

SCIENCE AND RELIGION.

(A Lecture by the Rev. Father Le Menant des Chesnais, S.M.)

(Concluded.)

PHYSIOLOGISTS have raised, particularly in this century, many objections against revelation. Several of them would wish to do away with a personal God, if they could. Now, if we admit of the fact of a primitive creation, we must necessarily acknowledge a personal God—creator and ruler of the universe. In order to deny the Supreme Being, scientists have tried to explain the formation of the world without Him by what they call spontaneous generation. But spontaneous generation cannot explain the formation of the universe. Let us suppose that spontaneous generation did exist; that we could trace every being now in existence to a primordial element, from which by means of evolution all things were emanated, how came that "protogenus" or primordial element into existence? Who gave it its property of evolving itself by slow processes into thousands upon thousands of wonderful beings? How can you account for the activity of the primordial "protogenus" without any cause to impart to it its activity? Besides, the most eminent scientists have solemnly declared that spontaneous generation is a myth, an illusion, and that there is no proof that it has ever taken place. The celebrated Florens, Milne Edward, Baland, Dumas, Brongniard, on the 25th of February, 1865, in their joint report to the Academy of Sciences, confessed that spontaneous generation was contrary to every scientific observation, and that every living thing proceeds either from another living thing or an egg, or to use the scientific adage: "*Omne vivo ex ovo aut vivo.*" In conclusion, let me add that if spontaneous generation were shown to be a fact instead of an hypothesis, we should have still to acknowledge that, as no effect can be admitted without an efficient cause, if matter had the property to organize itself and to generate life, it must have received it from its creator.—(See Strauss-Durockheim, "Theol. Nat." vol. ii., p. 339, and "Revue Scientifique," 21, Juillet, 1882.) In my lecture on the "Origin of Man and the Unity of the Human Species," I have shown the absurdity of the Darwinian theory of the Simian origin of man. Gratiolet, the celebrated zoologist, has demonstrated the typical anatomical difference between man and the Simian animals, particularly between man and the African Chimpanzee which is considered the nearest approach to man. Emmanuel Rousscau, the famous French anatomist of the museum of Natural History, has made the same statement, and pointed out how the skeleton of the chimpanzee or gorilla can bear no comparison with the human skeleton.—(See Comptes "Revue de l'Académie des Sciences," Vol. XLVI., p. 975.) Since the names of Hooker, John Tyndall, Carl Vogt, and a few others, such as Huxley, Darwin, Denton, and Hæckel are continually opposed to us as an argument that science and revelation can never agree, it will not be useless to consider the evidence of many more numerous and more eminent scientists in favour of revelation. I may quote, in the first place, the eminent geologist Honnlius D'Halloy, who, in 1866, affirmed he could never perceive any real opposition between science and religion. Agazzis, the famous naturalist, combated to his dying day the Darwinian theory. Faraday employed his sublime genius in defending religion against the attacks of would-be scientists. Gabriel Stokes, secretary of the Royal Society of London, and professor of mathematics at the University of Cambridge, used to say that revelation was the safest guide of scientists, and threw a heavenly light on the most difficult problems of science.—(See, "Les Mondes," Vol. XX., p. 733.) Dumas, secretary of the Academy of Science, has always professed his faith in theism and spiritualism. He declared that the knowledge of the greatest scientist is extremely limited and almost nothing, and that most of the things we behold are incomprehensible and inaccessible to human reason. He boldly affirmed the immortality of the soul, and everlasting life. The Baron Augustin Cauchy, one of the greatest mathematicians of the world, saw a beautiful harmony between science and revelation. Le Coonte, the Famous American scientist, affirms that science and revelation, like two twin sisters, walk always hand-in-hand for the perfectionment of mankind and the glory of the Creator. All these great scientists, and legions of others, are unanimous in seeing a perfect harmony between faith and reason, between religion and science. How, then, can it be said in consistency with truth that they are irreconcilable enemies? Some modern scientists pretend they cannot believe in a divine revelation, and positively deny it. But does this show there is really no revelation? If a man were to say he does not believe in electricity, or in the telephone, would this denial in any way prevent the marvels of electricity and sound from being considered as certain and undeniable by any well-informed person? Neither will all the reluctance of a few scientists to admit the existence of divine revelation invalidate the proofs which evidently demonstrate its truths to any attentive and unprejudiced inquirer. Scientific sceptics pretend Reason alone is enough to guide us in everything, and even lead us to heaven, supposing it does exist. They say so; but is it really so? Who will be ultimately right—the believer or the sceptic? Again, as every scientist has a system of his own, and as they all agree only in denying the supernatural; then, in order to be logical, they must admit that the most contradictory systems are equally reasonable and safe to lead man to his destiny, which is the affirmation of a contradiction, and a manifest absurdity. The great crime of religion in the opinion of sceptical philosophers, is to tell us we come from God, and we are to return to God;—that, in order to guide us, God has revealed to us certain heavenly truths, and made known to us what is most pleasing in his sight. The fact is, sceptical scientists want to believe in themselves only; they want to guide others, but not to receive any directions themselves; they want to teach, but not to be taught; hence their aversion and hatred for revelation. But revelation does not rest upon the opinions of philosophers and scientists. If scientists and philosophers will examine the proofs of revelation and Christianity, they will find them to be solid and convincing; but whether they give to religion their assent or not, it will survive all their attacks and false theories. Indeed, if

religion were to forbid the examen of the proofs of its veracity and divinity, then scientists might suspect it to be false; but such is not the case; far from forbidding serious investigation, it always encouraged it. The doctors of the Church have minutely examined one by one the objections of unbelievers, and triumphantly answered them; and no answer has been approved except it rested on solid proofs. But we must not mistake the examination of the grounds of religion and of the divinity of the Church with the assumed principle that man's reason is supreme, and that nothing is to be admitted, but what is pleasing to the reason of such particular individual; or, again, the affirmation that supposing revelation does exist, everyone is free to interpret it as he pleases. The Church encourages reasonable investigation; but she affirms the human intellect is finite, and many things are to it perfectly incomprehensible. For natural things, reason, properly used, is a safe guide, but for supernatural ones, we are to be guided by God and His Church. Thus, whilst encouraging scientists in their efforts, the Church preserves them from the rocks of error in faith or morals, against which they might otherwise be wrecked; but she does no more violence to them than the needle floating in the mariner's compass does to a clever captain by reminding him of the course he is to follow, in order safely to reach the intended harbour. According to the teaching of the Church, human reason is free and independent from every other authority but that of God, and the authority of God is not intended so much to restrain its individual efforts as to preserve it from error and from ruin. The Church is no enemy to science; but when scientists make mistakes in faith or morals, which might lead men astray, she tells scientists, as well as other men, with infallible accuracy, what they should admit, and what they should reject. In this respect she no more stops the progress of scientific discoveries than a professor who points out to a student how to correct a mistake, or master an art or science. In the study of arts and sciences, the Church preserves the mind of the learner from error, and his heart from corruption, she also teaches him how to employ his genius and science for the good of society and the greater glory of God.

A DETECTIVE'S SERMON.

(From the N.Y. Tribune.)

THE cell-door in the police station was closed upon a thief who had given his age as seventeen years, and who looked even younger. He did not look much like a criminal. His clothing and person were clean and his features were of a type indicating intelligence. The brutal expression often noticed in the features of law-breakers was lacking entirely in his. A Tribune reporter, who saw him locked up, noticed tears in the youth's blue eyes. The detective who had made the arrest had served many years in the Police Department and was familiar with the history of many thieves. "That boy ought not to be a thief," he said. "His father is dead, and he has a respectable, hard-working mother, to whom he might be a comfort instead of a curse. He has been on the Island twice already, and now he will go up for burglary."

"What kind of boys become burglars?" the reporter asked.

"All kinds."

"Do good boys ever get to be thieves?"

"Yes, when they fall in bad company."

"What influence do you consider the most powerful in leading boys on to crime?"

"Rum."

"Has not natural depravity much to do with their fall?"

"I do not believe that human depravity is natural," the detective said. "It is unnatural. The lives of the worst criminals in the city prove as much. Did it ever occur to you that there is much less of what you call natural depravity in country places than in the city? People get to be bad because their surroundings are bad, because they cannot resist temptation, because their better instincts are taken away by evil influences. This boy here lives in a tenement house. His mother is poor, and there is not much pleasure for him in the house. So he runs about in the street. If he lived in the country, as I did when I was a boy, he couldn't find much pleasure away from home. Here he associates with all kinds of boys, and there is not much wickedness which a New York *gamin* does not know about. Every grog shop which bears the sign 'pool for drinks' is a training-school for young thieves. The boys get heated with beer, and are fascinated with the game. They must have money to enjoy the sport, and drink leads them to steal it. This lad began stealing from his poor mother first. She would not have him punished. Then he stole from his employer and was discharged. I caught him picking pockets, and sent him to the penitentiary. When he got out he robbed a money drawer in a grocery. Last night he and his 'pals' broke the shutters of a cigar store and carried off a small amount of the stock. After he gets out of prison again he may become a more expert burglar, but his mother will die of a broken heart."

A sob, within the cell, sounded like an expression of assent. The officer noticed it, and turning away from the door he added in a lower tone: "It's the fault of the parents sometimes. If his home life had been made a little better and pleasanter, he might have been a steady boy. His mother was always complaining and fretting in the house before he began to steal, and since then she has tried to shield him from the police while she kept nagging him when they were alone. Boys are growing up to be sober, honest men in the worst tenement houses in the city. You will find, as a rule, that they have been taught by their parents to expect punishment for evil-doing and that they have amusement at home."

A Birmingham baker has had a remarkable experience. A swarm of bees flew into his shop and took complete possession of the premises, covering the windows, the bread, and the confectionery, and scaring away most of the inmates, causing a complete cessation of trade for some hours. The intruders were only removed by stoving, the front premises being filled with sulphurous fumes.