

“on this planet”—whether it was by instantaneous fiat or by slow, patient development—matters little. If the progress of physical science shows that “creation” in its precise sense is a misnomer, this involves no contradiction between science and religion. Rather, the forethought implied by evolution is more consonant with the attributes of Omniscience. The wisdom which can evolve by the interaction of many conflicting laws a result unattainable by the wisdom of man is super-human. The revelation from outside himself which man needs, and which comes to him in proportion to his need, is not of what he can discover for himself by his investigations, but a revelation of God in His power, holiness, love, and of man in his actual limitations, his potential illimitability. And this revelation is found, not in the surmises of natural religion, but in the Person of Christ.

I. GREGORY SMITH.



ART. V.—SCIENCE AND REVELATION.

THE fine thought of Shakespeare, that “reverence is the angel of the world,” whilst it harmonizes with those minds which instinctively look to and rest upon authority in all things, contains a caution and a reminder to others which our present leaders of thought would surely do well to keep before them. Though a great deal of modern criticism of Christian religion is not irreverent, there is an increasing tendency, and a growing temptation, to pass out of the liberty of free inquiry into the license of a destructiveness of criticism and restlessness of speculation which may be truly said to know no bounds. Seekers after truth, from whatever quarter they come, may well stand bewildered at the incessant ferment of thought as one sacred subject after another is cast into the crucible; and that word, “carried about with every wind of doctrine,” may fitly be held up to them in warning and encouragement.

This tendency to excess may be seen in two distinct and almost opposite directions, both perennial, no doubt, but none the less compelling attention in our own time, and requiring at least the same constant watchfulness as in any previous generation, because both are congenial to human nature.

One part of the religious world, denying many of its own fundamental articles of faith, has revived Roman doctrines, which it seeks to defend and establish by the union of Scripture with tradition. Another part, by the admixture of

rationalism with Scripture, is attempting reinterpretations of the same revelation, which shall make it harmonize with the partial and tentative theories of science. And, lastly, scientific men themselves are now striving to pierce the realm of the spiritual, and to feel after what they confess they cannot attain to or account for by the material scheme of things.

There is a call for a new Protestantism, which, abandoning some obsolete outworks, and using its weapons with not less courage, but perhaps less intolerance, than of old, shall contend against the errors peculiar to the second of these tendencies, as hitherto it has done against the first of them. Its stand must be taken, as in time past, upon that impregnable rock of Holy Scripture by which it stands or falls; yet it may avail itself, not only of the wider knowledge of that Scripture which modern research and criticism have opened up, but likewise of new arguments which science itself is now rendering available. For the reconciliation between religion and science must be accomplished by some conflict in so far as it is ever to take place, and not by the surrender of fundamental doctrines.

It is at least as much with the desire to contribute, however humbly, towards this reconciliation, as with the purpose of protesting against certain views of religion in vogue among scientific men, that the writer has ventured, as a student of both science and religion, on this essay. In this connection the following words of the late Bishop Philpott may be quoted, though it is twenty years since he delivered the charge in which they occurred:

“I am disposed to look with hope on the prospect of our men of science becoming the best and truest supporters of the Church of the future. Such persons know better than others, if they have really succeeded in deserving the name of men of science, what are the limits which divide what is true from what is false. They have learnt, and see, and feel a little, of the mysteries of Nature and of life. They are qualified above other men for adoration of the Infinite and the Eternal; and, if the Holy Spirit of God once touch their hearts, they are qualified above other men for devout submission to the teaching of the Word of God.”

The reconciliation of science with religion, it is submitted, is not to be sought in the reconstruction of religious doctrine, but in the recognition of the rational basis of revelation. Such a rational basis is constituted by a comparison of the possible modes of discovering and apprehending the facts and laws of the spiritual world.

These modes are:

1. By probability.

2. By revelation from God: (a) Written; (b) personal.
3. By "spiritualistic" intimations through a "medium."

The first, which serves more largely in physical science itself than is generally realized, includes those arguments and inferences from the analogy of Nature on which Butler dwells, and with respect to which he justly reminds us that "probability is the very guide of life." Of the many arguments of this kind to which scientific men should give weight, surely one of the most cogent is that the beauty and order of material systems, great and small, which they are accustomed to contemplate, testify to the existence of a Divine government, which in the spiritual world may be expected to appoint ways and means, duly constituted, orderly, central and executive; and that amongst these agencies a definite revelation of the Divine will is highly probable. Two other reasons for this probability will appeal with force to scientific men of the day. One is that, by its own confession, natural science is blind to things outside the material universe. Another is because that department of modern science, known as psychical research, which claims to have succeeded in obtaining intimations of the spiritual world, is so perilous for general purposes, that the presumption appears strong that Divine wisdom would prohibit such methods, and appoint a safer, more salutary, and more universally accessible mode of knowledge, even if it did not do so on moral grounds.

We may cite here the words of one of our foremost natural philosophers, whose mind, ranging along the confines of our knowledge of the material universe, and touching nothing therein which it has not simplified, is now straining its searching gaze into the realms of the immaterial and spiritual, and seeking to harmonize both in a "completer science." "Let science," he says, "be silent, and deny nothing in the universe, till it has at least made an honest effort to grasp the whole."¹ And again: "It may be that science sees only one half because it is blind to the other half." And again: "The region of religion and the region of a completer science are one."

This confession of the incompetency of the unaided human understanding to grasp the truths of the spiritual world at once demonstrates the probability of a revelation, and is at the same time endorsed by that revelation. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things

¹ Sir O. Lodge, "The Outstanding Controversy between Religion and Science," *Hibbert Journal*, vol. i.

which God hath prepared for them that love Him. But God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit."

Here, then, we pass to the second mode of the discovery of spiritual truths—namely, by the operation of God's Spirit revealing them, whether through the medium of a written or of a spoken word, or by an inspiration of thought independently of either. Psychology has rendered to modern thought the service of calling attention to the reality of spiritual experiences so efficiently, that to speak of revelation by the Spirit is now perfectly intelligible to scientific men. Moreover, the laws regulating it are similar to those which govern the natural world, and in order to meet science they may be expressed in its own terminology. Thus, in order to enter into communication with the spiritual world, the recipient of its intelligence must be "tuned" to perceive its radiations, like a wireless telegraph receiver. He must have an eye to see the light, or an ear sensitive to that order of harmonies which are to be heard; as Christ so often repeated: "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear." And the method of attaining this condition of receptiveness is equally definite. As daily demonstrated by religious experience, this adjustment of the spiritual sense consists in prayer, spoken, or written if need be, but essentially a spiritual action, a communing of spirit with spirit. So that it is true in terms of scientific theory, as well as in Christian practice, that whilst we speak to God in prayer, He speaks to us by His Word in one and the same way.

The power of prayer as a definite, practical thing is now being admitted to be highly probable, on psychological grounds, by, at all events, one of our leaders of scientific thought. Many will have felt grateful to Sir O. Lodge for the following passage, in which he infers the reasonableness of prayer:

"We can operate on each others' minds through our physical envelope, by speech and by writing, and in other ways, but we can do more. It appears that we can operate at a distance, by no apparent physical organ or medium: if by mechanism at all, then by mechanism at any rate unknown to us [*i.e.*, by telepathy].

"If we are open to influence from each other by non-corporeal methods, may we not be open to influence from beings in another region or of another order? And, if so, may we not be aided, inspired, guided, by a cloud of witnesses—not witnesses only, but helpers—agents like ourselves of the immanent God?

"How do we know that in the mental sphere these cannot answer prayer, as we in the physical? It is not a speculation only; it is a question for experience to decide. Are we

conscious of guidance? Do we feel that prayers are answered? That power to do, and to will, and to think is given us? Many there are who, with devout thankfulness, will say 'Yes.'

Also the following :

"We do not know the laws which govern the interaction of different orders of intelligence, nor do we know how much may depend on our own attitude and conduct. It may be that prayer is an instrument which can control or influence higher agencies, and by its neglect we may be losing the use of a mighty engine to help on our lives and those of others."¹

Such admissions are full of hope for the reconciliation of religion with a completer science, provided only that they be permitted to lead to their own logical conclusions. Given this faith in the power of prayer, all the rest follows—namely, that the mightiest of human philosophers should humbly employ that agency for the definite purpose of obtaining the guidance and illumination of God's Holy Spirit, by which to perceive the meaning of that Word of His, which will assuredly unfold to them more than they had dreamed; but which, without this preliminary adjustment of the seeker, will ever be to a large extent meaningless. This, indeed, is one of the manifold evidences of its Divine origin, that so truly does the key of prayer unlock this book that passages which may have been studied a hundred times over, with the same utter want of significance, flash out their depth of meaning the first time they are read with prayer. This interpretation of the Scriptures by studying them in the spirit, and not merely in the letter, in which they were written—the realization that "the words I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life"—contains the answer to much Biblical criticism.

Another principle which meets many of the objections raised by that criticism may here be noticed as forming part of the scientific basis of revelation—namely, that of evolution or development. If it be granted as highly probable that a revelation has been made in Scripture, it is not less reasonable that it should proceed by stages. Thus the Old Testament possesses a partial and provisional character suitable to the earlier education of mankind. God, not only "at sundry times," but also "in divers manners," spoke "to the fathers by the prophets." These, moreover, spoke darkly of things which they saw but darkly, "searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the

¹ Sir O. Lodge, "The Outstanding Controversy between Religion and Science," *Hibbert Journal*, vol. i., pp. 222, 227.

glory that should follow." Again, in Christ's ministry, whilst unfolding much of the truth, He told His disciples that He had many things to say to them which they could not yet bear, but which flashed upon them after the gift of the Spirit, and shine in their writings. And, going a step further, we are to hope for still further measures of insight into truth from the same source, "in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge."

Whether we consider the growth of a plant from its seed, of a child from the womb, or the development of mankind through lower types of life, we have the same principle of the working out of a plan from an origin which, at first inscrutable, gradually more clearly unfolds that which was to be made. Similarly, in revelation we have the germ of a Divine purpose foreshadowed in the promise to Abraham, gradually growing clearer throughout the prophecies, fulfilled in Christ's death and resurrection, further developed in the descent of His Spirit and in the spread of Christianity, and yet to be consummated by a second Advent, foretold, though shrouded in mystery, as the earlier stages once were.

It is here that the advocates of a more scientific reinterpretation of Scripture would claim, that the present age may be witnessing, and they themselves taking part in, this very development of the revelation. It is a claim which demands most careful examination. There is unquestionably a great expansion of the philosophical knowledge of religion, plenty of acute and scholarly intellectual criticism of Scripture, more than enough of ingenious speculation as to the reconciliation of its teaching with certain theories. Now, the condition to which all such assumed advances in religion must be subject, and the test which must be applied to them, is quite scientific—namely, that no part of the revelation may be so construed as to make it contradict other portions of which the meaning is manifest. This is a principle which in the interpretation of natural phenomena is fundamental. And where apparently irreconcilable inconsistencies present themselves, surely the dictum of Origen is just, that "he who believes Scripture to have proceeded from Him who is the Author of Nature may well expect to find the same sort of difficulties in it as are found in the constitution of Nature." Let us observe that this does not preclude the fullest expansion of religious truth out of both Scripture and spiritual experience, but limits and governs it in accordance with the laws of its own being.

Take, for example, that modern view of the idea of sin which tends to minimize its importance by explaining it as a relic of man's bestial predecessors, which the march of evolu-

tion is leaving behind. This theory should, one would think, be sufficiently refuted by the facts of history, which show that the progress of civilization apart from Christianity left man's moral nature very much where it was. It is a view contradicted flatly by the teaching of Scripture; and the rational explanation why this teaching is ignored is that it is precisely one of those spiritual truths which, without the spiritual perception alluded to above, are meaningless. Sin in its Scriptural sense is not recognised by philosophic reasoning, but by the conviction of a soul awakened to the vision of the holiness of God. Again, the discredit which is sometimes thrown upon the Atonement by philosophers obviously follows from this partly natural, partly willing, blindness to sin. Yet the same revelation which shows sin discloses its remedy, and discovers thereby a depth of redeeming love which again throws sin into yet more striking relief, as something indeed to be left behind, but never to be ignored. The criticism which assails such fundamental doctrines as these tends to leave nothing at all to revelation, and to make no distinction between the dimly shadowed and the terribly emphasized portions of Scripture. Against this a protest must be made. It is not by abolishing the letter of revelation, but rather by re-illuminating it with its own original inspiration, that a true reinterpretation of doctrine is to be gained.

The next to be noticed among the possible modes of discovering spiritual things is the unwritten revelation of that nature, which has been justly denoted as experimental religion. Those scientists who have been approaching religion through the data of "spiritualism" are now prepared to admit as rational the reality of the experiences of Christian believers, on the grounds of the experimental facts of psychology. Those who know the facts of the joy and peace of this communion with, and constant guidance from, their Lord, have indeed little need for such corroboration of their experience. It is for them rather to point out to the earnest student of psychology the possibilities to which his researches have given him a clue, and to bid him to abandon them for that beside which they fall into their justly subordinate and circumscribed bounds.

This is that personal guidance of the Spirit of Truth which, definitely promised in response to prayer, is within the reach of all seekers after truth; that Spirit who, having inspired the Scriptures, now unfolds and applies them to the daily life. It is His special function to reveal thereby Christ as the Saviour, as expressed in the words, "He shall testify of Me," and "He shall glorify Me." Nor is the guidance only through Scripture, but by manifold intimations of

Divine things, and by an inward voice, which in the daily experience of many Christians is a demonstrable experimental fact. In this revelation, the moral as well as the intellectual sense receives illumination; and the phrase "knowing by heart" becomes—in a truer sense than commonly belongs to it—a reality, transcending and supplementing mere mental knowledge.

Here, again, the scientific notion of attuning the receiver of the knowledge to the source from which the latter proceeds is enunciated by Christ: "If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God or whether I speak of Myself"; that is to say, the condition of receptiveness of spiritual truths is the attuning of the will. It is similarly the condition of Communion: "If a man love Me, he will keep My words; and My Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." At this point we pass from knowledge to the higher plane of love, which is a more perfect mode of knowledge, into which the latter is to merge indistinguishably.¹

The remaining mode of a revelation of the spiritual world consists in communication through the agency of a "medium" with human or superhuman spirits, as distinguished from the communion with the Spirit of God of which we have spoken. Psychologists assert that in this there is involved an act of will on the part of the unseen spirit, as well on the part of the seeker. Hence follows the inference that guidance may be sought from and given by these spirits in very much, if not in identically, the same way as by prayer to God. It is here that the danger of such intercourse lies from the religious point of view. For although guidance by spirits harmonizes with the beautiful and Scriptural idea of a ministry of angels guarding children, sustaining and succouring in trial and danger, yet to seek the guidance by going to these or any other ministers instead of to their Lord Himself is as certainly contrary to the teaching of Scripture. And though this may be recognised by some enlightened psychologists, the tendency of human nature runs in the opposite perilous direction. Witness, for example, the extent which devotions paid to saints has reached in the Church of Rome. It is certain that, under the dispensation of the Old Testament, communications with departed spirits were expressly forbidden by Divine command. From the fact that they are much less explicitly referred to in the New Testament, it might be argued that, with the spread of knowledge, researches into the psychology of spirits were to be permissible. But they

¹ 1 Cor. xiii. 8.

are clearly contrary to the spirit of the Christian dispensation, in so far as they minister to the tendencies of that spiritual idolatry, which in New Testament teaching takes the place of the material idolatry mainly dealt with in the Old Testament.

Leaving aside the abuse into which even scientific spiritualism is liable to fall, it can be argued with some force that to certain persons it furnishes a more convincing proof of the reality of spiritual things than they have discovered elsewhere. The fact, however, must be that such persons have never had sufficient faith in prayer to make use of it properly; and the question is whether they begin to do so after having admitted the nearness of the spiritual world. In some instances the reply to this question is in the affirmative. In one of which the writer has immediate knowledge, the seeker at a séance was irresistibly led through the medium to a prayer to God. May it not be that in these cases it is His Spirit Himself who answers? On the other hand, may it not be that on some other occasions it has been one of the evil spirits? How are they to be discerned? St. John gives a simple test, doubtless truly scientific if science were wiser: "Believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they be of God. Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: and every spirit which confesseth not Jesus is not of God."

Whatever service psychical research may be rendering to science by demonstrating the existence of a spiritual universe, its application to the discovery of truths about God and His dealings with man surely somewhat resembles the procedure of one who should set out for a country a few degrees of longitude eastward of him by sailing westwards round the globe. And granting the further application of the analogy, and that scientific and religious knowledge must meet somewhere, the writer submits that all which psychical research can do is to conduct us to the confines of a region where we must humbly and gratefully resign scientific guidance for the higher light of the appointed revelation which Divine wisdom has given in Scripture, remembering its ancient warning with regard to this subject: "When they shall say unto you, Seek unto them that have familiar spirits, . . . should not a people seek unto their God? On behalf of the living should they seek unto the dead? To the law and to the testimony! If they speak not according to this word, surely there is no morning for them."

JULIAN ELTON YOUNG.