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R E M A R K S

ON

“CHRISTIANITY AND MODERN PROGRESS,
BY THE REV. A. RALEIGH,” ETC.



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REMARKS

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ALLOW me to draw your attention to a recent publication which professes to give grounds for harmonizing Christianity and modern progress. Such a production ought to produce pain and sorrow, and be dealt with in the spirit which such sorrow will, through grace, engender.

Still I feel, as it has been brought under my eye, that I ought not to pass it over.

No one, of course, is strictly responsible for it but the author; still as it is an address from the Chair of the Congregational Union of England and Wales, at its annual meeting, it acquires a weight which a mere individual discourse would not have. It shows the tone of the dissenting mind—what finds utterance from the lips of those whom it sets in its high places and in the chief seats of its teachers. It shows us to what point the dissenting body is come in the conflict now going on between faith and unbelief; how completely the high and holy ground of possession of the truth by divine revelation is abandoned, to look for tolerance from the infidel reason of man without God in the world. It is, in fact, a humble supplication to the infidel to be allowed to have share in the inheritance of truth—admitting they have it

in their sphere, and craving the admission that the Christian has it in his.

The infidel reasoners are far enough from troubling their heads about the petitioners; as Dr. Ralceigh admits, they turn up their noses with contempt at the evidences of Christianity. The air, he tells us, is weary with their repetitions of scorn at Christian creeds. But Dr. R. begs for quarter. If they have scientific facts, Christianity has historic facts.

No doubt it has facts far better proved than any other facts of history, as every sober mind admits. Science has no such facts really. What are called the facts of science are merely the general laws deduced from phenomena or appearances; many, of course, I admit, adequately proved; but which, when of importance to our subject, are not really facts. Nobody, unless some rare German, for I have known such, doubts of the astronomical system, demonstrated by the laws of a principle we call gravity. It is admitted because it accounts for the phenomena. I admit, if you please, as a fact, that the earth goes round the sun. Hence when these laws are known, calculations can be made, as to what will happen *if* all goes on as usual. In a word, appearances, accounted for by general laws, enable man's mind to draw mental consequences, that is, to calculate the ordinary succession of phenomena.

In natural science, facts have another place. They are observed in their present existence, and what is observed, and that only, is a fact. These facts are then generalized. Not into laws, such as the law of gravity, but into general principles of causes, or rather similarity and successions of forms. Be it that all animal being is reduced to cellular atoms. I have nothing against it. I leave science in possession of its facts, and the gradual development of theories connected with them. The uniformity of succession of facts may be adequately ascertained. Harvey may find that nothing had living being which was not previously in an egg, and sufficient instances may be found in various forms of being to justify a general conclusion. It may or may not be adequately investigated to justify the conclusion that the fact is universal. In

these cases I dare say it is. Still the conclusion is not a fact. It is sufficient to make a science, for classification, and for man to act on and to learn by.

So geology, though facts are much less accurately ascertained, still we may say a general succession of formations in a certain order is pretty well ascertained. Sufficiently so to classify, though with defects and difficulties, and to form a science. Now no Christian has the slightest interest in combating these facts, nor, if done honestly and simply, scientific generalizations from them. But man's conclusions are not facts. Sir C. Lyell finds a skull or some evidence of human existence, in the delta of the Mississippi, begins to calculate the silt deposited by the river, and says man must have lived 100,000 years. That I read in his second edition. I gave that away and got afterwards the third, and here he admits he was wrongly informed as to the data, and it must have been 50,000 years. Now, when I find such leaps as this, to say nothing of other questions, can I speak of facts? The *fact* is, there was a skull in the delta. All the rest is calculation or supposition.

We get some human remains in the Floridas. It must have taken 10,000 years for the coral insects to make the coral. But all this assumes depth of water, rate of increase of the growth of coral, which are not facts; the only fact is that some human remains are in Florida. The case of cutting through what the Tine torrent has brought down has been insisted upon—Roman remains, bronze remains, and then those of the stone period, and then a skull: one thus thousands of years old. I was assured by a member of the Antiquarian Society, referred to in the account, that they all thought this a mistake, and that the skull was clearly stained with bronze on one side. Now I am not a geologist like Sir C. L., but when we have got the facts, others are, or may be, as competent to reason. We have to remember that "*is*" represents a fact; "*must be*" always man's reasoning: a very different thing from facts. It is a fact that there is a layer of sandstone of many feet thickness. It is a reasoning, not a fact, that it must have taken 20,000 years to have formed it. When I come to reasoning,

and to probable calculations, and probable causes, I come to the uncertainty of man's reasonings, and to speculation as to how things came about, in which a thousand possibilities come in to make the "must be" uncertain. My experience of scientific investigation of causes and calculations has led me to conclude that they are extremely uncertain, and little to be relied on. Astronomy, being a question of mathematical calculation for the most part, is, of course, not liable to the same uncertainty. In general we may say, Science is not a system of facts, but of conclusions from phenomena; and conclusions, however interesting and often adequately proved for common life, are never facts.

But on what different ground matters stand, as Dr. R. puts it, is soon seen when the real question is stated.

Those who take this suppliant ground with the infidel, admit that if the man of science has his facts, all must give way. "When so proved," he tells us, "we have but one thing to do—accept it." "No matter what they may seem to involve or bring after them. No matter what cosmogonies, ethnologies, chronologies, the facts may seem to favour or frown upon." Now I am perfectly assured that God's work and God's Word cannot contradict each other. But that is not the real question here, but the means of certainty of knowledge, our knowledge. And Dr. R. says: "if they *are* facts, professed and declared such by the whole scientific world," etc. Now turn the case. Scripture affirms, plainly and positively, something, in the clearest way, as a fact. It upsets the theory of the scientific world. Will Dr. R. say: Well, if Scripture professes and declares it, it is to be accepted, no matter what scientific conclusion it favours or frowns on? If not he has accepted the authority of science as a means of certain knowledge, and rejected the title of Revelation to be such. It is a question of authority, and certainty of knowledge.

I admit science is not the object of Scripture in any way. Of course it is not. It deals with the relationships of man with God. Material facts are before men, and left to men. Scripture speaks on ordinary subjects the ordinary language of men, that man may

understand it. It says the sun rises: it does not speak of the sun's rays being, by the revolution of the earth, a tangent at the point forming the horizon to the eye of the spectator. But there are cases where scientific conclusions, not facts, come across the domain of Scripture: say, such as the unity of the human race, involving the race in the ruin and effects of the guilt of the first parents of that race,—cases, consequently, where it is a question of means of certainty. Which am I to trust, man or God? Thus: there are blacks; that is a fact. Many of these new philosophers *conclude* that there were originally more than one race. That is a conclusion, not a fact. I read, “by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned;” and that God “hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth.” Now I am not discussing here the point in itself of races of men, but what authority is the Word of God to have? Which am I to trust, man's conclusions, or the statement of Scripture, because it is a revelation?

I find men differing. Mr. Agassiz may tell me, he is a naturalist, that it is not Darwinian development, that that is utterly unfounded, but that there are many races and that the types of animal forms are different in different quarters of the globe, and that man in each partakes of this typical and characteristic form. Dr. Darwin and followers may insist that the gorilla of Africa, of one quarter of the globe, is the original type of the whole human race everywhere, his own ancestors, as the gorilla is the development of some less perfect form still, and that a stupid penguin may, in a sufficient number of ages, be formed into a clever man by natural selection, let alone gorillas. The ethnologist assures me that negro faces are found in Egyptian monuments in the times of the Osirtasens and Rameses in the earliest records we have of man, and that there must be two races.

Pictet, by accurate investigations of Zend and Sanscrit, assures me that no data of pre-historic man goes beyond some 3,000 years before Christ, as a limit. Now the

only fact in all this is that there are figures of negroes on Egyptian monuments, and, if you please, different kinds of pigeons. The causes of which difference of typical form no one has yet adequately explained. But scientific facts, Dr. R. tells us, we are to accept, no matter what cosmogonies or ethnologies they seem to favour or frown on. If they set aside Moses' account, so much the worse for Moses, or Paul's declarations, so much the worse for his ignorance. "It is just as certain (Dr. R. tells us) that there are errors and mistakes in the Bible, considered as a human book as it is certain that fallible men wrote the several parts of it, distinguished and selected them one by one from other contemporary writings," etc.

Now I will give all credit to Dr. R. possible. The gap I have left out contains this salvo . . . "which, however, do not affect the substance of its inspiration, or impair the certainty we have of the complete communication of the divine meaning in it." What is the substance of its inspiration? Who is to put the limits? For instance, is the unity of the human race involving all in sin? The real question is that of the authority when Scripture has spoken.

Critical examination of copies or translations are the careful ascertainment of what is Scripture; the oracles of God having been committed to man, though secured to us by God in grace and providential care. The authority of what is ascertained to be so, is another question. As to *this*, we have Dr. R.'s assertion: "It is just as certain that there are errors and mistakes in the Bible, as it is certain that fallible men wrote the several parts of it." What then is inspiration? What the authority of the Scriptures? We find in the word that in the perilous days of the last times we are referred to the Scriptures, and it is declared that every Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and that what the apostle taught, having received it by revelation, he communicated it, not by words which man's wisdom taught, but which the Holy Ghost taught (1 Cor. ii.). And Peter: holy men of old spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. I need not recall how the Lord Himself puts

His seal on the authority of the Scriptures, and uses them as of divine authority against Satan, and in reference to Himself. The facts of Christianity, Dr. R. tells us, are adequately proved history, and that is sufficient.

Proved by what? "They stand on the highest ground of historic credibility." No doubt they do, so as to prove the folly of infidels. But what has that to do with the authority of the Word of God: our one security, according to the apostle, in the last days? But still if all rests on historic credibility, there may be mistakes. Where is the authority of the Word? "But here is our case (says Dr. R.), that out of this book, as history, and out of other books as histories contemporary and subsequent, there arise up to our view, first dimly in type and shadow, then clearly in personal life, the great facts which stand at the heart of Christianity," etc. Now here the Scriptures, Old and New Testaments, I suppose, and other books, are heaped together to prove facts historically. One book may be more exact than another; they are all histories written by fallible men. And all this is to curry favour with, to get a little allowance from, those who care not for them, and will not have, save as an historical document, such as others are for ethnology, their book; nor their Christianity at all at any price.

What shall we say to such pandering to infidelity. "For his princes were at Zoan, and his ambassadors came to Hanes, they were all ashamed of a people that could not profit them, nor be an help nor a profit, but a shame also and a reproach." If the Church rests on the authority of God and of His Word, they have a place which that authority will sanction and give honour to. He that believeth not, hath made God a liar. He that is of God heareth us. If they relinquish this to try and put themselves on a level with men, and try and drag in Christianity after them, they have lost all their vantage ground, Divine authority over the heart and conscience; and the infidel, to use an oriental expression, will make them eat dirt, and won't be bothered with their Chris-

tianity. And this is the ground leading dissenters have now taken. This is what it is important to notice in what is passing around us. They are giving up the only solid ground of truth. We must know now-a-days who is to be trusted. Christians must be Christ's, and on the ground He has laid for it in the revelation He has given. God's Word must have authority over men, or it is not His Word, and it, and they who should have wielded it as the sword of the Spirit, have lost their place and title and true greatness.

And now, see what a singular and strange blindness this treachery to the authority of God's Word, this pandering to infidels, brings in. It is perfectly incredible that an intelligent man should have fallen into such utter darkness, if it were not that unfaithfulness to God ever brings in blindness, and confusion in man. Men, Dr. R. tells us, were to be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it. Man "was made," he tells us, "*for this world*" (the Italics are his), "as, we may say, an earthly man in the higher sense—reproductive, progressive through the ages, industrial, scientific, artistic, conquering, lordly." Is this Adam in Paradise, or out of it? How wholly is the fall ignored here! But, to pursue. "But this is not all: the first chapters of Genesis are full of art and science. Poetry, music, metal working, husbandry, architecture; a whole city is built almost before Eden had time to wither. So far is it from being true that natural knowledge is the natural enemy of revealed religion, we see them here in their cradle, and they are twin sisters." Who would have thought that all here referred to sprung up under the hand of Cain and his family, after he had killed Abel, the accepted one of God and because he was so, and when God had driven him out from his presence because he had thus filled up the measure of sin, and had chased him as a vagabond (Nod) from before his face, from which Cain declares he was now hid, and that Cain had now built the city and embellished it, invented the music and the metal working, to get on as happily as he could without God, and that the result of all was the flood.

“This they willingly are ignorant of,” even how the world that then was perished—the result of the mixture of the sons of God with the daughters of men.

Let us see the account from which the statement is drawn:—“And now art thou cursed from the earth, which hath opened her mouth to receive thy brother’s blood from thy hand. When thou tillest the ground, it shall not henceforth yield unto thee her strength; a fugitive and a vagabond shalt thou be in the earth. And Cain said unto the Lord, My punishment is greater than I can bear. Behold, thou hast driven me out this day from the face of the earth; and from thy face shall I be hid; and I shall be a fugitive and a vagabond in the earth; and it shall come to pass, that every one that findeth me shall slay me. And the Lord said unto him, Therefore whosoever slayeth Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold. And the Lord set a mark upon Cain, lest any finding him should kill him. And Cain went out from the presence of the Lord, and dwelt in the land of Nod, on the east of Eden. And Cain knew his wife; and she conceived, and bare Enoch: and he builded a city, and called the name of the city, after the name of his son, Enoch. And unto Enoch was born Irad: and Irad begat Mehujael: and Mehujael begat Methusael: and Methusael begat Lamech. And Lamech took unto him two wives: the name of the one was Adah, and the name of the other Zillah. And Adah bare Jabal: he was the father of such as dwell in tents, and of such as have cattle. And his brother’s name was Jubal: he was the father of all such as handle the harp and organ. And Zillah, she also bare Tubal-cain, an instructor of every artificer in brass and iron: and the sister of Tubal-cain was Naamah.” (Gen. iv. 11—22.)

And then Abel and Cain and his city of progress are twin sisters in the same cradle. Is it possible to conceive a greater degree of infatuation than that to which this pitiable servility to infidelity has reduced the writer of the address! Cain, driven out from the presence of the Lord, hid from His face, a mark set on him by God, establishing a city where God had

made him a vagabond, and embellishing it with arts and sciences to make it pleasant without God—for God he certainly had not—and which ended in result in the judgment of God in the flood: this is our pattern, this is the twin sister whose embraces we are to court. We are to learn by it, we are told, that there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all.* Is it possible for infatuation to be more complete? But such is the ground taken by dissent now. And while reading that the friendship of the world is enmity against God, pandering to the world, that the world may, in some small degree, admit it to its company, and its career of progress.

And what is the grand point of agreement? “The need is just this—that each party (if we may speak of parties in the matter) shall accept frankly the facts which are universally accepted by the other.” Can anything be more absurd? Why, as to facts, am I to accept all that are accepted by another party? Why are infidels to trust the facts the Christian party accepts? It is merely trusting the competent investigation of the party, they would say their prejudices, a book or fifty books full of errors and mistakes, according to Dr. R. Why should I accept the facts other people accept, without knowing their infallibility or competency as conclusive, or investigating for myself? I take facts on adequate testimony, not on other people’s accepting them. Nothing can be more absurd. A treaty of peace with those who reject the truth of God on such ground as this; because, indeed, my party believes it, they are to do so too, and I to be bound by their facts as they choose to state them. And where is God in all this, where a revelation? Where a word sharper than any two-edged sword? Men’s opinions, for the *acceptance* of facts is only that, are to be trusted, and trusted on both sides without examination, by an agreement between Christians and infidels; and that is to be the ground of faith and common progress: a ground impossible, I do not say to a Christian, who would be abhorrent from the whole scheme, but to an honest man. But my object is not

* Spoken wholly and exclusively of spiritual gifts.

now to discuss the scheme, which seems to me the shallowest thing imaginable, and base in its servile pandering to infidel men of science; but in these days, when everyone sees that all is breaking up (and dissenters know it as well as anybody else, and this discourse is the proof of it, and the betrayal of their fears), we need to know what we can trust, and whom; and while I doubt not there are many beloved brethren amongst dissenters, saints who believe in and trust the Word of God as I do myself, such a testimony from such a place is a witness and a proof that we cannot trust for a moment the ground on which dissenters have placed themselves, nor the dissenting body as standing on the sure ground of divine truth. I urge, and such statements should only press upon the soul the need of doing so, every humble soul to hold fast the Word of God and its authority, its divine authority.

We all know translations are man's work, and of course in a measure partake of his imperfection. All may know from the Word of God that the oracles of God were committed to men to keep. But they are prophetic, or inspired writings which were so. Their authority is a matter of faith. And though man's failure in faithfulness may affect details, as in the work of his own salvation, they are given, according to the wisdom and will of God to be His Word, and are their own evidence, as the sun in the firmament. Man may, in one sense, labour for his own salvation; he may diligently seek to have the Word of God pure; but the soul taught of God knows God has given both, and will have both owned as His, and appreciated as His. It is God's will that man should use diligence thus; but the humble soul taught of God knows on whom it leans with confidence, and from whom it has alike received eternal life, and the Word by which it has been engendered in him. He may make mistakes in his path, in his interpretation of the Word, but he is, for all that, led and guided of God in both, and attributes his mistakes to man in both, and faithfulness and truth to God. He says: "*Let God be true, and every man a liar,*" and he knows God has not left him in darkness, but that God has given him a revelation from Himself, a revelation of grace and truth

come by Jesus Christ, and of all His preliminary dealings, so important to the full understanding of that, and that the Scriptures are able to make men wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus, able to make the man of God perfect, and that the entering of God's Word gives light and understanding to the simple. The Christian is one who, by divine teaching, knows the truth, and authority, and power of the divine Word. He accepts it in the largeness and fulness in which it is given, thankful if learned enquirers, as hewers of wood and drawers of water, can give it to him as free from all human imperfections as possible, labour that no earthly particles of mud be in the water, but the water he knows to be water, he drinks it and lives.

J. N. D.