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Science and Faith.

BY THE REV. G. FERRIES, M.A., D.D., CLUNY, ABERDEENSHIRE.

II.

Difficulties occasioned for Religious Faith by Science.

THE positive certainty of the achievements of science affords every ground for satisfaction and implicit trust to the thinking mind. The command which is gained over nature is at once a source of keen mental gratification and of many tangible benefits; life is aided and embellished, and that too in the immediate present, in a great variety of ways. Furthermore, large hopes are held out for the future. An ideal is formed and the imagination is set aglow. A faith and hope are generated by enthusiasts and by certain writers of fiction, which, it is claimed, serve all the legitimate purposes of religion, and possess the unique advantage of being built on ground that is demonstrably trustworthy. Those who cherish this ideal or faith anticipate a time when the secrets of nature will be disclosed to such an extent that her resources, which are already understood to be practically limitless, will be made to yield an abundance of good to all the inhabitants of the earth, all being educated sufficiently to employ the gifts of nature with intelligence and profit. Chemistry and electricity, *e.g.*, are peculiarly promising. The chief hope, or the dream, of many hearts is bound up with such sciences as these. The material world appears to offer the prize of happiness which is appreciable in form or quality, which is here and now forthcoming, and which is or promises to be sufficient in amount.

Next, whereas science is cosmopolitan, the creeds are only for sections of the people: which religious creed is true, and why? The habit of judging according to evidence makes it hard to

assent to any body of dogma. In this way the faith inherited from tradition is involved in difficulty. History now traces the formation of dogma, and shows that it is a product of human thought, imperfect therefore as everything human is. If again the inspired word of Scripture is appealed to, the ground for this appeal has to be examined; a blind acceptance of scriptural declarations must be valueless; we require to have truth which approves itself as such. And assuredly there can be no confidence whatever, in these days of science, that the person who is affected by doubt as to the whole subject of religion will be constrained by an intellectual study of Scripture, and on grounds of indisputable evidence, to become a man of faith. A human element, relativity to their age and circumstances, and a process of growth are discovered by him in the Books, and this raises many questions as to their absolute trustworthiness, before the spiritual things are spiritually discerned. But not to speak of other points, one feature above all staggers him—the amazing character of many parts of the writings, those, namely, which report miracles. For while science knows of a multitude of unsolved problems in its own sphere, it refuses to treat any of them as in principle insoluble; there is often great difficulty therefore in admitting that in a bygone age there were occurrences on the earth of which a natural explanation is impossible.

There remains the belief in God as a present living Power. It has already been indicated how the need for God may be lessened till the feeling

is entirely lost. And when the crucial question is raised, 'Is there conclusive evidence for the existence of God?' a one-sided habit of resting in exact scientific proof tends to raise doubts, to lead to a suspension of judgment, which may become life-long, or pass into Agnosticism or unbelief. An explanation of the origin of the world is frequently sought in some form of development of the matter and forces actually discovered in the universe. Evolution is taken to be the cause of all that is, and not to be merely the mode of the Creator's working. Darwin, the coryphæus of nineteenth century science, tells us that owing to his specialism in Biology he found to his regret that in his later years there was an atrophy or decay of some of the principal powers he once possessed, the faculties for literature and music. We can only expect, therefore, that religion, which depends so much on the cultivation of the feelings and the guidance of the will, would be similarly affected, if a person has been exclusively and passionately engrossed for a great length of time with any department of study—all the more as there is apt to be a pride of science which is alien to the spirit of religion.

But notwithstanding the difficulties that often bar the way to faith, religion may present itself as reasonable, even to the mind that is steeped in science. In this connexion the history of thought is again instructive; for if one leading class of intellectual pursuits has tended, in the manner already indicated, to disturb the faith of many, another main branch of modern research, in which the widest survey of man's powers and interests is taken, has been found to lead up to Christian belief and to yield results which amalgamate with it; the whole of knowledge has been combined in an articulate unity in which the material element is understood in the light of the spiritual. Accordingly, we return to one of the chief threads of the history, which was taken up for a moment.—The mental and spiritual powers of man have been the subject of much investigation, especially in the last generations. *Man* is one of the objects in nature, and distinguished as he is by the possession of mind he presents problems of a special type, which science, if true to itself, cannot disregard. What is the origin and what are the limits of his knowledge? This question, as raised by Kant, was discussed in the early part of the nineteenth century, and a long course of scientific or philo-

sophical inquiry thereupon followed. *Thought* was proved to be constitutive of experience; we call into requisition certain ideas in the very act of knowing the world of sense. Thought is not produced by external objects, nor is it explicable in terms of sense; it is elemental and formative. And just as ideas contribute their part to form man's experience, the intelligible world itself presupposes universal thought as constitutive of it. So, then, the ultimate truth we require is by no means to be discovered in the external sphere of nature, which is often supposed to be exclusively of interest to science. There is a mental component of actual existences which imperatively demands attention, and which must be investigated by methods that are applicable to mind. Then, too, as science brings the separate fact of observation under a law, the laws again, and the sciences themselves, have to be related to still higher knowledge. Viewed in their isolation they are but fragments belonging to one self-consistent, organic body of truth. A fragment is properly understood only in relation to the organism of which it forms a part. The very quest for fact and reality, for truth unqualified and entire, impelled very many during the century just finished to rise from the single sciences to the higher truth which shows their meaning—to universal truth which is gathered up in the mind of God. It was declared that the finite, as appearing in nature or science, and in human thought itself, implies the infinite as its ground and necessary complement. While the natural sciences were left free to follow their proper methods of research, the course of inquiry just referred to, aided by the growth of Romanticism, succeeded in giving a powerful impetus to the cause of Christian faith, and the effect continues till now.

The idealistic philosophy did not profess to be a means of producing religion; it avowedly assumed the existence of religion in the form of faith (so, *e.g.*, Hegel, *Phil. of Religion*, i. p. 6, ed. Marheineke; Biedermann, *Dogmatik*, 2nd ed., i. p. 174 ff.; Principal Caird's *Introd. to Phil. of Religion*, new ed., lects. ii. and vi., esp. p. 41, and his *Gifford Lectures* on 'The Fundamental Ideas of Christianity,' lect. ii.). Its task was to bring out the rational meaning of the sense-forms in which that popular faith was clothed, to make explicit the reason that underlay the whole of Christian doctrine. The intellect thus obtained

satisfaction in the matter of religion, similar to that which is afforded by any of the sciences when it clarifies and articulates the fragmentary, half-developed knowledge that passes current in daily life and practice. By means of philosophical theology the Christian religion was retained, through the greater part of the century that has just closed, by many minds that were imbued with the scientific spirit of their time. Philosophy took the existing faith and justified it to thought.

But latterly, for about a generation, the rapid advance of physical science, its thoroughly approved methods and its marvellous results, and the criticism applied to faith and to Scripture, have told to such an extent on the convictions of people, that a deep and widespread craving has arisen for trustworthy methods and for positive realities in the religious sphere itself—for fact rather than speculation, or at least prior to speculation. It can no longer be assumed, in a time of general education and activity of mind, that religion exists in the form of faith, and only needs to be elaborated by the instrument of philosophy. Those who have experienced the intellectual discipline afforded by the positive natural science of the day are trained to seek certainty, indubitable reality, in matters of faith as elsewhere; and often from the very motive of honesty they suspend their judgment, hesitate, or hang loose to all religion, till that craving is satisfied. Philosophical theology presupposes religion, and even a body of definite beliefs; but in the present age, according to a common experience, religious beliefs cannot be taken without question from tradition in the way that was formerly customary. They are gradually appropriated as they approve themselves to the critical, positive, practical spirit that now prevails.

To the new demand for concrete reality in the things of faith, the teaching of Ritschl and his followers has responded, a species of teaching which appears to be well adapted to an age in which there is a general interest in science and a lack of interest in metaphysical speculation. Only some of the leading aims of this newer movement can be here indicated, namely, such as are held in common by its representatives, and promise to yield results of value. The existence of the Christian Revelation as a historical fact, unique and unequalled in significance, is appealed to. Through the Church the life of religion is brought

near to the people of the present time, and the pure type of morality which the faith embodies is participated in more or less by all. Here, then, is a great positive reality and a ground of appeal to the modern mind. But, as in other practical matters, the appeal is not to the intellect alone. In the religious process, reason is neither silenced nor yet independently exercised; in the positive act of faith it is the *man* that is drawn to God.—As a matter of fact, it is the *Christian* religion, through its prevailing spirit and effects, that has acted on us, and which is acquired by each of the faithful in turn. It follows that *Natural Theology*, which does not take account of the distinctive gift of Christianity to the world, cannot exist in its pure form among us. This does not mean that nature has no religious message to convey to us, but that, consciously or unconsciously, we must now read nature in the light of that Christianity which permeates our thought and has to a great extent made us what we are.—The peculiar life of the spirit which is exhibited by Christianity is to be discerned in its fulness in the record of *Scripture*. The N.T. Books set before us this reality of faith as it existed in its perfect form, or, so to say, in its classical period. Hence the N.T., though it presents differences of teaching on the part of its writers, and therefore calls for criticism, nevertheless possesses authority which cannot be superseded.—But the record is an after-effect; spiritual life is primarily personal. The *Person of Christ* gives meaning to the books as to all the later history of the Church. On Him, on the positive Revelation He embodies, the seeker for God must found his faith as on a rock. He is the unifying centre for all Christian life and thought. In this life of faith spiritual and moral ends are contemplated as the most important, and thus one is prepared to believe in the possibility of Miracles. The evidence in each instance can be weighed by the spiritual man without that extreme aversion to the subject of the miraculous which the habit of contemplating scientific law alone is apt to engender.—Furthermore, knowledge of the most valuable kind is to be derived from the Christian Revelation. The doctrines of the faith are such that they can be proved in the practice of life, put to the test of *experience*. Once more, therefore, the quest for reality is responded to by adducing this principle of verification. It is, indeed, no new principle, since Luther had said (*Greater Catechism*) that

God is One from whom we expect all good, and Melancthon held that to know Christ is to know His benefits.

But if the new school, in virtue of its method, may justly be said to be in touch with positive science, and so to have at the present time 'a *Charisma* for Apologetics,' the corrective of the Idealistic philosophy that preceded it is required, to prevent the error of Agnosticism from creeping in at some stage, and to preserve intact the rights of reason in interpreting the facts of religion. To set up any external, impassable limit to the power of reason, even in its dealings with divine things, whether the limit is sought in Scripture, in the Person of Christ, in religious experience, or elsewhere, is an arbitrary and self-contradictory attempt, as philosophy has abundantly shown. In setting up any limit, thought *ipso facto* sees beyond it; the progress of thought cannot be arrested till it reaches the Infinite. But mutual-recrimination on the part of the two schools of theology is uncalled for; each brings a valuable gift to swell the general store of science. On the one hand, the 'positive beliefs' supply the matter which is admittedly necessary and is not otherwise forthcoming in an age of science, the matter without which philosophy would be a mere manipulation of empty categories. If one cries down such beliefs as crude, there might be the rejoinder that physical science is likewise crude from the point of view of philosophy, but it supplies, nevertheless, a flood of knowledge and subdues the world. The whole field of religion and theology is freshened by the introduction of the modern or positive spirit, and by drawing anew from the perennial source in the Revelation in Christ; and, as a consequence, rich and abundant results have been achieved, a new interest is created, and abroad a new enthusiasm has been awakened, and there is much promise for the future.

On the other hand, while there are welcome effects, alike in regard to faith and practice, many new questions have been raised, and it is the part of reason or philosophy to answer them. The newer positivism, taken by itself, is but a torso—a department of knowledge existing along with other departments in one and the same mind. Reason in its higher sweep has the task of unifying this knowledge, of investigating the origin of knowledge, and combining the branches of it, both the sacred and the secular, in one consistent

whole. Further, it has to do justice to the vast range of religious truth, to relate the non-Christian systems to Christianity, to articulate the component parts of Christian doctrine, and to try to see that doctrine in its completeness, not merely in the fragmentary form which may suffice for the individual. Philosophy has to insist that in no direction shall the path of inquiry be foreclosed. Faith is entitled to claim its full heritage; and this can only be possessed when speculative thought, elaborating the material furnished by reason and revelation, seeks to realize, even in their infinity, the wisdom and goodness which are to be found in God.

(a) If a person has occupied himself with different sciences, he finds as a matter of course that the results, from the very fact that they have been ascertained, harmonize with each other: there is no urgent necessity to show the consistency of the whole. So, too, in the acquisition of a positive and practical faith, there is a reconciliation with previously existing knowledge at every step, as each article of faith is accepted. Yet it is needful in the latter case that the reconciliation, which may have been but instinctive, a reconciliation to feeling, should be made explicit to the reason, and that the whole fabric of knowledge, instead of resting on assumptions only, or on 'common sense,' which may mean only prejudice, should be based on an approved Theory of Knowledge. (b) As the Ethnic religions prepared for Christianity and led up to it, Christianity itself cannot be properly understood without looking behind it to that development. There has been an interesting discussion in the *Zeitschrift für Theol. u. Kirche*, 1898, pp. 1-96, between Troeltsch and Kaftan on the relation between Christianity and the other faiths. Troeltsch, who adopted the principle of Hegel's classical treatment of the process which culminated in the Absolute Religion, insists on the inherent connexion between Christianity and the antecedent religions, and on the necessity of basing our assent to Christianity on an exposition of the origins; while Kaftan points to the need of having a religious standard—which for us can only be Christianity—as one proceeds to interpret the pre-Christian history itself. According to Kaftan, one's understanding of the development depends on the faith which is brought to the investigation; our acknowledgment of elements of truth in

heathenism and our condemnation of its errors imply that we have concluded that there is truth in religion, and settled what the guiding truth is. Obviously, to the man of no faith the history of religion is the history of illusion. The result of the discussion therefore appears to be that the end—Christianity—apprehended by a sympathetic faith, gives a clue to the preceding process, while the subsequent elucidation of the stages of that process, by the means afforded by reason and history, adds meaning to Christianity, and makes its position as the perfect religion indubitable. Here as elsewhere faith is aided and completed by purely intellectual inquiry. (c) That Christian thought cannot be confined by any external limit,

such as the specific N.T. declarations regarding Christ, is admitted by Kaftan (*Dogmatik*, § 11), who, while accepting the Christian Revelation as final and normative for faith, yet acknowledges that the doctrines of Christianity lead up to 'problems' for the reason. They are problems which are held to be capable of solution, and accordingly there seems to be, with a difference of phrase, a valuable recognition of one main contention of philosophical theology: reason has a distinctive work of its own to do in settling questions that are raised by faith. And here the scope and power of reason are unlimited; there is admittedly no end to the tasks that are set for it.

Pauline Anthropology and Christian Doctrine.

BY THE REV. A. S. LAIDLAW, M.A., B.D., HUNTLY.

II.

The Grounding of Sin.

'Sin is not imputed when there is no law.'—Rom. v. 13.

IN a former paper I sought to show that the connexion in the mind of St. Paul between the Christian and the Adamic factors of his doctrine is by no means so intimate as is commonly supposed. The next question goes deeper. Leaving the point as to the importance which the apostle may have attached to the statements which he derived from the Mosaic writings in their bearing on his doctrine of Christ, we have now to inquire into the absolute validity of the dependence of the latter upon the former.

It is a prevalent idea in Scripture that sin is grounded by the prior existence of positive precepts, against which it is constituted by transgression. An analogous instance occurs in the Priestly narrative of the Flood, which does not recognize the distinction between clean and unclean animals, because the Priestly view of Israelite history regarded ceremonial distinctions as having proceeded from the Sinaitic legislation. For the same reason the reference to Noah's altar and sacrifice is omitted. Profane history abundantly illustrates this artificial mode of thought. The science of

history has been created by the modern idea of development. History written before it became influential was little better than annals. It lacked perspective. This is true especially of the history of institutions. *Nascitur non fit* is as true of institutions as of poets. But it was precisely this fact of growth or development that was missed. Institutions did not grow, they were made. Society came into existence when a mob of human units, tired of their individualism, came together and said, 'Go to, let us draw up a constitution,' and forthwith appointed a committee with powers.

The great legislator who is supposed to do this kind of thing out of hand is a familiar figure in history. It was Hermodorus of Ephesus who, so late as 451 B.C., is credited with the wisdom and experience that drew up the Twelve Tables of the Romans. Or, according to another story, these are a transfusion of the laws of Solon, which a deputation went from Rome to Athens to procure. It is a token of the acuteness of Gibbon that he criticises such tales like a modern evolutionist. He remarks: 'In the comparison of the Tables of