record of the creation and history of the world.⁵⁷

Cole then proceeded with his Scriptural refutation of the old-earth theory. First, he presented his interpretative comments on Genesis 1:1-2:3, in which he argued for a literal six-day creation about 6000 years ago.⁵⁸ He also emphasized that the Fall of man in sin had affected the whole creation (plants, animals, atmosphere, etc.). In this presentation of his understanding of Genesis, he used extensive footnotes to quote Luther's views as confirmation of his own.⁵⁹

While he clearly believed the Flood was related to the interpretation of the geological phenomena, he devoted all his efforts to refuting the day-age theory and, more importantly, the gap theory. His comments on the Flood were limited essentially to pages 91-92. There in response to the objection that one flood could not possibly have accounted for the geological record, he said,

We have already insubvertibly established it from the lips of eternal Veracity, that neither the earth, nor the material of which it was formed, nor any creature that is found therein, had existence before the FIRST DAY of revealed Creation: — THAT TRUTH we have undeniably and everlastingly established, insubvertible and immoveable by mortal ability! What phenomena soever, therefore, of order or confusion, of

*combination or disorganization, of quiescence or convulsion, the researches of the Geologist may discover, all must inevitably be the production of the beauteous Creation and destroying flood, recorded in the annals of everlasting Truth.*⁶⁰

The days of Creation had to be taken literally, said Cole, because of the context of Genesis 1 (the use of 'evening and morning' and ordinal numbers with 'day') and because Exodus 20:8-11 stated that God created the heavens, earth, seas and everything in them in six days, which by parallelism to man's work week must have been literal.⁶¹ In addition he cited Psalm 33:6,9, Job 37:18, and Proverbs 8:22-29 as proof that God had created *ex nihilo* by His word.

Cole anticipated that his opponents would object that all this may have been true, but it did not prove that a gap of millions of years did not transpire between the 'beginning' in Genesis 1:1 and the first day of creation of this present system in verse 2 or 3. To rebut this idea, Cole turned (in addition to Exodus 20:8-11) to passages in the New Testament, which were used by no other scriptural geologist I have investigated. From John 1:1-3 he argued that 'the beginning' (which he said had to refer to the same time as the words in Genesis 1:1) and 'all things that were made' were inseparably linked with no great time gap between them. Likewise, Hebrews 1:10-11 precluded the possibility that the 'beginning' and the 'foundation' of the heavens and earth were separated by vast epochs of time.⁶² Next he quoted Mark 13:19⁶³ and remarked:

*Now, is there a geologizing mortal upon earth who will assert, that the Redeemer is here speaking of 'afflictions' " experienced by a world of creatures, who lived in a mighty space between "the beginning", and the present race of mankind? Will any geological sceptic, we repeat, dare aver, that our Lord is here referring to a race of beings of whom his disciples had never heard, and whose existence was never known to men or saints, till discovered by wondrous Geologists in the nineteenth century! Must not every scientific [sic], unless he violate every remnant of natural understanding, honesty, and conscience, confess that the Saviour is here speaking to sons of men of the 'afflictions' " of the same sons of men which have been from the beginning of the Creation of this world? Then, here is the **creation of man** immediately, manifestly, and undeniably, connected with "the beginning"!"⁶⁴ (Emphasis added.)*

Similar reasoning applied to Matthew 19:4-8 led him to the conclusion that the 'beginning' could not possibly be thousands and thousands of years before the creation of Adam and Eve. And if the old-earth geologists objected that the 'beginning' may have been formed out of pre-existing matter, he countered, using Hebrews 11:3, that God did not use pre-existing matter to create.⁶⁵ With

these arguments, Cole concluded that the old-earth geologist 'must either deny the truth of his geological doctrine, or deny the truth of the Word of God!'⁶⁶

In addition to these scriptural arguments, Cole devoted about fifteen pages to a consideration of ancient pagan traditions about creation,⁶⁷ which he believed undoubtedly were derived from and served as a collateral confirmation of the true source of the patriarchs found in Genesis.⁶⁸ Though these pagan accounts were more or less distorted, Cole believed, they were closer to the truth than the contemporary geological theories.

When he came to a five-page analysis of the geological arguments for an old earth, he manifested his ignorance of the details and current state of geology.⁶⁹ He believed that the three pillars on which the old-earth theory rested were 'the affixed dates of mineral or other deposits', 'the chronological specimens of organic remains' and 'the conclusive indices furnished by the various strata.'⁷⁰ He neither defined them well nor documented his assertions from the writings of Sedgwick or other geologists. Nevertheless, he dismissed them all on the basis that Neptunians and the Plutonians held completely opposite views on the chronological order of the rocks and fossils. Such geological ignorance surely fuelled the antagonism of his opponents.

On natural theology and ethics

In the remainder of the book, Cole criticized the natural theology and ethical system of Sedgwick. We touch on them only briefly for the sake of context.

Sedgwick asserted that the religion of nature and the religion of the Bible were in perfect harmony. Cole agreed, but contended that the natural religion expressed in the *Discourse* was opposed to Scripture, since it appeared to teach that people could know God and eventually enjoy His eternal presence through applying their mind to the study of nature.⁷¹ Cole argued that the ancient pagan philosophers were unsurpassed by any moderns in their intelligence, but that they could never know God by reasoning from nature. Furthermore, he stated that the only reason that natural religion so harmonized with the religion of the Bible in Britain at the time was because of the long influence of the Scriptures on the nation.⁷²

Likewise, Sedgwick's ethics were perceived to be an unchristian system of 'natural-religion-morality.'⁷³ Cole's criticisms were three. One, Sedgwick's system was rooted in the belief that man had some inherent goodness, contrary to the teaching of Scripture and the articles of the Church of England concerning the total depravity of man. Secondly, the fruit of Sedgwick's system was the fostering of pride in the minds of those who think themselves good. Lastly, it destroyed the Gospel in that it promised salvation to people as a result of their goodness.

It would be beyond the scope of this thesis to develop

Cole's argument on these two topics. Suffice it to say that if Cole did misconstrue Sedgwick's meaning, as Sedgwick later retorted, he was not the only one to have misunderstood.⁷⁴ Also, Sedgwick was partly to blame, evidenced by the fact that he deemed it necessary to devote several pages in a later edition of his *Discourse* to clarify his meaning.⁷⁵

Conclusion

Cole wrote against the old-earth geological theories, not for any personal advantage, but in defence of the truth, as he saw it. In Cole's mind, the real battle was not between science and Christianity, for he believed that experimental science and the study of the rocks and fossils were legitimate and worthwhile endeavours. Rather, more explicitly than any other Scriptural geologist I have investigated, he stated his conviction that the old-earth geological theories, which contradicted what for him was the plain teaching of the Bible, were part of a great spiritual battle that had begun in the Garden of Eden. Since that time, Satan had been subtly tempting and using people (even professing Christians sometimes) to cast doubt on or to deny the Word of God. Cole referred to this battle over and over again.⁷⁶

The geological debate was, for Cole, just one evidence of this spiritual battle. Other contemporary evidences were the 1829 law allowing Catholics participation in parliament, and the proposed legislation being considered in the early 1830s to no longer require university graduates to affirm their faith in fundamental Christian truths. In both these cases, as in the case of Sedgwick's geology and ethics, it had been argued (as Cole saw it) that these issues had nothing to do with biblical revelation and vice versa.⁷⁷ This divorce of Scripture from these issues was of grave concern to Cole.

So in spite of Sedgwick's intentions, Cole believed that the inevitable tendency of the *Discourse* was to contribute to the subverting of Scripture and to the dechristianization of Britain, with all the negative moral and social consequences attending.⁷⁸ These factors then help to explain both Cole's argument and prophetic style of writing. He perceived that he was part of a cosmic battle of the greatest eternal and temporal significance.

References

1. Cole, H., 1858, transl., *Luther Still Speaking: The Creation, a Commentary on Genesis 1-5* (1858), vi.
2. Venn, J.A., *Alumni Cantabrigienses: 1752-1900* (1940-54), 2:89.
3. Two of his works referred to him as 'late lecturer of Woolwich, Kent.' See the title pages of Cole, Refs. 22 and 23.
4. Venn, ref. 2. Cole signed the preface of his 1834 book on geology (ref. 5) and his 1837 translation of Luther's commentary on Psalms from Islington.
5. Cole, H., 1834. *Popular Geology Subversive of Divine Revelation* p. 121. Hereafter this will be cited simply as *Geology*.
6. The Islington Green Chapel was started in 1832 by a Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion minister. See Philip Temple, *Islington Chapels* (1992), 67. The Connexion was a loose confederation of about 45 urban congregations, which had similar origins to the Calvinist Methodists. The Countess of Huntingdon (1707-91) came under the influence of George Whitefield in 1739 and she wanted to help establish churches that would have a continuity of evangelical preaching. These churches held to the Thirty-nine Articles and used much of the liturgy in the *Book of Common Prayer*. See James Hastings, ed., *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics* (1913), VI:879-80.
According to two unidentified handwritten fragments preserved in Document YJ853.04 PRO in the Local History Department of the Islington Reference Library, Cole 'seceded' from the Church of England to pastor the Chapel. It seems doubtful, however, if Cole would have interpreted it this way. He firmly defended the establishment of the Church of England in his rejection of the Catholic emancipation act of Parliament in 1829. See Cole, Ref. 13. Five years later, in a strong rebuttal of another Anglican clergyman's teaching on infant baptismal regeneration, Cole gave a strong defence of the Church of England, though he was not opposed to the existence of Dissenters. See Henry Cole, 'The Rev. H. Cole in reply to the Rev. H. Budd on the Church Services,' *Christian Observer*, Vol. XXXIV (1834), 471-77. Also, in a sermon preached in an Anglican church in May 1842, Cole defended the Church of England as a superior church, partially because it could trace its origins directly back to the apostles. See his first sermon in Cole, Ref. 17.
7. Title pages of Cole, Refs. 15, 19, 20, 21, 27. The church is no longer in existence. Its location suggests that it was probably destroyed in World War 2.
8. Gilbert, R., 1836. *The Clerical Guide*.
9. Gilbert, R. *The Clergy List* (volumes for 1843-1857).
10. Cole, Ref. 5, p. 133.
11. See Gilbert, Ref. 8, under 'London: St. Mary's Somerset.' He was also willing to absorb the financial cost of getting his ideas out to others, as seen in the case of offering his *Principles of Modern Dissident Evangelism Disclosed* (pre-1840) to other Anglican clergymen at no cost. See a review of several of Cole's works in *Evangelical Register*, Vol. X2 (June 1840), 255-7.
12. Venn, Ref. 2; 'Deaths,' *The Times*, 30 June 1858, p. 1; *Gentlemen's Magazine*, 2:199, 1858; 'Births, Marriages and Deaths,' *Islington Gazette*. 10 July 1858, p. 3. Several of Cole's works mentioned his life-long struggle with poor health. See, for example, Cole, Ref. 5, p. 17. and Ref. 1. pp. 2i and vi-v2.
13. Cole. H.. 1829. *A Brief Appeal to the People of England*.
14. Cole. H.. 1834. *A Collection of Spiritual Songs for Divine Worship*.
15. Cole. H.. 1841. *A Collection of Psalms and Hymns for Public Worship*.
16. Cole. H., 1827. *A letter to the Rev. Edward Irving. . .in refutation of the awful doctrines, held by him of the sinfulness, mortality, and corruptibility of the body of Jesus Christ*.
17. Cole, H., 1847. *Sermons of the Essential Doctrines and Distinguishing Glories of the Kingdom of Christ*.
18. In Ref. 5, Cole mentioned that this was in preparation for publication, but I was unable to find it listed in any of the leading library catalogues. Maybe his poor health never allowed him to finish it.
19. Cole, H., 1852. *A Reflective Letter Addressed to ... the Royal Agricultural Society*.

20. Cole, H., 1857. *The Waste Places*. In this 12-page pamphlet Cole expressed his concern about the 3-fold desolations in the dissenting churches: 1) the custom of sitting to sing God's praises, 2) the neglect of the Scriptural education of children, and 3) the rejection of the ordinance of water baptism.
21. Cole, H., 1853. *The Bible a Rule and Test of Religion and Science*. It was preached at Great St. Mary's Church, in Cambridge, on June 26, 1853.
22. Cole, H., 1823. *Luther on the Bondage of the Will*.
23. Cole, H., 1826. *Select Works of Martin Luther*.
24. Cole, H., 1836. *The Pope confounded and his Kingdom exposed*.
25. Cole, H., 1847. *A Manual of the Book of Psalms*.
26. Cole, H., 1883. *The Flood*.
27. Cole, H., 1856. *Calvin's Calvinism*
28. Cole, H., 1823. Melancthon's *Interpretation of Two Horrible Monsters*.
29. In particular, Cole remarked in his translation of *Luther on the Bondage of the Will* (page v), that Rev. August Montague Toplady called this book of Luther 'a masterpiece of polemical composition.'
30. Sedgwick, A., 1834. *Discourse on the Studies of the University*. Hereafter this will be cited simply as *Discourse*.
31. Cole, Ref. 5, pp. 52, 113.
32. Cole, Ref. 5, pp. 10, 73, v, 87, ix, 8.
33. Cole, Ref. 5, pp. 133, v2.
34. Actually, Sedgwick said that the Scriptures were silent on the time between the initial creation and the creation of man. See Sedgwick, Ref. 30, p. 149.
35. Cole, Ref. 5, p. 82.
36. A reviewer in the *Athenaeum* (No. 363, 11 Oct. 1834, 740-41) called Cole an 'intolerant bigot' who 'assumes a more than papal infallibility, and pronounces his anathemas with a complacency that would be fearful if it were not ludicrous.'
- The *Christian Observer* (XXXIV:369-387, June 1834; 449-451 July 1834) commended Cole for his sincere intentions and for pointing out the errors of Baden Powell's allegorical interpretation of Genesis 1 and the conflict of Anglican doctrine with some of Sedgwick's remarks about ethics and religion. It also agreed that to assign one degree of inspiration to Scripture's moral statements and another to its historical and physical statements was to 'utterly subvert' its authority. Nevertheless, the reviewer rebuked Cole for his geological ignorance and prejudice against weighing the facts, and charged that Cole 'at once shuts the door to calm and candid argument' by his 'abusive' language and assertion that all true Christians would agree with his literal interpretation of Genesis.
- The *Evangelical Register* (X2:255-257, June 1840) was more positive in its review, particularly of Cole's Scriptural arguments, though it appreciated his two letters to the editor of the *Christian Observer* in 1834 (which the latter magazine declined to publish because they said Cole presented nothing new to the arguments of his book) as the letters were less declamatory. Cole published the letters himself in 1834. See the bibliography.
37. Cole, Ref. 5, pp. 10-11. At the end of the book (p. 132) he added, 'But I am fully aware, that such aggrieved and prophetic meditations as these are not receivable amid the loud and flattering plaudits of a talent-admiring and science-idolizing multitude. I undeceivedly count, therefore, the costs of all the vituperation and contempt which will be poured upon the present pages. Their contents will, I am aware, be denominated, "scientific ignorance," "visionary fears," "religious cant," "illiberality," "want of courtesy," "violations of the charities of life;" &c. all of which I am quite prepared to meet, and ten times more. But let admired philosophers and scientifics know, that VITUPERATION is not the REFUTATION OF ETERNAL TRUTH! — I am amply and happily repaid in my own heart for my present labour, by the solid and immovable persuasion, that no ability or talent of mortals will ever hold up the popular principles of GEOLOGY against their scriptural REFUTATION and DESTRUCTION, which these pages contain.'
38. Anon., 1834. Review of Cole, Ref. 5. *Christian Observer* XXXI V:376. The reviewer wrote that Cole and others like him 'seem to consider Christian geologists as systematically wishing to subvert holy Scripture' (emphasis added).
39. Cole, Ref. 5, pp. 8-9. On page 129 he similarly said of Sedgwick, 'whatever [his] conscious, or unconscious, meaning may be' the result of his ideas was to undermine the Word of God.
40. Sedgwick mentioned in passing 'the Buggs, the Penns — the Nolans and the Formans', but did not explicitly refer to any geologically informed critics during the years 1822-34, such as Young, Ure and Fairholme. Even in the greatly expanded and revised fifth edition (1850) of the *Discourse*, Sedgwick left this section (pages 111-116 in the 1850 edition) unchanged and made no specific reference to the writings of Young, Murray, Fairholme or Rhind in the late 1830s, even though he knew Young personally and almost undoubtedly knew of Murray, if he did not know him personally, because of Murray's reputation in science, in the church, and his membership in the Geological Society.
41. Sedgwick, A., 1830. Annual General Meeting of the Geological Society, Presidential address. *Philosophical Magazine*, N.S. V2(40):310.
42. Sedgwick, A., Ref. 30 (second edition), pp. 148-153. Cole's book (and therefore his harsh language) was published after Sedgwick's remarks and in response to the third edition of *Discourse* (also published in 1834), according to Cole's *The Bible a Rule and Test* (1853), 72. Cole's *Geology* was announced in his critical letter to *The Times* on Feb. 20, 1834. But it seems most likely that Sedgwick wrote his comments before he had seen Cole's letter to *The Times*, since if he had seen the letter, it is certainly surprising that he did not specifically mention Cole along with the other names. It was not until the 1850 fifth edition of the *Discourse* (p. 132), that Sedgwick openly responded to one point in Cole's book (Cole's charge that Sedgwick essentially denied the need for Scriptural revelation), though he did not mention Cole's name.
43. Sedgwick made a similar criticism of Scriptural geologists in Sedgwick, A., 1825. On the Origin of Alluvial and Diluvial Formations. *Annals of Philosophy*, N.S. IX:241.
44. Sedgwick, A., ref. 30, p. 152. Here he made some qualification but without mentioning any specific names: 'All the writers of this school have not indeed sinned against plain sense to the same degree. With some of them there is perhaps a perception of the light of natural truth which may lead them after a time to follow it in the right road.'
45. Cole, Ref. 5, p. 52. Similar remarks appear on pages 83, 128-29 and 136, where he ended his book not with a standard formal closing, but with the hope of God's mercy for Sedgwick: 'That the interposed hand of mercy may forbid such being the end of your scripture-supplanting speculations is, Sir, I assure you, the really concerned desire of your sincere well-wisher, in the highest of all senses, Henry Cole.' In his *Two Final and Conclusive Letters to the Editor of the Christian Observer* (1834, p. 8), Cole criticized his reviewer for not distinguishing between Cole's respect for Sedgwick as a person and Cole's convictions about the importance of the topic of debate. In a similar vein, Cole explicitly said that he was not attacking the person of Rev. Edward Irving, but rather opposing his erroneous doctrines.

- See Cole, Ref. 16, p. 98.
46. Cole, H., 1834. *Two Final and Conclusive Letters to the Editor of the Christian Observer*, p. 9.
47. Cole, Ref. 5, pp. 94, 106. In his 1853 sermon (Ref. 21), p. 24, he described geology as 'a science, like every other, the gift of God, as the offspring of his creation works.' Similar positive remarks about science generally are made on pages 26-27.
48. Cole, Ref. 5, pp. 14, 77, 83, 84, 54, v.
49. Cole, Rref. 5, p. 79; Sedgwick, A., Ref. 30, p. 146.
50. Cole, Ref. 5, pp. 79-80.
51. Cole, Ref. 5, p. 81. In Ref. 21, pp. 22-23 and 25-26, Cole reiterated these views: *'Another position assumed by the graceless advocates of science is this. That none are qualified to judge of the conclusions and deductions of any science, but those who are fully acquainted with the nature and details of the science on which they profess to pass their judgment. How manifestly absurd a doctrine! How marvellous! that men whose whole lives have been spent in data and conclusions, should arrive at such a conclusion as this! — A person to whom God has given natural vision, cannot see whether he is in the light or in the dark, without the physical knowledge of all the properties of light and darkness! An unlettered traveller cannot judge whether he is under the down-pourings of a torrent of rain, or under a serene sky, because he knows not the physical causes of rain, nor of the serenity of the air of heaven! A father cannot know his children, nor a man his friends, because neither of them have studied the physical constitution of their bodies and souls! The absurdity of such a doctrine is monstrous!*
- 'Not less palpably absurd is this doctrine when applied to the heaven-authorized judges of the false conclusions of science. One philosopher reasons, concludes, and teaches, that "there is no God." No servant of the Most High, however, though taught and saved "the law and the testimony," can bear any witness from that "testimony" against the Atheist, unless he has himself travelled through all the mazes of impious reasoning by which the blasphemer has arrived at his awful conclusion! Another philosopher declares, that the matter which constitutes the consistence of creation, is itself the God of creation. No public or private witness for the Most High, however, who has been taught by "the law and the testimony," and has felt, and known, that "God is a spirit," and who savingly worships him as such, must attempt to judge or gainsay so awful an infidel, unless he has himself devoted his previous existence to physical speculations on the nature of matter! But to multiply illustrations of the absurdity of such a doctrine is, perhaps, well nigh as absurd as the preposterous absurdity itself, in question; which it is superfluous to expose.*
- 'No! men and brethren. — An existence devoted to scientific speculations, is not required here! The meanest and most illiterate member of the family of heaven, who has, by the Volume of inspiration, been made "wise unto salvation," will, in one moment, and with one word from that Volume, confute and expose the most profound philosopher on earth, when his speculations, though the labour of a century, shall terminate in his drawing one conclusion, from his vain researches, which shall stand adverse to the "the law and the testimony" of truth eternal! ... the Bible is not only "the law and the testimony" of all doctrine, and duty, and science; but it is also the inspired and literal history of the creation of this world; and not only so, but the inspired, literal and only source of all preprofane history of men, nations, and things.. The Bible's preprofane history, is either the literal and eternal truth, as Moses was inspired of God to write it; or it is the mightiest and most solemn imposture the world ever witnessed!'*
52. Cole, Ref. 5, pp. 1-96, 96-116 and 116-126 respectively. Pages 126-136 gave a summary and conclusions.
53. However, in the 1850 edition of the *Discourse* (pp. 178-83) Sedgwick expressed serious doubts about this and discussed many scientific objections to the nebular hypothesis.
54. Sedgwick, Ref. 30, p. 30. Most of his life, Sedgwick vehemently opposed the notion of biological evolution. Here he meant only astronomical and geological evolution, or progressive change. Also, Cole did not interpret him to mean biological evolution.
55. Sedgwick, Ref. 30, p. 26.
56. In one sense the *Christian Observer* (34:373-374, June 1834) was correct in concluding that Cole had misunderstood and misrepresented Sedgwick. In context, Sedgwick meant that even if we did not have the Scriptural testimony, geologists could prove that man first appeared on the earth in the last few thousand years. Cole may indeed have misunderstood Sedgwick at this point.
- On the other hand, he may not have. Rather, clearly he perceived that this phrase had a wider meaning, namely, that Sedgwick and the other geologists developed their theories of earth history without regard to the teaching of Scripture (disguising that fact by reinterpreting the biblical record to fit the geological theory, in a way that Cole found exegetically unconvincing). This view is based on something else Sedgwick wrote (and Cole quoted), *'If the Bible be a rule of life and faith, a record of our moral destinies; it is not, I repeat, nor does it pretend to be, a revelation of natural science. ... The Bible is left to rest on its appropriate evidences, and its interpretation is committed to the learning and good sense of the critic and the commentator; while Geology is allowed to rest on its own basis, and the philosopher to follow the investigations of physical truth wherever they may lead him, without dread of evil consequences.'* See Sedgwick, Ref. 30, pp. 146, 155; quoted in Cole, Ref. 5, p. 79.
57. Cole, Ref. 5, p. 31.
58. In addition to this literal interpretation, he also believed there was a typological or spiritual significance to the days of creation (as there is to so much of the Old Testament): the creation of light on the first day was linked to spiritual birth in 2 Cor. 4:6 and the literal days probably also represent the nearly 6000 years since creation, so that the end of these six spiritual 'days,' when God will finish His work on this earth, might be (in 1834) only 167 years away. See Cole, Ref. 5, pp. 72-73.
59. He also cited the commentary of the eighteenth century Baptist Hebrew scholar, John Gill. But he only quoted Luther, in Latin with his own English translation following, because Gill's commentary on Genesis was accessible to readers, whereas Luther's was not.
60. He went on to say (pp. 91-92), *'And what lauded 'discriminating powers' of man shall essay to point out what of terrestrial order did, or did not, belong to the primeval harmony of the Creation? or what of convulsion and disorganization was, or was not, effected by the righteous judgment of the destroying deluge? Who shall decypher or portray the beginning, middle, or end, of the convulsions of the earth, when "the windows of heaven were opened from above," and the fountains of the great deep were broken up" from beneath? [Gen. 7:11] And though some organic and unorganic [sic] strata may seem to be placed informs and conditions that natural judgment would not resolve into the effects of one flood, what finite creature shall arraign and deny the ability and will of an infinite God! The speculative Geologist, therefore, who gathers up phenomena left by the revealed Creation and the flood, and out of them vamps up a baseless fabric of human imagination, and sets it in hostile array against the Truth of divine Revelation, wilfully casts off the fear of God, tramples under foot the record of everlasting Verity, and presents himself to the world of his fellowmen, as a combatant against the infinite Majesty of Heaven!'*
- It is clear from this statement that Cole did not believe that God

miraculously created the fossiliferous strata in the condition we find them, as the *Christian Observer* (XXXIV:381, 1834) falsely accused Cole of believing. Rather, in an unspecified way he saw Creation Week together with the Flood (the latter apparently being the dominant agent) as responsible for the effects observed. In the heat of the controversy, it was not just Cole then who sometimes misunderstood and misrepresented others, resulting in false charges.

61. Cole, Ref. 5, pp. 35,70-72. Exodus 20:8-11 was used as an argument against both the day-age and gap theories. He rejected the use of 2 Peter 3:8 to interpret the days as long periods, because, he argued, the verse referred to the eternal nature of God, not the length of days in the creation week.
62. In a footnote on this verse, Cole quoted Baden Powell's view, as expressed in his *Revelation and Science* (1833), 14, that Genesis 1 was merely a poetic legend that had religious application. Cole responded (p. 43), 'If these divine-authority-denying, and inspiration-denying principles of geological scepticism, were not read in public print, who could possibly bring himself to believe that they existed in a christian land, and in the hearts of revelation-blessed mortals! — And farther, who would ever venture to suppose, that such principles were openly avowed in the public worship of God, in both Universities of Britain, by ordained ministers of the Word of God, and of the Gospel of Christ!' As noted earlier the *Christian Observer*, Vol. 34 (1834), 369, shared Cole's view by saying that Powell was opening 'the flood-gates of infidelity.'
63. 'For in those days shall be affliction, such as was not from the beginning of the creation which God created, unto this time, neither shall be.'
64. Cole, Ref. 5, pp. 46-47.
65. Cole did not explain, however, how his interpretation of Hebrews 11:3 squared with the statements in Genesis 1 that plants, sea creatures, man and woman were made out of pre-existing matter.
66. Cole, Ref. 5, p. 50.
67. In footnotes occupying most of pp. 61-66, he provided Greek and Latin quotes, with translation and comment, from the writings of Orpheus, Hesiod, Pindar, Homer and Ovid.
68. Because Adam was the ultimate source of the patriarchal tradition, Cole spent five pages (*ibid.*, 55-60) arguing that Adam was not primitive in his understanding, as many nineteenth century contemporaries supposed. Rather, since he was created sinlessly perfect in the image of God, he had an incomparable 'profundity of knowledge and wisdom,' even in natural philosophy, a significant portion of which was lost as a result of the Fall and became increasingly obscured by his posterity.
- Cole reasoned that if Adam had received a different account of creation than the one recorded in Genesis, then that account would have survived through Noah to be found in the nations of the post-diluvian world. However, no trace of such an account of pre-Adamite creations has been found 'in the truth-preserving treasures of tradition.' So it must have never existed.
69. Cole, Ref. 5, pp. 85-89. In a long footnote (pp. 88-91), he did, however, accurately summarize Werner's (Neptunian) and Hutton's (Plutonian) theories of earth history.
70. What difference Cole perceived in the latter two points was impossible for me to discern.
71. At one point Cole clearly misunderstood Sedgwick. The latter said that people could know of some of God's attributes and His existence from a study of nature, while Cole objected that no one could know God in this way. In another place, however, Sedgwick would appear to be saying precisely what Cole charged. Sedgwick wrote, 'Man has moral powers and capacities unsatisfied with what he sees around him. He longs for a higher and more enduring intellectual fruition —

a nearer approach to the God of nature. And seeing that every material organ, as well as every vital function and capacity in things around him, is created for an end, he cannot believe that a God of power and goodness will deceive him; and on these attributes he builds his hopes of continued being and future glory' (Sedgwick, Ref. 30, p. 31; quoted in Cole, Ref. 5, pp. 97-98).

72. Cole wrote, Ref. 5, p. 111, 'The everlasting debt is due to divine Revelation alone! It is this, and this alone, that makes even the natural religion, and natural knowledge of God, what they now are in Britain! Let this be testified by every nation now upon earth, where the sun of the Book of God hath not shone! And let all natural religion advocates know, that, if all our religion-connected science had ever 'stood upon its own basis,' as the infidel Geologian would now pretend to establish his 'new science,' the natural knowledge of God would be as far from the heart of every Britain [*sic*], at this day, as it was from the nations of heathen antiquity! On what ground, then, shall we consider that mortal to stand, who, with all the vain philosophy of the ancient world, set, 'in the wisdom of God,' before him; and with the Scriptures of everlasting light and truth in his hands; boasts of a natural science of Creation's work, 'independent of every written testimony,' and a natural religion 'independent' of Revelation!'
73. Cole, Ref. 5, p. 116.
74. As noted earlier, the *Christian Observer* was also concerned about Sedgwick's views on this point.
75. Sedgwick, A., 1850. *Discourse*, fifth edition, pp. 130-43. Here he affirmed his belief in the necessity of scriptural revelation and personal faith in Jesus Christ for salvation.
76. Cole, Ref. 5, pp. 1, 4, 6, 32, 34, 53, 67, 69, 83, 94, 95, 129. Interestingly, such a view of spiritual warfare was also expressed a decade later by Sedgwick himself in his scathing 85-page review of the evolutionary theory of Robert Chambers' *Vestiges of the Natural History of the Creation* (1844). The review appeared in the *Edinburgh Review*, LXXX2:1-85, 1845. On page 3, Sedgwick wrote of 'the seductions of this author, who comes before [the readers] with a bright, polished, and many-coloured surface, and the serpent coils of a false philosophy, and asks them again to stretch out their hands and pluck forbidden fruit, ... who tells them that their Bible is a fable when it teaches them that they were made in the image of God— that they are the children of apes and the breeders of monsters.'
77. Cole, Ref. 5, pp. 2-6.
78. Cole, Ref. 5, pp. x-x2, 8, 135. On pages 44-45 (footnote), he put it this way: 'What the consequences of such things must be to a revelation-possessing land, time will rapidly and awfully unfold in its opening pages of national scepticism, infidelity, and apostacy [*sic*], and of God's righteous vengeance on the same!'

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