

and delighted acknowledgment which the Church of Christ makes of the gain to the human race from evidenced knowledge of nature.

2. The next essential consideration is the *closeness of the relations of theology to science*. Theology cannot dwell apart from science, though it is quite possible that science may exist apart from theology. It is not for us to forget the service which theologians, and also the practical benevolence of the Christian Church in its missions to the heathen, have rendered to science; but, while remembered, it does not need to be dwelt on here. Theology must stand in close and friendly relations with science as a condition of its own existence. Even a profession of concern because of the progress of science is an admission of weakness. There can be no disguising of this from ordinary reflection, and there should be none in the councils of the Church. Such apprehension betrays mistrust of scientific methods, which is a challenging of human intelligence; but in its worst light, from a Christian point of view, it is mistrust of the testimony of creation from those who proclaim unwavering trust in the Creator and in the truth, the grand certainty, that all His works praise Him. It is, therefore, one essential part of the task entrusted to the Christian Church to banish from its borders mistrust of science.

3. The point most pressing for consideration is that *theology has been specially assailed from the regions of scientific inference*. Theology has not been assailed by science, the impossibility of which has been indicated; but by scientific men, distinguished in various departments of science, it has been met by a distinct refusal to recognize the supernatural. It may seem only a verbal difference to say that it has been assailed by recognized scientific leaders, not by science; but the difference between science itself and the applications which scientific men make of scientific conclusions is immense. Science does not rest on authority, and teaches us to sit lightly on the dicta of individuals. It accepts only what evidence establishes, constraining all to recognize. But when scientific men proceed to reason as to the logical consequences of scientific results, as warranting inference concerning the government of the world, science ceases to be responsible, whether these inferences form theology or assume an aspect of antagonism. Such inferences as to the government of the world become fit subjects for the general intelligence; and, according to the analysis of experience, theologians may fairly be regarded as having trained aptitude for dealing with them, while scientific observers have no special training for this task, and are, in fact, so much disciplined in intellectual exercise of a different kind that they may, in a large measure, lack the training which fits for this work. Accordingly, it is only expressing a very general impression among intelligent men if I say that examples of cosmic speculation from recognized scientific authorities have in several cases failed to awaken a favourable judgment of fitness for the voluntarily selected task.

The fact to be faced, however, is this. That there has been formally proclaimed antagonism to the recognition of the supernatural, which has received a special degree of notice on account of the scientific eminence of those who have avowed it. In these circumstances, it belongs to theologians to make their appeal to intelligent men by a clear statement of their own position. It has been maintained by some, on a quasi-scientific authority, that the belief in God has been disintegrated by the widening of knowledge, and that, accordingly, belief in a supernatural order of things has passed away. The proper rejoinder for those who discredit the assertion is a request for a statement of the knowledge appealed to as accomplishing this result. To this falls to be added, in the line of theologic defence, the consideration that *no kind or amount of knowledge of that which belongs to nature can avail for a negation of the supernatural*. To explain natural occurrences by the laws of nature is only to discover that nature contains more than appears; that by penetrating beneath the surface it is possible to ascertain the causes at work. This all men now recognize—that is to say, there are accredited sciences; but to claim that science is the annihilation of the supernatural is to claim what science must itself repudiate as strongly as theology. This is to forget the limits of science in intoxication of delight over the discoveries made within these limits. Science which proclaims the indestructibility of matter and the conservation of energy simply acknowledges that the conditions of observation make it impossible to

answer the question which ordinary intelligence raises. And this acknowledgment guides a very little way toward demonstration of the position that the widening of our knowledge of the natural has disintegrated rational belief in the supernatural. The next line of defence for theology, as it is positive in form, is the first line of foundation of structure for a system of knowledge as reliable as science and for human life vastly more important. The possibility of science is a postulate of the *superiority of intelligence over the whole realm of outward existence*. It is the affirmation that observation is superior to the things observed; that even changes of material occur according to rational methods, admitting of the discovery of causes. It is an assertion of the competency of intelligence in the task of interpreting the occurrences within the field of nature, and is thus an acknowledgment that intelligence reigns in the universe, and that intelligence can explain the processes recognized as occurring; and to say as much as this is to supply natural theology with its fundamental postulate and Christian theology with distinct testimony in its favour. These are the positions, traced in mere outline, to which theology invites the attention of scientific men, on account of the strength of which it has received the life-long support of scientific men of the highest eminence, and is upheld by a large mass of practical sagacity among men of wide enterprise and large experience of the requirements of human life.

As a proper accompaniment of this claim and a legitimate offset of the avowed scepticism of men of scientific repute, we can appeal to the deliberate avowal of Christian faith by men who have made scientific research their work of life. Restricting such allusion to those who have passed away with comparatively recent times, we can give the names of Brewster, or Agassiz, or Faraday, any one of which may be set against that of Clifford—a name which suggests geniality, benevolence and intellectual acuteness such as all can unite in admiring, but which recalls also denunciations of religious belief so full of passion as to lead to the inference of intensely personal elements, calling for a large deduction before we can estimate the logical value of the reasoning.

From this fundamental consideration it is allowable to pass to one or two references directly practical.

4. In view of the immense advance in scientific knowledge and the admitted conflict as to the legitimate inferences from this knowledge, the interests of the Christian Church require among its adherents, and specially among its ministers, some devoted to the study of distinct departments of science. It is a legitimate claim on the part of scientific men that the defenders of theology give evidence of possessing ample scientific knowledge. To meet this claim, there must be division of labour and specializing. The interests of the Christian Church so obviously call for this as to present a legitimate object of Christian ambition to those who recognize the power of such knowledge. It is quite compatible with devotion to theology proper, or to the practical work of the pastorate, that there be continuous and successful devotion to a distinct yet auxiliary branch of study. The laws of mind shew, indeed, that there is restfulness and refreshing in periodical transition to a subject distinct from the main theme of occupation. When to this consideration there is added the direct service which may be rendered to the Christian Church in its grand task of evangelizing the world, the fire of holy zeal may well kindle the ardour of scientific or philosophic enthusiasm.

What is here urged upon the ministers of the Church and on those preparing for the ministry of the Word is thus urged only on the ground of their distinctly accepted responsibilities. But in a Presbyterian Church, where there is parity of ruling power for the elders who do not exercise teaching functions, there is place to be found for all attainments among the members of the Church such as may contribute toward the cumulative evidence for the harmony of scientific and religious thought. Direct participation in the Church's work by those who have made scientific pursuits the task of their life is to be sought by the Church itself, and may be rendered in the assurance that special service is done to the cause of Christ by such aid.

One thing, however, is specially to be considered by those who are the accredited teachers of the Church; that is, the distinct obligation to shun general charges against science, and general attacks upon

scientists. There may be sufficient reason for criticising and condemning scientists who have gone beyond their own province to promulgate views antagonistic to religious faith and life; but it is to be remembered, in all such cases, that scientists as a body, do not participate in the attacks made on Christian faith, and very specially that those who make these assaults, in doing so, do not act as scientists. That they are scientific men is true; that they are engaged in scientific work at such a time is not true. And if they claim that their criticisms are to be sheltered under the name of science and their theories referred to as scientific, there is the clearest evidence on which to urge that this is "science falsely so called." The definition of science and the conditions of its procedure demonstrate that such speculations as those developed in antagonism to our acknowledgment of the supernatural do not belong to the department of science.

Let this, then, be matter of constant acknowledgment among the members and conspicuously among the teachers of the Church, that the true attitude of the Christian Church toward science itself is that of friendly alliance. It is the part of the Christian man to maintain a living interest in the scientific investigation of all the hidden things of nature, and to make ready acknowledgment of the gain to the entire race involved in every fresh discovery concerning the laws of existence and action in the universe. It is the part of the Christian Church in these latter times to render grateful testimony to the exceeding worth of the wide circle of the sciences, because of the knowledge they involve and the immense service they render in aiding in the attainment of a fuller and deeper knowledge of the universe, in which moral and spiritual life is the grandest thing discovered.

VALUE OF THE CATECHISM.

Dr. John Hall, in an address, related the following incident, illustrating the value of knowing the Catechism:

"When comparatively young I remember having heard a man of ability and popular talent discourse to the people about the things of salvation. Among other things he told them that all that men wanted was that their mistakes should be corrected; that they were in ignorance; that the Spirit of God had nothing to do but to correct their ignorance; to shew them that God really loved them; and when that was done the whole was done, and the moment men were thus enlightened the work of conversion was finished. It seemed to be a looser theology that was consistent with safety, and I remembered my Catechism definition of effectual calling, that 'effectual calling is the work of God's Spirit, whereby, convincing us of our sin and misery, enlightening our minds in the knowledge of Christ, and renewing our wills, He doth persuade and enable us to embrace Jesus Christ as He is freely offered to us in the Gospel.'

"Ah! there it is—'persuade and enable.' The gentleman leaves out that second part; he says nothing about enabling, and though I was in other respects ignorant about theological matters, from having that ready formula in my mind I detected the mistake, and was saved from erroneous teachings. Have you not seen the carpenter, when a dispute has arisen about a settlement, settle it at once by drawing the rule from his pocket and applying it on the spot to the difficulty in question? That is exactly the great value of having young people taught some distinct formula that they can easily remember, and which may prove to them a protection and defence when they may possibly have neither the time nor the inclination to read heavy works in which errors are pointed out, and the truth plainly and fully presented."

We have had Dr. Flint on "Agnosticism," and now we have a deliverance from Prince Bismarck, brief, pithy, pointed and decisive. An under secretary suggested to him lately that a solution of the ecclesiastical problem might be gained by a nation taking up towards all Churches a purely Erastian, and towards all creeds an absolutely Agnostic position. "Erastianism let us have by all means," he exclaimed, "but Agnosticism never. A people that gives up God is like a government that gives up territory—it is a lost people. There is only one greater folly than that of the fool who says in his heart there is no God, and that is the folly of the people that says with its head that it does not know whether there is a God or no."