

Science vs. Theology.

A lecture by B. F. Underwood on "Science vs. Theology," given at Quincy, Illinois, is thus reported:

A large audience of very respectable and intelligent people was present, and they testified their approval by frequent applause.

Mr. Underwood said that his object was not to convert people, but to help them to think, so that they would grow out of old errors and be able to understand, accept and assimilate scientific views in regard to religion. The scientific is the modern view in contrast to the primitive, theological conception of man and of the world.

Science and theology, he said, study different objects, employ different methods and breathe a different spirit. The object of science is the order of nature, whose existence is certain and whose operations can be seen. The object of theology is a supernatural being, whose ways are said to be "past finding out". Scientists study the order of nature and the relation and dependencies of her parts. The theologian speaks of the purposes and plans of a being who, he says, created matter and bestowed order and beauty upon it. The former searches into the law; the latter dogmatizes about a supernatural law-giver. Scientists regard the laws of nature as uniform modes of action, and as inviolable; the theologian believes they are like legislative enactments, and that they have been and quite likely will be again suspended.

The scientist is satisfied with no proof that is not based upon observation and experience. The theologian claims to see by the eye of faith much that nature never reveals to the scientific investigator. The scientist, when he has traced force beyond force and law above law, up the chain of causation until he can proceed no further, appealing to a thousand corroborative analogies, holds that a keener vision and a wider induction would disclose an extension of the realm of natural law. The theologian, on the contrary, when the mathematics of human intelligence fails to solve a problem, like that of life for instance, has recourse to the word God, which really stands for our ignorance rather than our knowledge. Theology begins where science ends. The realm of science is the region of universal law. The empire of theology is the region of the supernatural—a region unknown to science. The realm of science has grown large, and that of theology (once universal) has grown small, with man's progress and enlightenment.

Science teaches us to investigate and then believe or disbelieve as the evidence shall warrant; theology demands that we believe first

and investigate, if at all, afterwards, because doubt is dangerous and disbelief is damnable. The mass of devout adherents of theology think in herds, because they accept creeds upon authority, not daring to reject them.

While science advances and theology decays, morality persists, because it has a natural foundation of which theology forms no part. Morality requires no miraculous evidence and depends upon no theological dogma. It requires no written decalogue and needs no individual authority. It has its indestructible basis in the nature of man as a feeling, thinking, acting being, and in society as an aggregation of such beings.

Empires rise and perish, religions grow and decay, special forms of civilization appear and give way to other types, but the social condition everlastingly persists and morality, therefore, ever has a foundation as broad and deep and enduring as humanity itself. Theologians could have no idea of moral qualities in God, if they had not first discovered those qualities in man. The morality of this age does not owe its existence to any religion, to any book, to any historic character, however much or little any of these has influenced mankind. To ascribe it to the dominant religion was as absurd as to attribute the enlightenment of ancient Greece to her mythology or the ascendancy of the Saracens in the ninth and tenth centuries to Mohammedanism.

Science observes the changes in the material world, but knows nothing about a creation of matter from nothing. Matter is indestructible and, so far as we can judge, is self-existent and eternal. Worlds are formed and dissolved; but the substance is neither increased nor diminished. There is universal power immanent in all phenomena, power in which we live and move, but there is no reason for ascribing to it personality. "Divine personality," says Emerson, "is a theologic cramp." Infinite personality is as contradictory as a square circle or a round triangle. Science acquaints us with some of the natural laws and forces by which the worlds are formed, and Mr. Darwin and others have shown some of the natural causes that have led to the evolution of higher from lower forms of life.

Theology says a miracle must have been required to introduce life upon the globe, but theologians have no experience of any such miracle, can have no idea of it, and have no proof of it. It is an a priori speculation. We are at liberty to hold that the beginnings of life correspond with its development, and that by natural processes living substance, at first very simple, was evolved from substance in which life existed only potentially.

Liberalism, as held by thinkers today, is in accord with science, and looks to it for the destruction of superstition.

The enlightened human reason and not any one book is the highest standard and best guide. All books have to be subjected to this standard before we accept or reject their teachings. Their teachings must be tried by the same test.

Intellectual, moral and physical culture is the prime condition of man's well being, and the means to attain this condition are observation, experience and reflection, and not any imagined book revelations or special inspiration. Revelations, so-called, reveal only what human reason has previously discovered. The untrammelled exercise of reason is not simply an inalienable right; it is a duty.

Beliefs are neither moral nor immoral in themselves, but right beliefs in time show their good influences in character and conduct, and wrong beliefs result injuriously. There is, therefore, every inducement to seek truth without condemning those who have not the truth. Doubt is the beginning of wisdom; without doubt a man never investigates, without investigation he learns nothing and lives and dies in ignorance. Doubt leads to inquiry; inquiry to knowledge, wisdom and happiness. We have a right to expect unity only in things that can be demonstrated; in things admitting of doubt there should be free diversity, and in all things charity. The only rational faith is conviction based on evidence.

Morality is the science of human relations. Its foundation is in the nature of man and his relations to other beings. The principle of self-sacrifice admired in Jesus should be glorified in humanity, wherever men have died for country or race, or suffered for the good of others. The world is worthy of our best efforts. One world at a time is all that we care to attend to. If there be a continuance of life beyond the grave, the best way to fit ourselves for such a state is to attend to all the interests of this life. Of any other kind of "preparation" there is no need.

Reliance on ourselves, on the invariableness of natural law and on our power to utilize the forces of nature are better than petitions for aid by trying to touch the heart or affect the purposes of Deity.

Evil is due to man's inability to adjust himself to his conditions and to overcome antagonistic influences. Man is progressive—a rising, not a fallen, being—the improved product of evolution, not the degenerate descendant of an illustrious ancestry, made perfect from the beginning. None are sinners at birth, but the results of the experiences of ancestors are inherited, and exist at birth in the form of constitutional tendencies or ap-

titudes. Man has inherited the instincts and traits of savage life, and these, not the fall of Adam, are the cause of man's imperfect condition. And man is saved, not through Christ, but through his own efforts and the efforts of his fellow men, in subduing the natural world to his needs. Self-reliance is better than waiting for Providence to interpose. A lightning rod on a steeple is better than the prayer of a saint for the preservation of a church.

Man has a conscience, which has been acquired by the race, but its decisions as to what is right or wrong depend upon education. It approves or condemns according to the judgment and views of the individual.

The penalties of violated law are more useful as restraints than childish fears of hell, and working for human happiness is more creditable than trying to get to heaven. People who are the most concerned about their own souls, are liable to have the least valuable souls to save. "Take care of my civil rights bill" were the last words of Charles Sumner. It is better to study the order of nature, which is observable and calculable, than to hunt for the origin of nature, of which there is no evidence or clue.

Worlds, life, species, language, society, morality, religion, art and civilization have been evolved according to law without any miraculous intervention. The Christian theology is the natural product of speculation concerning the ultimate cause of phenomena. We ascribe ultimately all phenomena to universal power and call that power God, but the word god is the letter x in an indeterminate algebraic equation. Who by searching can find out the ultimate nature of the cause of phenomena? Who can tell us the ultimate nature of matter?

The Bible is a natural outgrowth of the human mind; the literature of a people—a mixture of truth and error. All religions are such outgrowths. All phenomena are natural. Law is everywhere and miracle nowhere.

The New Minor Planet.

On August 13, 1898, Herr Witt, of Berlin, Germany, discovered a new minor planet, which, by virtue of its nearness to the earth, is of greater interest than most of the minor planets discovered. As yet no name has been given to the planet, but it is designated as "1898 D Q." When this new planet is in opposition to the earth, which will be about once in thirty years, it will be nearer to the earth than Mars or Venus, being distant about 14,000,000 miles. According to astronomers, a study of this planet will be valuable in calculating more exactly the distance of the sun from the earth.