

ART. III.—RELIGION AS SCIENCE.

A NEW COLLEGE SERMON.

“Then I saw that wisdom excelleth folly as far as light excelleth darkness.”—ECCLES. ii. 13.

IF we desired to justify the existence of a college chapel, we might find a plea in the value which the Bible everywhere sets on knowledge. In countless passages the acquisition of it is recommended as of a treasure that is beyond price. It is acknowledged that such acquisition is attended with difficulty, and even at times with danger, but the difficulties are worth enduring and the risk worth incurring. Men are earnestly enjoined to increase their stock of knowledge by all legitimate means. “Stand in the multitude of the elders, and cleave unto him that is wise. Be willing to hear all the discourse of such, and let their aphorisms not escape thee. If thou seest a man of understanding, get thee betimes unto him, and let thy foot wear the footsteps of his door.” The text that has been quoted from Ecclesiastes, therefore, expresses a theory in which all the Biblical writers acquiesce.

In some of the Biblical books the authors, besides praising wisdom, show us by illustrations what that term denotes. In the Proverbs of Solomon the praise of wisdom is coupled with a series of precepts for life. Virtue is represented as a department of knowledge. Sin and folly are identical. The wisdom which was present at the making of the world—which doubtless means the sciences of which the universe is the embodiment—is also the preceptress whom men should follow in their actions, from whose guidance nothing should allure them. Because human conduct, when taken in large masses, follows something like mathematical laws, therefore experience provides guidance for conduct. Therefore the aphorisms in which observant men have recorded their experiences should be carefully studied and made the basis of moral science. Hence, in the Book of Proverbs we have enthusiastic panegyrics of wisdom side by side with precepts which sometimes astonish us by their homeliness, while at other times we marvel at their profoundness.

The extraordinary work called the Wisdom of Solomon applies the theory that knowledge is virtue to the interpretation of history. With the marvellous power possessed by Biblical authors, and apparently by them only, of treating future events as though they were past, this writer applies it first to the story of the crucifixion, an event which, according to any hypothesis, took place many years after the

writer's time. He attributes the crime perpetrated by the crucifiers to ignorance, and the patience of the Crucified One to knowledge. Had the former but known in that their day the things belonging to their peace! But they were hidden from their eyes. They thought His life madness and His end dishonourable; but they were in error. And the same key which solves for the author of the *Wisdom of Solomon* the problem of the crucifixion gives him also the analysis of the other striking events in the history of his race. Noah is aware that the flood is coming, and is prepared for it; so the world is saved because it contains one wise man. Lot knows what fate is going to overtake Sodom; hence he escapes it. Joseph knows that the laws of God must not be broken; so his resistance of temptation, which leads him in the first place to the prison-house, presently raises him to a throne, and helps him to save a whole country from famine. Knowledge to this writer effects what in the analysis of the author of the *Epistle to the Hebrews* is effected by faith. Whether the knowledge in question is derived from special revelation or from observation and experiment is to this writer a matter of as little consequence as it would be to Epictetus. Aegisthus was equally warned against the crime which led to his ruin, whether its consequences were known to him from observation or whether the slayer of Argos was specially sent to tell him of them.

The third book in which the importance of knowledge is forced upon us is the *Book of Job*. The *Proverbs* tell how men should act; the *Book of Job* tells us how they do act, and shows them on the stage. The sages of the East are introduced trying to find out the purpose of suffering. The purpose of it, the writer himself tells us, is probation. Man has problems of many orders set before him to see if he will solve them, and the hardest question is set to the aptest scholar. God's ways in this matter are comparable to those of prudent men. The general who has defeated a powerful enemy is rewarded by being summoned presently to face one who is still more formidable. That is the highest reward that can be given him, and the reward he would best care to receive. The engineer who has spanned an ordinary stream is presently called upon to span the Forth or Niagara, or some day the Channel, or, it may be, the Atlantic itself. The physician who has successfully dealt with an intricate disease is rewarded by being singled out to treat some new and terrible epidemic. That is the answer which revelation and analogy give to the question of suffering. But the whole world, as its views are represented in the *Book of Job*, is of opinion that children are sent to school not to learn, to be

trained and tested, but solely in order to get prizes. The prizes are health and wealth and posterity; good conduct will secure them, bad conduct will forfeit them. When, therefore, a case is brought before the wise men which conflicts with this theory—a case in which the best conduct is rewarded by destitution, disease, and bereavement—how do the sages of the time deal with the question? Do they discover that their theory must be wrong because it conflicts with experience, and acknowledge that their theory must be abandoned or modified? No; their method is to adhere to their theory and fling experience to the winds. The principle that where experience conflicts with prejudice, experience, and not prejudice, must be set aside, is maintained by all the speakers in Job, the old men who discourse in an archaic and classical tone, and the young man who speaks in a more colloquial style, teeming with modernisms. The argument in Job does not advance because, where no one knows the way to start an inquiry, advance cannot be made.

And then God Himself is introduced speaking, not as He speaks in revelation, but as He speaks in nature. If man would really understand God's ultimate purposes and plans, he is advised to make himself acquainted with some of the simpler processes and methods of Nature. Sound knowledge of even a small part of the plan may help towards understanding the whole. The character of God in nature is to be learnt as the character of a man might be learned—by specimens of conduct, thoroughly understood. So long as the plan of Job's friends was applied to the natural sciences, they made little or no advance. But when men began to register experience and modify their prejudices in accordance with it, they began to grow. The supposition that the orbit of the planets was of necessity circular was at one time as widespread and as firmly believed in as the doctrine that health and wealth are assigned in proportion to good conduct. But when science began to be based on certainties, both propositions were seen to be equally infantile.

From this brief survey of the Wisdom literature, we learn in the first place that the Bible is by no means exclusive as regards what it classes as knowledge. The attainments which it ascribes to Solomon are what we should call scientific attainments, observation of and acquaintance with the order of Nature; yet it is in virtue of that knowledge that he is able to understand the moral problems offered by the government of the world as manifested in history. He also can make a first attempt to bring morals into touch with science. The question discussed in Job is whether it is worth while to serve God or not, whether He is just or unjust in His dealings.

And the advice given by that book to him who would handle the problem correctly is to study physical science. The wisdom of the Bible includes, therefore, whatever is certain and correctly observed or reasoned out.

In the second place, it appears that, according to these writers, religion, if it be not identical with knowledge, at least varies directly with it. He who knows most will also be the most religious. The progress of the sciences may at times diverge from the meeting-point with revelation, at times converge towards it, but of their ultimate convergence the writers have no doubt. The true religion throws down a challenge: let everything be scrutinized and registered, and presently he who knows most will believe most. For being shocked at God's justice being called in question, for defending it by accusing the innocent, for making black white and bitter sweet in God's cause, Job's friends not only get no thanks, but are made at the close of the book to atone. God will have no advocacy of that kind, if only on the ground that it is certain in the long-run to lose the case. But if God's cause can be defended on the grounds of science, if from correct observations and deductions some insight can be obtained into His plans, such an advocacy will be acceptable. And the acquisition of knowledge will be acceptable, even if he who produces it is unable to find a place for it in the brief for God; for though we ought to know the steps by which our knowledge has been attained, no human being can say whither it will lead.

If the true religion could not afford to offer such a challenge, there would be no hope of its persistence. Whatever depends for its maintenance on the suppression of some evidence, the concealment of some fact, any form of simulation or dissimulation, is doomed. Nature is too homogeneous and too closely connected to allow of the permanent concealment of anything whatever that finds a place in her chain of certainties. Novelists tell us of men and women who have chosen to be blind for life rather than be conscious of the deformity of those with whom they have elected to live. So long as they could see, that deformity would be confronting them; but by paying the terrible price of total blindness, they could get rid of it. And so when a system would maintain itself in defiance of experience, it presently has to demand a similar sacrifice on the part of its devotees. By blinding themselves to some things, they are presently compelled to blind themselves to everything; and though some in any age may be found ready to make this sacrifice, a permanent supply of victims cannot be counted on. Hence the true religion must challenge the world as the Biblical Wisdom writers challenge it. The

reign of the true religion must be conterminous with the reign of light. "They that put their trust in Him," says the author of *Wisdom* in a brilliant passage, "shall understand the truth, and such as be faithful in love shall wait for Him." The most perfect man, as represented in the *Book of Job*, gives way at the fourth trial; the most perfect woman gives way at the third. Without the love of God they would have yielded at the first; but the insight into the purposes of God to be acquired by patience grounded on love would have kept them safe through all.

Hence, though religion and knowledge are not the same, there is assuredly the same spirit amid the diversity of gifts. The light that shines within is akin to that which illuminates without. It is misleading and inadequate to describe the spirit of our religion as resignation; accommodation to experience characterizes it far more. Preparedness for new truths, readiness to accept the light, fearlessness in the presence of man, submissiveness in the presence of God—these are some of the qualities the cultivation of which has made this country the home of the true religion and of science, too. If we examine what is being said of England now, resignation is not a word that figures in the praise which it is receiving; they are qualities that are more akin to faith and hope which win admiration greater than uninterrupted success would have won. The scientific virtue of fearlessness in facing the truth earns approbation from which the character of the truth acknowledged scarcely detracts. The commander who telegraphs home that he alone is responsible for a reverse earns thereby as much confidence as a victory would have earned. If men attempt to conceal the truth in order to gratify an interest, confidence is shaken, because it is well known that Nature will not change its face for anyone's gratification; but those to whom the light is welcome whatever it reveals, whom it neither dazzles nor frightens, are, it is thought, likely to find their way.

We think of the chapel as attached to the college, but perhaps it would be historically, or, at least, ideally truer to think of the college as attached to the chapel. It may be that learning, having been generated by one motive, continues in order to fulfil other objects; but it may be doubted whether, if the original root were to dry, the branches would still be green and the fruit perennial. The religious interest is so deeply rooted in mankind that it is likely to survive when branches once grafted on to its tree are dead. If, following Christ's advice, we endeavour to estimate the approximation to the truth in various religious systems by the amount that they have done for knowledge, no one would think of

mentioning any beside our own. In the studies on which many of us are engaged Christianity, and especially Protestant Christianity, is responsible for the greater part of their progress and development. That there is a science of language, that we can give an intelligent history of the sounds whereby we express our thoughts, that we can interpret the records of the past, is the outcome of the precept, "Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every living creature." That verse is the source of the scholarship of Europe. The love of Christ and the desire to spread His Gospel have braced thousands whom the love of science by itself would never have armed with the courage and patience that have resulted in acquisitions for knowledge as well as triumphs for the Cross. And if we inquire into the origin of those endowments that provide leisure and opportunity for the pursuit of knowledge of the most varied kinds, the cases in which the initial or primary motive for their foundation was not religious will assuredly be a minority. In the case of the little that has been done for the growth of knowledge by other religious systems, the fact that it is so small is what makes its connection with religion unmistakable; the distance from branch to root is so short that every eye can span it. But with ours the growth is so vast that special investigation is required to locate the root. The mass of knowledge is so stupendous that few can perceive how the fear of the Lord was the beginning of it.

That fear of the Lord will also be the satiation with wisdom, we need not doubt. Christ bade men search the Scriptures because they testified of Him, and for centuries men were afraid to search the Scriptures for fear they should be found not to testify; but when they began to search the testimony was not found wanting, and the historical fact that the searching of the Scriptures and obedience to Christ's commands are what generated the sciences gives us faith and confidence that when Christ calls Himself the Truth and the Light we cannot interpret those words too liberally. Those, therefore, who doubt and question are the allies of those who believe, for he who asks the questions is the pioneer for him who finds the answers. And if in God's Word, as in His work, not all is clear and easy, we may believe that in both there is the same benign purpose of enabling man to obtain for himself glory out of the works of God.

Since, therefore, the light is what we seek, the room in which we worship, just as it was the beginning of the building, so remains an essential part of it, since it is here that we address and listen to Him whose works we are here to learn to search. And in the union of belief and knowledge

that an English University should show, we seem to realize how in the Church of Christ God will destroy the face of the covering cast over all people, and the veil that is spread over all nations.

D. S. MARGOLIOUTH.

ART. IV.—PHILLIPS BROOKS: THE MAN AND THE PREACHER.

ALTHOUGH seven years have elapsed between the death of Bishop Phillips Brooks and the publication of his "Life and Letters,"¹ yet the delay was unavoidable and the result worth waiting for. Arthur Brooks, his brother (known to many in England through a striking volume of sermons on the Incarnation), had originally undertaken to write the Life, but his work was cut short by death, and Professor Allen necessarily required time to digest and arrange the material placed in his hands. Professor Allen is qualified, both by sympathy and long personal friendship with the Bishop, and by his previous literary work, to give to the world this worthy memoir of one of its greatest men. The author of "The Continuity of Christian Thought" (which has made Church history intelligible for the first time to many a student), of the "Life of Jonathan Edwards," and of "Christian Institutions" in the International Theological Library, had already made his mark in the fields of religious biography and of ecclesiastical history, and this, his longest book, will add to his fame. It is long, very long—some 1,500 pages; but it is not too long, and could very easily have been made much longer. It is beautifully got up, and enriched with many portraits of Phillips Brooks and of some of his friends, and illustrations of the churches with which he was associated. One portrait we miss, even among the many that are given, which belongs to a late period of his life, and was prefixed to a volume published by Cupples, of Boston, called "The Bishop and the Child." It ought to be added to the Life.

Professor Allen's work was doubtless written in view of two classes of persons, and its appeal is to them both, and we doubt not that this determined the form as well as the length

¹ "Life and Letters of Phillips Brooks," by Alexander V. G. Allen, Professor in the Episcopal Theological School in Cambridge, Mass. With portraits and illustrations. 2 vols. London: Macmillan and Co.