Science Chastened by the Spiritual Forces

With the monstrous weapons man already has, humanity is in danger of being trapped in this world by its moral adolescents. Our knowledge of science has clearly outstripped our capacity to control it. We have many men of science, but too few men of God.

Reviewing all the marvels of the work of Creative Intelligence, Mahomet ended by recognizing as the most wonderful the fact that men should pity each other. He might have found, on the other hand, as the most base, the instinct of cruelty—that dark heritage that man has brought with him out of his dim and remote biological past and handed down as the persisting curse of his race. All cultural progress has been largely determined by the interplay of these two forces. In the measure that compassion has influenced thought and action, man has succeeded moving forward toward those distant goals that his ideals have enabled him to visualize in his moments of faith.

With the unfolding of reason he has come to sense the underlying unity of life, and with that perception—however vague as yet—there has dawned the truth that he does not stand alone in the center of existence, morally irresponsible in his attitude toward all else that lives and breathes. He is beginning to see, on the contrary, that the inscrutable power that has endowed him with the sacred mystery of life has imposed upon him the duty to respect the same divine gift in the humbler creatures which share with him his planetary habitation.

In recent years the growth of the humane sentiment, based on an intelligent perception of the spiritual kinship of all that lives and feels, has encountered no more formidable obstacle than the scientific spirit of the age.

Man has rubbed the Aladdin's lamp of science, and behold, the marvels that have materialized and the stupendous transformation in the physical resources of life that have thus come forth! Nature has yielded up the terrible secrets of her hidden powers and her tremendous forces have been brought to the service of man. With her magic formulas he has created new orderliness and capacity staggering the imagination of even her inventors. With his scientific genius he has revolutionized the outer aspects of existence. A dupe of his own accomplishments, however, he has been led to believe that the value of a civilization is largely reflected in the harnessing of scientific knowledge and in the extent of the material accessories of life.

But somehow the dream of human betterment that inspired the great work has become a nightmare from whose haunting presence man has been unable to escape.

Among the evils which the scientific spirit has fostered is the ruthless and merciless torture of dumb life in the physiological laboratories with its inevitably debasing effect upon its practitioners, both men and women. In these memorable words Mahatma Gandhi blasted the iniquity, "Vivisection, in my opinion, is the blackest of all the black crimes that man is at present committing against God and His fair creation. We should be able to refuse to live if the price of living be the torture of sentient beings. It will become us to invoke in our daily prayers the blessings of God, the compassionate, if we in turn will not practice elementary compassion towards our fellow creatures."

There will come a time—there must come a time unless the moral foundations of our civilization are shaken down—when a different spirit will animate those engaged in the promotion and application of scientific knowledge. Then it will be no longer possible to defend practices in the name of science which are carried on without any thought of the moral responsibilities involved and which shock the conscience of every enlightened Christian. Divorced from moral restraint and humane sentiment there is no science worthy of that designation.

It is appropriate in closing to quote from the famous scientist and engineer, Charles P. Steinmetz. This is what he wrote:

"Here is a force which history clearly teaches has been the greatest power in the development of men and history. . . . Some day people will learn that material things do not bring happiness and are of little use in making men and women creative and powerful. Then the scientists of the world will turn their laboratories over to the study of God and prayer and the spiritual forces which as yet have hardly been touched. When this day comes, the world will see more advancement in one generation than it has in the past four."

The foregoing article is reproduced from Revereence For Life Magazine published by the New England Anti-Vivisection Society. It was written by Hon. George R. Parsons, the Society's President, Boston lawyer and former Assistant Attorney General of the United States. It is offered to readers of this newspaper as a few thoughts for serious consideration.

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