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SCIENCE AND RELIGION.

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BY

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IN this pamphlet I propose to discuss briefly—(1.) The meaning of the words Science and Religion; (2.) That which each has done for humanity; (3.) The struggle that has been, that is, and that is to be, between Science and Religion; (4.) The duty of us now living in respect to this struggle.

(1) *The meaning of the words Science and Religion.*—Derivation is often an aid in the understanding of terms. Science is derived from *scio*, I know. Religion is derived from *religo*, I bind fast. By derivation therefore the former has to do with knowledge. By derivation therefore the latter has to do with a binding fast. This binding fast, we are generally told, is of man to the god from whom he has fallen away. This suggestion as to the meaning of the word Religion, yielded by its derivation, is not very satisfactory to those who attach no meaning to the combination of letters G. O. D., and who therefore feel difficulty in comprehending the process of the binding of man to an incomprehensible nothing, from which it is impossible to conceive he has fallen away. Let us turn to definitions of the two words. Science, says Mr. Herbert Spencer, is the sum of all knowledge. Religion, says Mr. Mallock, is belief in god, belief in personal immortality, belief in miracles. Science therefore will, throughout this essay, be regarded as the sum of human knowledge; the total result of man's investigation of himself and of the world whereof he is part. Religion throughout this essay will be regarded as implying belief in god, belief in personal immortality, belief in miracles. To render the dis-

cussion as simple as possible, I shall especially dwell upon that aspect of religion that has to do with belief in god.

Science is the sum of all knowledge. That knowledge of man is often spoken of as two-fold. Man knows something of the world outside his consciousness—of the rocks, and the flowers, and the animals, and of his own body. He knows something, moreover, of the growth and working of his own mind. These two phases of knowledge have long been regarded as dealing with things so fundamentally distinct that different names have been given to them. Thus the study of all that is outside man's consciousness has been named from *φύσις*, nature, physics; and the study of the growth and workings of his mind has been named from the Greek *μετα*, beyond, and *φύσις*, metaphysics. Using Latin synonyms, physics is the study of the natural, metaphysics of the supernatural. But of late a growing belief has been that this distinction is artificial. More and more strongly is it forced upon us that this distinction between matter and mind is only one phase of the old distinction between organ and function, and that mind or consciousness is only a function of a particular kind of matter as contractility is a function of muscle. The ancient separation of the study of mind from the study of matter and its working is sufficiently indicated in the two epigrammatic questions and answers attributable to our old friend, *Punch*: "What is mind? No matter. What is matter? Never mind." Some venture, however, to think that the time is coming, and, indeed, now is, when a special name for the study of brain-function is misleading, and when it would be almost as just to give a separate high-sounding name to the study of the properties of muscle as to those of the nervous system.

(2) *That which each has done for humanity.*—Entering upon this vast question, let me hasten to say that I am not of those who believe that religion has done no good upon the earth. The belief in god seems to me to have actuated many noble lives; to have led to much self-sacrifice and much happiness to others. It would be folly to deny that the belief in god has made in many lives music, whose melodies have stirred lofty emotions and pleasant tenderness in other minds. But I shall contend, first, that the happiness to individuals that has sprung from Religion has been fully equalled by that springing from Science; and, second,

that the joy entering into the life of man as result of scientific work could never have been his as result of religious thought. It is plain that there is but room for one or two suggestions here. (a) Science has never, as far as I know, inflicted punishment or taken human life because of difference of opinion. Of this religion must be accused. And, in truth, Religion has taken human life without any difference of opinion, but simply as result of its own very nature. The belief in god has led to human sacrifice. No such damning accusation as this can be recorded against Science. Helen, wife of Menelaus, King of Sparta, has been stolen and carried beyond seas by Paris. The whole Greek nation rises in arms. Foremost in readiness, as in anger, is Agamemnon, king of men, brother of Menelaus. Sixty ships he lends to Arcadia. With one hundred he himself sets sail. And off Aulis the wind falls, and the sea is smooth as the face of a sleeping child. Wrath enters the heart of Agamemnon, longing to be first under the walls of Troy. He consults the priest. And the priest tells him that Diana, the goddess, is angry, and the sole remedy is the death of his daughter Iphigenia. By boat and by land the messengers travel homewards to Mycenæ, and to the maiden bear the message of her father. She is to come to him to be wedded to Achilles, foremost of the Greek warriors. And Iphigenia prepares her bridal robes, summons her maidens to her, and journeys by land and by boat to the becalmed ships off the coast of Aulis, with dreamy hope and delicious fear warm at her heart. And, reaching the vessel where her father is, beholds no Achilles, no bridal. Only a priest, holding the sacrificial knife. This sacrifice of a daughter was the result of belief in the gods. Well might Lucretius cry: "Tantum religio potuit suadere malorum" (to so much evil could religion lead). This example, the Christians will say, is taken from the history of those believing in a false god. I turn to their Bible, and I see an old man going two days' journey from home, knowing that the love of a mother would have been stronger than the command of god. I see him leaving behind the two young men that have accompanied him, knowing that their human nature, even in his dull, blind time, would have prevented the crime commanded by his deity. I see him, with his son, mount the hill called Moriah. The son says: "Behold the fire

and the wood: but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?" And the white-haired father lies deliberately. "And Abraham stretched out his hand and took the knife to slay his son," because of his belief in god, his belief in immortality, his belief in miracles. His criminal conduct is to be laid at the door of Religion.

(b) If any man or woman will survey one single day of his or her life, and will honestly inquire whether such happiness as brightens that day is due to belief in god or to man's patient investigation of nature, the answer can be scarcely doubtful. Almost all that makes life happier, that makes the wheels of the machinery of society move more easily, is due to Science, not to Religion. Let any man think of his day, from his uprising in the morn unto his withdrawal to rest at night, and estimate how much of such joy as falls to his lot during that day is referable to the belief in god, how much to man's investigation of the world around him. The work whereby he gains his daily bread, the materials upon which he labors, the machinery employed, the food he eats, the railway that carries him to and from his toil, the ship that bears the results of his labors to distant lands, the system by aid whereof a piece of paper with a few ink scratches thereon is on the morrow read by beloved eyes hundreds of miles away, the wondrous machinery whereby he here in England can wish to friend on another continent many happy returns of this very day, the books, the pictures, the music, all arts that hush in some measure the world's wailing—these are the outcome not of belief in god, but of man's patient investigation of nature.

In truth, it is but the old question once again. Whether has done the more for you, Earth or Heaven? While there has been much promised and vowed in the name of Heaven by those who claim the right to speak for her, there has been no more than promise. There is no evidence forthcoming of the attainment by any man or woman of the promised happiness of Heaven. But happiness falls to the lot of some few at least upon Earth, and into the lives of almost all some gleams of its sunshine steal. Science by its work unceasingly increases the sum of human joy, rendering hourly more possible happiness for all. Men have cried aloud on behalf of Heaven and proclaimed as on the

housetops the bliss that is there to be, whereof no single particle of evidence has ever been forthcoming. There is no need for men to proclaim the happiness earth can afford. Earth herself declares it every moment. Our part is it to touch tired hands and to guide tired feet to such standpoint that with the lifting of tired eyelids human eyes may behold this earth in its loveliness, and see as the god said in the old fable that it is *very good*.

(3) *The Struggle between Science and Religion*.—That struggle has been in the past, is now, and must be in the future for long time, if not for ever. It seems to the present writer that the two orders of thought are irreconcilable. Science has to do with that which can be investigated: it requires proof of all that it accepts as true. Religion has to do with that which cannot be investigated: it requires us to accept as true that which cannot be proved. The existence of god is as impossible to prove as to disprove. No scientific thinker would declare there is no god. The question is an undecidable one, and is therefore to him a matter of no moment whatever. He is perfectly indifferent as to whether a Deity exists or not. His business is to attend to the actual world that offers itself for study, to deal with matters which are tangible and have to do with human existence and human happiness.

The records of the past tell us with terrible iteration that the great opponents of new scientific facts have been the teachers of Religion. It was the religious people who objected to the earth going round the sun. It was the religious people who opposed the introduction of Greek into the course of studies at the English universities.

And if any think that the *odium theologicum* for a new scientific truth is dead in this nineteenth century, I remind them of the fashion in which the "Origin of Species" of Charles Darwin was greeted twenty-one years ago. The publication of that work was followed by a howl of execration from the religious folk. The book was blasphemous, its writer evil. From the pulpits, from the religious press, from Exeter Hall, went forth anathemas. This terrible book was directly opposed to the inspiration of the Bible. The two books were irreconcilable. The one or the other was true. The other or the one must fall. To many of us all this seems true enough. But mark the change of front

to-day. The great book is twenty-one years old to-day. It has reached its majority. Though the hiss of serpents sounded around it in the cradle they were strangled by the Hercules, Truth, and the "Origin of Species" is recognised as perhaps the most remarkable book of this century. The nations of the Continent, more quick to understand our great Englishman than his own countrymen have been, accept his teaching. The majority of educated men and women of this country are evolutionists. The wild cries of 1859 are no longer heard. Even the clergy of the educated type are largely silent. We do not hear men say to-day, as the writer heard a clergyman cry some years ago—"Darwin! Believe in Darwin? I don't. I never read a word of him." After much outcry against the new truth, the religious folk are now, after their usual manner, admitting that which they opposed most virulently; and, with their usual calmness, appropriating the new discovery as theirs, and regarding it as a truth, not only in thorough accordance with "revelation," but in fact taught therein. As they opposed the idea of Galileo and then appropriated it: as they opposed the enunciation of geological truths that demonstrated that "the poor world" was more than the orthodox six thousand years old, and then tried, with signal failure, to reconcile the discoveries of modern geology with the first chapter of Genesis, so now, after opposition of the most vituperative and least argumentative kind, they are accepting evolution and explaining to us how very clearly the doctrine is taught in the word of god. A religious thinker, addressing the present writer recently, claimed the doctrine of evolution as a godsend to religion. Reply was made: "Sir, you are right in the word you use, but your pronounciation is at fault. It is not a godsend to religious folk. It is a god's end."

In this struggle all must take part. There can be no neutrality on the part of any earnest man or woman. True is it that many may urge want of time and want of ability to investigate matters so complex, and may hesitate to decide for themselves the momentous question as to whether is the worthier mistress, Religion or Science. And yet such as these have to determine upon which side they will range themselves. To such as these I offer this suggestion. Feeling that you have not time, opportunity, power to study

in full these great subjects, observe the lives, the brainwork, the effect upon human happiness of the religious and of the scientific workers. Upon whichever of the two antagonistic sides you find the fairer and the more keenly intellectual lives, the more ardent search after what is, the greater increase of man's peace and joy resulting from the labors, to that side adhere for your very life and for the life of others. And because you who read these lines are but an ordinary toiling man or woman striving as best you can to arrive at the better, because you have not the opportunity to speak or write for the good cause, do not despair. You can at least live for it. In good truth, one well-lived life is worth numberless lectures and innumerable pamphlets. Showing that you can be honest, sober, pure, gentle, can care for things that are of good report, though you have no belief in god, you are doing as much to kill superstition as is effected by the most eloquent lecturer. You can be a soldier in the army, if you are not a general. And in the later years the soldiers will not be forgotten. The grateful remembrance of the name of Oliver Cromwell does not imply forgetfulness of his Ironsides. For myself, at least, whilst his name never comes to my lips without a feeling rising at my heart that is like that stirred by the voice of a father or mother, yet I can never forget the Ironsides. It was their individual bravery and faithfulness that made him possible. Grave, thoughtful, strong, true, nameless men! They are not forgotten to-day. And the rank and file of the army that is now fighting will be remembered reverentially, and with love, by those that live after them.

(4) *The position to-day.*—Of those who resolve to embrace as mistress Science or the result of man's investigation of nature, and to reject Religion or the belief in god, hard things will be said. More hard things will be said of them than to them, for our antagonists prefer maligning to arguing. But to them one or two often-recurring phrases are addressed that call for a word or two of comment. We are told that we are taking from earth all its loveliness and poetry when we fail to recognise god. To take from earth its loveliness and poetry is not possible. Even Religion has failed to do that. For many centuries her beauty has been ignored or accredited to imaginary beings. She has waited, patient in her beauty, whilst her own children have been

worshipping a false parent, and even now, as her sons and daughters turn from the false to the true, there is no murmur of complaint. The hush of hope falls upon the world as the true children, one by one, are recognising the true mother, and are laying their strength and love long estranged at her sublime feet.

We are told that these new ideas are opposed to the idea of the perfection of nature. I do not see this perfection of nature. The chief charm of this world is in the steady advance towards better conditions. Nowhere does there seem to be attainment of the best. Everywhere does there seem to be progress towards the better.

Finally, we are told that rejecting Religion or belief in god, and cleaving only to Science or the result of man's study of the universe, we are casting from us all the beauty of the old creed, and leaving for ourselves only an inheritance of hopelessness and ugliness. Those that speak thus can have no conception of our joy. Let me remind them of an old Greek story. Once upon a time, a certain sculptor, named Pygmalion, fashioned for himself a statue out of the clay of earth. No god was his helper. With his human hands, out of the soil and water of the earth, he made for himself a statue. It was so fair that he fell in love with it. But at first it was hard and cold. Then he took it in his arms and held it close against his heart. And, even as he did this, he felt the statue grow warm; he felt against his breast the pulsations of a human heart; he felt the lips of a living woman upon his own. And so those who, rejecting deity and knowing no help from heaven, turn to earth, and, by human thought and human toil, work out for themselves a creed, shall find that even, if for a moment, that new-fashioned creed seem cold, it is but for a moment. Take this product of man's labor upon earth's materials: hold it close against your heart of hearts. You shall find it grow warm, real, living to you; and it shall be to you, through all your life, a comfort and a hope.

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