

WHAT DOES THE EARTH TEACH?

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“Speak to the earth, and it shall teach thee.”—Job xii, 8.

God has provided two great books for man's instruction—the book of revelation and the book of creation. The one is that volume whose name is familiar to us all—the Bible; the other is that wonderfully framed universe, whose silent pages are ever lying open to an observant eye.

The lessons of the book of revelation are known to a comparatively small portion of mankind. There are many millions of men and women who never heard of a Bible and are utterly ignorant of its saving truths.

The lessons of the book of creation are within reach of every human being. The most unlearned savage has a great teacher close at hand, though he knows it not.

To both of these great books one common remark applies. A man may live in the full light of them, and yet be no wiser for them. The book of Scripture may be possessed, and yet confer no benefit on the possessor. To understand the Bible rightly, we need the teaching of the Holy Ghost. The book of creation may be open on every side of us, and yet we may see nothing of God in it. It is pre-eminently a volume which is instructive to none but an enlightened eye. “But he that is spiritual discerneth all things.” (1 Cor. ii, 15). Once let a man's mind be guided by the Spirit of God, and he will see in both volumes things that he never dreamed of before. The Bible will make him wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. Creation, read with a spiritual eye, will confirm the lessons of the Bible. The word of God's mouth, and the work of God's hand, will be found to throw mutual light on one another.

The season of the year to which we have come has drawn me into this train of thought. Harvest with all its interesting accompaniments, is upon us. Thousands of strong arms are clearing their way,

over fields of wheat, and barley, and oats, from one end of the land to the other. Thousands of eyes are reading every square yard of our English cornfields. I think it good, at a season like this, to remind people of the many lessons which the earth is continually teaching. I should like to sound in the ears of every farmer and laborer, and gleaner in the land the striking words of Job—“Speak to the earth, and it shall teach thee.”

But what are the special lessons which the earth teaches? They are many and various—far more than most people suppose—more even, I believe, than many true Christians ever consider. I am one of those who hold firmly that there is a close harmony between nature and revelation. Let me give a few examples of what I mean:—

1. I believe, for one thing, that the earth teaches *the wisdom and power of God*.

This is a point which requires very little proof. None but an atheist, I think, would attempt to deny it. That the globe in which we live and move must have had a beginning; that matchless wisdom and design appear in every part of the framework of creation; that the minutest plants and animals, when viewed under a microscope, proclaim loudly “the hand that made us is Divine”—all these are great first principles, which few will attempt to dispute. The denial of them involves far greater difficulties than the acceptance. No wonder that St. Paul declares: “The invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse” (Rom. i. 20.)

2. I believe, for another thing, that the earth teaches *the doctrine of the fall of man*.

How, I should like to know, can we