

**RELIGION AND SCIENCE AS
ALLIES; OR, SIMILARITIES
OF PHYSICAL AND
RELIGIOUS KNOWLEDGE**

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Religion and science as allies; or, Similarities of physical and religious knowledge by James Thompson Bixby

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AS ALLIES

OR

SIMILARITIES OF PHYSICAL AND RELIGIOUS
KNOWLEDGE

BY

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"Science was Faith once; Faith were Science now
Would she but lay her bow and arrow by,
And arm her with the weapons of the time."

"In vain would the skeptic make a distinction between science and common life, or between one science and another. The arguments employed in all, if just, are of a similar nature and contain the same force and evidence. Or, if there be any difference among them, the advantage lies entirely on the side of theology and natural religion."—CLEANTHUS, IN HUME'S "DIALOGUES," Part I.

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PHYSICAL AND RELIGIOUS KNOWLEDGE.

INTRODUCTION.

THE conflict now going on between the physical discoveries and theories of these latter days, and the forms of faith which have hitherto ruled the mind of Christendom, is one of the most noticeable phenomena of the intellectual movement of the times. The constant discussions from pulpit and platform, the numerous essays, pamphlets, and books, in which these two opponents are arrayed one against the other, and attack, defense, or effort at reconciliation made, allow no intelligent man or woman to remain unaware of the controversy.

It is a fact, so notorious that we need specify no particular instances nor details, that, by a large part of the Church, modern science is looked upon as a godless and blind teacher, a sacrilegious intruder upon the domain of revealed truth, and that, among almost all denominations and phases of religious thought, there has been more or less suspicion, jeal-

ousy, and abuse of physical investigation. It is a fact almost equally patent that, on the part of science likewise, among many, at least, of its representatives, there is a similar hostility entertained toward religion, and that not only all ecclesiastical organizations, but all spiritual faith and principles, are looked upon as their natural foes.

Now, this present antagonism of religion and science is a matter which may justly give concern, I believe, to all who have at heart the welfare of either. It is becoming quite plain to all clear-sighted observers that religion certainly cannot afford the continuance of any such quarrel.

"The problem of our age," said Archdeacon Hare, in his life of Sterling, "is to reconcile faith with knowledge, philosophy with religion. The men of our age will not believe unless you prove to them that what they are called upon to believe does not contradict the laws of their minds, and that it rests upon a solid and unshaken foundation."

In former conflicts, the struggle had been to preserve the Church from division, or the orthodox doctrine from aberrations or perversions.

In the present controversy, the debate concerns the fundamental ideas of religion. Twenty-five years ago Dr. Newman said to a sectarian controversialist, "Let us discuss the prospects of Christianity itself, instead of the differences between Anglican and Catholic." To-day such a change of front is still more necessary. More than ever be-

fore it is the citadel of Christianity, rather than her outposts, that needs to be defended. The wise Christian will turn his arms from these petty skirmishes about tapers and genuflexions, millinery of priests and wording of creeds, the sense of Hebrew numerals and the supernatural efficacy of drops of water, to ward off the blows of a nearer enemy—an invader who is pushing his way already with uplifted battle-axe into the Holy of Holies.

In former assaults upon religion, it was cynics, and worldlings, and doubters of every thing, who led the attack. Jest and jibe, scoff and sneer, were the favorite weapons of attack. Believers had only to stand firm in courage and patience on the unassailed foundations of their faith, and the strong currents of man's instinctive yearnings would before long turn the tide of popular opinion the other way, and bring the Church safely through its peril. To-day, however, the objections presented against religion are brought forward in no frivolous spirit, from no mere feverish mental excitability or love of innovation, but in the sincerity of an earnest loyalty to truth, out of a serious desire to get at the reality of things, through all illusions and at all risks. It is not ridicule, but reason, that leads the assault. The weapons are not the clown's bells and grinning mask, but the astronomer's spectroscope, the biologist's flask. The scales in which Christianity would now be tested are not those of universal skepticism, but of cautious, critical weighing of historic evi-