

SCIENCE AND RELIGION

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THE Scientist seeks to know all kinds of things. The Christian has the highest assurance that searching will not reveal the deep things of God. The conflict is due to confusion of thought and lack of faith. The first is treason to science, and the second the worst possible offence to religion.

Science is the collection and classification of appearances. It uses the telescope to extend its sight thru the inconceivable immensities of the universe, and the microscope to search out the smaller details of creation. It uses millions of miles as a yardstick and thousandths of an inch as a foot rule. It weighs the lightnings. It devises cunning instruments for its searching and reveals wonders that stagger the imagination. In all this it seeks nothing that cannot be made apparent to the senses.

But the world is so full of things that mere observation proves inadequate to the task of searching out their relations. So the real scientist must be a man of constructive imagination. A hundred years ago the astronomers pictured a solar system of eight worlds, but seven were all that had ever appeared to the human eye. The exact position of the other world was calculated and the great telescopes directed to that spot. The new world was there. So science figures what ought to be, and then finds it.

Some of its theories seem incapable of absolute proof, but that is far from calling them false. Truth is truth, whether man ever finds it or not. An illustration of this is the famous theory of evolution. It is hardly conceivable that it can ever be demonstrated that man actually evolved from lower orders of creation, but most scientists would appear to think that he did. Shall we call that theory a wicked dream? It has resulted in a wonderful stimulation

of scientific research and many real discoveries of important laws of life. By its use such wizards as Luther Burbank have added immeasurably to the material wealth of mankind. The theory is prized because it works.

But here we come to one of the main conflicts between science and religion. If man has developed from monkeys to say nothing of the development of monkeys from snakes and of snakes from little drops of living jelly, what becomes of the fall of man? And if there was no fall, how could there be a redemption? The conflict is there, and it is serious.

But to get to that conflict a number of assumptions are necessary. One of those assumptions is that science has discovered an absolute fact of creation. Now modern science does not even claim to make such discoveries. Its business is to see all that can be seen and to reason out the relations between the different discoveries. It reaches evolution not as a fact, but as the best known system of reasoning to account for a multitude of facts. It roughly arranges all life, past and present, in one ascending scale. It points out the fact that Albermarle pippins may be developed from crab apples. Like Pharaoh's magicians in the presence of Aaron, it duplicates a few of God's miracles, but candor drives it back to Sir Isaac Newton's confession. He called himself a child gathering shells on the shore while the unexplored ocean of knowledge stretched before him. It endorses St. Paul's declaration that we know only in part. Its more reverent devotees exclaim with the founder of chemistry, "O God, I think Thy thoughts after Thee."

Science presents an amazing picture of common things analyzed into strange forms. First, it reduces all substances into molecules too small to be seen under the most powerful microscope. These molecules it divides into atoms very much smaller than the molecules. Then it takes the atoms and reduces them to protons and electrons so small that the atom looks like a big pond of nothing with a handful of very small minnows swimming around very fast. Finally it guesses that the whole thing is just a manifestation of electricity, which in turn is not matter at all but inconceivable power. So its whole study is to find out how an unknown power acts. What appears to you and me as a tree is described as something very different, but not a bit more true. The scientist reduces it to power just as you and I trace it back to God. No man can say that the

one explanation is truer than the other. Our advantage lies in finding our explanation more satisfying. The scientist has not found any means of learning why his power acts the way it does. The Christian explains it all as an exhibition of love that passes understanding. Then it would be well to give up understanding and seek the proofs of love.

Now science undertakes to examine all the evidence and give a true verdict. In nature it finds power and law in a universe so vast that no telescope can reach its borders, and so complicated that no microscope can search out its details. Religion discovered both in the dawn of history. Science finds love in living creatures, but fails to penetrate the mystery of the Eternal. Religion says that men have felt the love beyond their sight. It means some of these men and accounts for their greatness. Can science account for it otherwise? These lives and their greatness are facts of history.

Certain fishermen in the Roman province of Galilee began telling a story two thousand years ago of wonderful experiences they had with a man brought up in the carpenter's trade. And a little later a great scholar declared that this man, who had died and been buried, had spoken to him from the sky. These men were beaten and imprisoned, and finally killed, but their message lived. And that message, thru the centuries, has been the most important element in the improvement of human society. Modern science would be impossible but for the interest in education aroused by a desire to place that message within reach of all men and women. Shall science study rocks and bugs and ignore the greatest facts of human experience?

Granted that science is not equipped to weigh the evidence of divine love, is it not equally bare of equipment to disprove that love? Take the radio as a wonderful achievement of modern science. The air is full of music because great artists perform at the broadcasting stations. Receiving sets all over the land catch the sound, and all kinds of people listen, some in delight, and some in disgust at lovely harmonies wasted on souls that feel no response. The Master said long ago, "Hearing they might not understand." And again he said, "Cast not your pearls before swine." God made human hearts to receive his message. No device of man can per-

form the fact. What would you think of a man who tried to catch music with a fish net?

The evidence of God as friend and redeemer are where they might be expected, and not elsewhere. The Bible is a record of human experience. If I would judge the truth of Genesis, I must follow God as Abraham followed Him. If that course results in my consciousness of God's friendship, I can believe that God dealt with Abraham as the Book says he did. But I can't disbelieve until I have tried that experiment. And I don't dare rest my faith on miracles. It is written, "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." It is tempting God to ask Him to prove His word by a miracle. When Jesus was asked for a sign, he called the people wicked and faithless and said no sign should be given but his own death and resurrection. He said also, "If they believe not Moses and the prophets, they would not believe though one rose from the dead." With the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and your searching of signs and wonders will not find out God—is the teaching of Christianity—and it is desirable to keep clear the claim of religion as well as that of science.

Science reasons backward from what it sees, tastes, hears, smells and handles; it doesn't hope to come within a million years of the "First Cause." The beginning is entirely outside the range of its study. Religion is different. The first sentence in the Bible is about the very thing which science cannot approach—the Beginning. Science puts its truth in sight. The Bible lays the foundation in faith. It teaches not merely the unseen but the unseeable. There is not necessary conflict, but a clearly marked difference of procedure. Science is an endless, indomitable search. The Bible is a beacon pointing out the unsearchable.

Science says, I know nothing of God. It says I see immeasurable distances and inconceivable power controlled by perfect law. Behind these things is the great unknown. My business is with things as they are. I try to use these to the best advantage and waste no time asking why they are thus and not otherwise. Two things I hate. One is lying, for my whole method is a search for truth. The other is selfishness, for my whole spirit is impersonal; what I know I tell the world. Religion says, the spirit of man can know the unsearchable. It says that the story of Jesus made a new way of life so great that civilization took a new direction and gained a new power—and these things are merely secular history.

Now this is a distinct force in the world. Its power is very great. Its source is entirely outside the sphere of modern science. That source of power is beyond the range of scientific investigation. The most that science can do is to investigate the manifestations of this force. The invisible may seem unreal, but it is not always so. Many of our greatest physicians testify to the value of religion as a healing power. Dr. Howard Kelly, one of the most distinguished of them all, has recently organized an association of Christian physicians. That ruthless man of blood and iron, Otto Von Bismarck, recognized unseen forces controlling the destinies of nations. He called them the imponderable—which means the unweighable or incalculable. And modern statesmen still consider the great moral currents which will not yield to their manipulation. The unknown—the unknowable if you please—is not always the unreal. It is in part the basis of all reality. There are many things subject to man's knowledge and control, but the ways of God are still past finding out.

And right here do science and religion join hands. Religion helps science; for it says, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." Now the man that loves like that is willing to share whatever he may learn. And sharing knowledge is just as important as getting it. The little that one man sees in one short life wouldn't make very much science. For science must see the veriest of trifles thousands of times, and in many relations, before it can be sure that it really saw what it thought it saw and not something entirely different. And even then it must test this thing which it really saw by all the knowledge that it has. For science believes that all truth is one, and simply cannot bear the thought of any contradictions. To its way of thinking, every fact in the universe must agree with every other fact. While science has very little to say about love, it absolutely refuses to admit any man's right to know any scientific fact and keep that knowledge to himself.

And science helps religion, for it exalts the truth. It may not care whether the truth is good or bad, but it does insist on its being truth. The real scientist is both honest and thorough as far as human strength and resolution permit. He knows that only truth can endure, that the world will patiently weigh his work until it has sifted out and rejected every error. Slipshod or dishonest work is sure to be revealed some day, and likely to bring him dis-

credit very quickly. A great host of the world's brightest minds is eagerly watching everything he does, and criticising without mercy. For the work of science every day is a day of judgment, here and now. Religion seeks for favor, but science is interested only in the truth.

There are unworthy scientists just as there are unworthy Christians. Some scientists are befuddled. Are there not Christians likewise afflicted? Some scientists are mercenary. Did you ever hear of a selfish Christian? And if the scientific world embraces charlatans and fakirs, is the church entirely free from hypocrites? But when you compare the profound aims of science with the ideals of Christianity, you certainly find points of agreement. As a matter of history, the church has its martyrs and science has them too. As a matter of fact both religion and science are leading men away from degrading superstitions and dangerous vices. And as a matter of fact both science and religion have their thousands of sincere and zealous seekers after truth. Are the builders of a better world or the scrambling seekers after place and power and favor the more entitled to consideration?

Now if we have two groups of people seeking the same thing they ought to help each other instead of quarreling. The leader of all true Christians tells them to know the truth. Scientists are seeking the truth too. Christianity undoubtedly helps science when it teaches people to be unselfish. And we find science making much faster progress in Christian lands than in any other. Science is teaching one of the most important of Christian doctrines when it seeks to know the truth for the truth's sake alone. The great founder of Christianity told us the truth would make us free. Shall we repeat the error? When Jesus restored an infirm woman on the Sabbath, he asked what man would not loose an ox or a sheep on that day; and if it were worse to loose the woman that Satan had bound for many years. Isn't science still loosing people—not only from disease but from drudgery and loneliness as well?

But the truths of science are often so disturbing. So are the truths of religion. The ancient prophets were so disturbing that they were beaten, imprisoned and even killed. Jesus and the apostles preached such unwelcome truth that they were taken to the cross and to the headman's block. No man putteth new wine in old bottles. The world will have scientific truth whether the

churches want it or not. And because all truth is God's truth, the churches will take and use the contributions of science, even if they have to discard some of the most important traditions of men. Galileo was imprisoned by the Church for declaring that the world moves. In his day people understood the Bible to state the contrary. We no longer read the book that way. Along the path of history are the wrecks of many theories both scientific and religious.

The old order changeth, giving place to the new, lest one good custom should corrupt the world. We need new faith for the new day, just as we need new knowledge. Scientific theories have their day and cease to be. Other theories result in finding God's truth, which is eternal. Religion can afford to adopt the policy of Gamaliel—if God is not with those who introduce alarming new ideas they will fall of their own weight; if He is let us be careful not to be found fighting against God. Who knows but that God is revealing his glory to modern science as truly as he spoke to the prophets of old? We of today may be as blind as those who cried out, "Crucify Him."

Religion cares for the fatherless and widows. Science doesn't oppose that kind of thing. Neither does it say, "Be ye warmed and filled," and give nothing needful for the body. On the contrary it works the magic of making two blades of grass grow where one grew before. It digs sewers, builds highways, multiplies the comforts of existence. Religion cares for people's bodies and welcomes the help of science in so doing. True religion is not Jonah sitting at the well at Ninevah, but works with science for the good of even that cruel heathen city.

There is no real conflict between science and religion. They help each other, but it is also true that they deal with widely different aspects of events. Science seeks and obtains material blessings. Religion seeks the fruits of the spirit—love, joy, peace longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance. Science is at the bottom of modern prosperity: it is seeking out the mysteries of nature, and making it easier for man to subdue the earth. Religion in its teaching love, faith and the other spiritual fruits has no rival. We depend on science for our knowledge of rocks and bugs and greater tools with which to labor. We depend on religion for our knowledge of the greatest facts of human experience.

As a nation and as a world, we are rich and troubled, wise and

perplexed building a mansion of prosperity upon the shifting sands of human knowledge and human resolution. Ought we not to seek a rock that can resist the storms? Does not the fine linen of Dives often cover an aching heart? Happiness needs a foundation that can never fail. Prudence counsels that we look for something that can never change. For this the Christian offers his Bible. Why not let science help in the interpretation of that Book? Parts of the Bible may have been misunderstood but its genuineness as a record of human experiences has never been successfully impeached. And the experience recorded there is experience with God.