

## A SERMON.

Preached by the REV. CANON DART, M. A., D. C. L.,  
at the *Evonia* of King's College, 29th June,  
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"Speak to the earth and it shall teach thee, and the fishes of the sea shall declare unto thee. Who knoweth not in all these that the hand of the Lord hath wrought this?"—  
Job xii. 8, 9.

We assume as a fundamental proposition that there must be perfect harmony between the laws and facts of Nature and the truths of Revelation, so far at least, as they are co-extensive. Our blessed Lord's parables are so many appeals to the phenomena of Nature for the purpose of drawing instruction from them. The sower at work in the field, the tares amidst the wheat, the net cast into the sea which gathered fishes of every kind, at once occur to our minds as suggesting and declaring harmonies between spiritual truths and the facts and processes of Nature. Job, in the text, and in many other places, argues upon the same principle, and indeed it is one that is assumed in nearly every book of Scripture. It seems to be peculiarly appropriate for consideration on an occasion like the present, although it cannot be adequately treated within the confined limits of a sermon.

There are two distinct modes in which God declares Himself to man. His works are in their measure as truly a declaration of Him as is His Word. "Speak to the earth and it shall teach thee, and the fishes of the sea shall declare unto thee." "And the glory of God and the magnificence of His name shall be glorified." And thus the Church recognizes Science as the interpreter (in her own province) of God's Will and Nature. For though the Church may have the highest office in the household of God, she is not the only one of God's servants. As in the Lord's parable, so on earth there are many servants in the household, to each of whom is assigned a special charge with corresponding powers. And the Church has to recognize this truth in order to perform duly her own proper work.

The principle indeed is expressly accepted in one branch of Science and in one department of Revelation. History is always accepted as the true interpreter of prophecy, or rather, history and prophecy are found to be reciprocal interpreters; history throwing light upon the words of prophecy, and prophecy revealing history as the record of God's dealings with His creatures. And in the same relation in which History stands to Prophecy, does Physical Science stand to those parts of Revelation which speak of the material creation. It interprets the secret handwriting graven by the Master's Hand on the walls of the house he has given us to live in; speaking generally this is the rule on which the Church Catholic has always acted. For whilst exercising her authority in matters of Faith, she has treated the words of Revelation concerning those physical facts which lie within the reach of our knowledge as being beyond her special charge. And when any portion of the Church has attempted to speak with authority on such subjects there has generally been some error in its decisions as if Wisdom had ceased to guide it when it overstepped its due limits.

Thus then the Churchman will be ready to except the conclusions of reason when exercised upon the subjects within its province. And if he finds he cannot, with his understanding, reconcile the statements of science with those of Revelation, faith will come in to reconcile the two, or at least to enable him to wait, till a "keener vision" shall make all things clear, and a more perfect knowledge shall make all things plain." Until then, we must bear in mind the principle that in comparing science with Revelation we have to compare the certainties of each, not the speculations or hypotheses. Obvious as this truth is, it is frequently overlooked, and the oversight is the occasion of a good deal of avoidable distress. Let any one note the popular writings of Professors Tyndal and Huxley, or still better the extracts in Dr. Wainwright's book on Scientific Sophisms, published in the Humboldt Library, and he will see that all the passages offensive to Christian feeling positively bristle with beliefs and suppositions, and unwarrantable assumptions. In the interests of science

itself we do well to distinguish carefully between facts and hypotheses. For the disposition to frame hasty hypotheses is distinct from, and alien to that patient and persevering search after facts, by which only the limits of science can be enlarged.

It has been observed that every department of science at its first beginning has always as if by an inevitable law, started off into paths seemingly diverge from those laid down by Revelation. Yet in time it has come back to the old paths, clearing up its own difficulties by a brighter light and answering its own objections by a more perfect knowledge. Astronomy for instance was at first supposed to contradict the written word. We all know the story of Galileo and the Inquisition. And when at a later period, the Telescope revealed the immeasurable depths of the Universe, infidels declared it to be impossible to believe that the tiny earth could have been an object of special care to the Deity. Of course the answer to this is that spirit and matter are of incommensurable values. Siberia and Africa are of immense extent as compared with Palestine and Aetia, yet no one would deny the infinitely greater importance of the tiny districts in the world's history. But Physical Science supplies us with another answer. Besides the Telescope we have the Microscope, and this latter gives us evidence that however vast may be the Universe there is no portion of it too minute for God's notice and care.

Geology again. This was supposed in its early days to be in direct opposition to the Scriptures. But what it really opposed was, tradition that was erroneously identified with Scripture. The Scriptures assign no date to the creation, and the notion that instincts of carnivorous beasts were suppressed before the Fall, comes not from the Book of Genesis, but from Milton's Paradise lost.

"Beasts now with beasts'gan war, and fowl with fowl,  
And fish with fish; to graze the herb all leaving  
Devoured each other."

There is not a hint of this in the Book of Genesis, though it is assumed as an article of faith by many good people who take as a Scriptural fact what is merely a poetic imagination. And indeed, if Adam had not known from observation what death was, he could not have understood the saying of the Creator: "Thou shalt surely die." But the distrust of Geology has long since passed away, and we now are assured by many examples that an acquaintance with it is not only compatible with faith in Revelation, but is helpful to a clearer understanding of it. "Speak to the earth and it shall teach thee" Nothing is clearer from the records of Geology than this, that the earth had one Creator and that the Creator made the earth for man. This unity of plan and purpose is evident throughout. It is evident in the epochs, in which a vast vegetation was producing immeasurable stores of coal. It is evident in the long periods of volcanic action, cleaving the hard granite and bringing materials for the use of man within his reach. And it is evident in the gradual alteration of the typical forms of life, ever assuming shapes more nearly suited to man's use, all witnessing more or less distinctly to the one Creator, and the one purpose, all declaring that He made the earth, and that the earth hath He given to the children of men.

All the harmony may also be seen between the written word of Revelation and the sciences of History and Archeology. Though at first they may bring to us things hard to reconcile with the words of Scripture, yet difficulties have ever vanished before more complete and accurate investigation. We are justified merely from our experience of past investigations in believing that "whatever record leaps to light, the Scriptures will never be shamed."

As more knowledge of the past reaches us from new sources, as more sculptures or records come to light from ancient and all but forgotten cities, so much the more do we value History as an ally of Holy Writ, removing difficulties here, correcting errors of interpretation there, and often confirming what seemed to be improbable statements.

Few things, says Professor Rawlinson, are more remarkable than the complete harmony which exists between the pictures of ancient Egypt and the Egyptians as drawn for us by Moses, and that

portraiture of them which is now attainable from their own contemporary writings and monuments. And to take an example from a different part of history, if it be asked (and sceptics have put the question) how Israel could become such a dominant power in the East as represented in the time of David and Solomon, the answer, so experts tell us, is to be found in monumental evidence. For the Jewish Empire to arise it was necessary that Egypt and Assyria should be simultaneously weak. Such weakness is found in the interval between B. C. 1100 and 990. And this coincides with the rise of Israel to power and Empire under the three kings of the united nation.

(To be Continued.)

## AN OPINION OF FIFTY YEAR'S AGO.

DECEMBER 1ST, 1834.—Went to St. Paul's yesterday morning to hear Sidney Smith preach. He is very good; manner impressive, voice sonorous and agreeable, rather familiar, but not offensively so, language simple and unadorned, sermon clever and illustrative.

The service is exceedingly grand, performed with all the pomp of a Cathedral, and chanted with beautiful voices; the lamps scattered few and far between throughout the vast space under the dome, making darkness visible, and dimly revealing the immensity of the building, were exceedingly striking.

The Cathedral service thus chanted and performed is my beau ideal of religious worship; simple, intelligible and grand, appealing at the same time to the reason and the imagination. I prefer it infinitely to the Catholic (R) service, for though I am fond of the bursts of music and the clouds of incense, I can't endure the indistinguishable sounds with which the priest mumbles over the prayers.—Greville's Memoirs, vol. 2, page 312.

## OUR OWN FAULTS.

Let us not be over curious about the failings of others, but take account of our own; let us bear in mind the excellencies of other men, while we reckon up our own faults, for then shall we be well pleasing to God. For he who looks at the faults of others, and at his own excellencies, is injured in two ways; by the latter he is carried up to arrogance, through the former he falls into listlessness. For when he perceives that such an one hath sinned, very easily he will sin himself; when he perceives he hath in aught excelled, very easily he becometh arrogant. He who consigns to oblivion his own excellencies, and looks at his failings only, while he is a curious engineer of the excellencies, not the sins of others, is prouder in many ways. And how? I will tell you. When he sees that such an one hath done excellently, he is raised to emulate the same; when he sees that he himself hath sinned, he is rendered humble and modest. If we act thus, if we thus regulate ourselves, we shall be able to obtain the good things which we are promised through the loving kindness of our Lord Jesus Christ.—St. Chrysostom.

## A LIVING GOD.

Did you ever, I ask you, hear a religious man say as years went on, that his religion had disappointed him? Nay, the life of our God is continued even now upon the earth; and where that life is, there is the full mending, irresistible power by which God will lead us from strength to strength, until at length we come to appear before our God at Zion. We worship no absent God. We serve no lifeless abstraction. We devote ourselves to no mere idle idea. We are buoyed up by no mere inflated enthusiasm. We serve a God living, a God present, a God who loves, a God who acts, a God who bids us trust Him to the uttermost as we patiently pursue the path from whose end, even now, He is beckoning to us, whispering to us the while as our minds are dark, and our hearts are cold, and our fears are great, these rich words of most abundant promise, "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now."