

**The
First Things**

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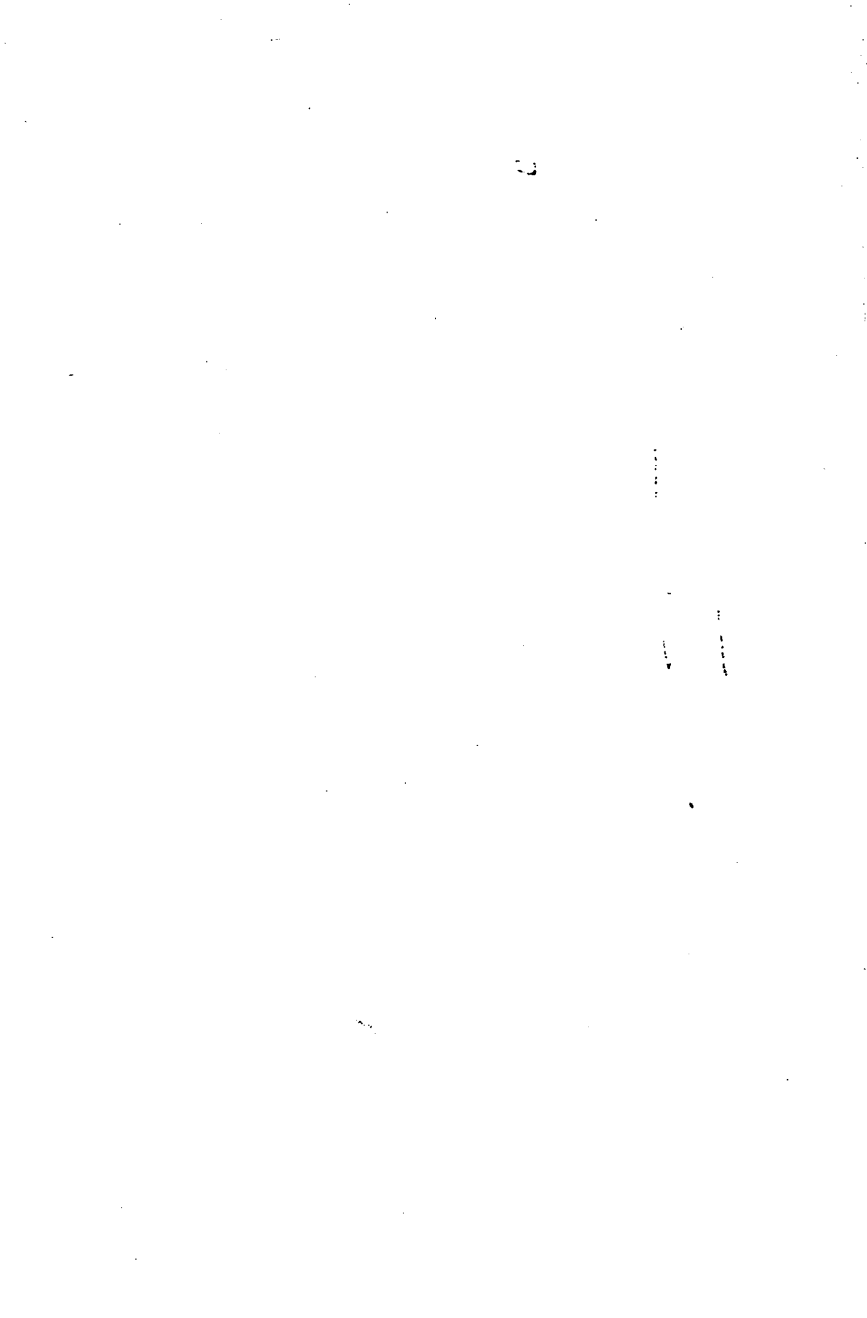
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THE FIRST THINGS



THE FIRST THINGS

STUDIES

IN THE

EMBRYOLOGY OF RELIGION AND
NATURAL THEOLOGY

BY

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TO
THE MEMORY
OF
MY BELOVED COLLEAGUE,
THE REVEREND RALPH COLLEY SMITH.

P R E F A C E.

THESE Papers, which are collected here as more or less cognate, were all written in the intervals of a busy city pastorate.

I make no pretence to any scientific knowledge other than can be gathered in an ordinary course of reading. Yet although I am not an expert, and able to go down into the mine to bring up specimens, there is a sphere for common-sense—one can judge of the specimens when brought up. I have ventured to think for myself in regard to a theory which is fast attaining to almost universal credence—to enter a caveat against a too-ready acceptance of what has much that can be said in its favour.

Some of the themes discussed would need a treatise rather than an essay to do them justice; nevertheless I venture to hope that, even in the perfunctory way they are presented here, they may not be altogether unwelcome.

I have to acknowledge my obligations to Mr Andrew Lang's 'Making of Religion' in the preparation of the chapter on the "Origin of the Idea of God among Primitive Peoples," and to Prof. Robertson of this city for material help in the chapter on "Naturalistic Theories of Jehovah."

JOHN BUCHAN.

GLASGOW, *January* 1902.

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THE FIRST THINGS.

I.

DOES EVOLUTION DISPENSE WITH GOD?

By an almost general consensus of opinion evolution is now accepted as the explanation of the manner in which living organisms came into existence. It would by many be said to be the greatest idea that, in last century, science has introduced into the world. But evolution is not in itself a product of the nineteenth century. The earliest evolutionist was not Charles Darwin, for we find among the early Greek philosophers some who might fairly be so termed.¹

¹ Empedocles, *e.g.*, whose doctrine is a strange anticipation of the survival of the fittest.

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But it is certainly true that only in the nineteenth century the process of organic evolution has been suggested in a plausible fashion, and that will always be connected with the name of Charles Darwin.

Various sciences are held to have contributed to the idea of evolution. Before La Place propounded the nebular theory, astronomy showed the existence of worlds in all stages of development. Geology shows how the earth's past history can be interpreted in terms of the present, thus giving new force to the old adage, "*Natura nihil fecit per saltum.*" Then came Darwin, who, by patient observation and insight, gave a clear and telling account of how one step in the great world process of evolution may have come about.

Evolution is a process from the rudest initial form to what is shapely and highly developed. The flower is a mere bud to begin with, from which the blossom in its structural complexity is evolved: the animal begins as a mass of structureless protoplasm, and develops into a highly articulated and

complex form, with all its multifarious organs and parts. Evolution is thus the production of the highly organised from the unorganised and structureless germ. The two outstanding proofs on which the theory is based are—recapitulation, and the existence of rudimentary organs in men and animals. Recapitulation means that the highly developed animal in the course of its progress passes through successive stages, each of which corresponds to the perfect state of some lower form. The stages through which any individual of the higher animals passes in the course of its development are supposed to be a sample of the changes which the species may be supposed to have undergone in the process of evolution from a remote ancestor of simple structure in the course of geologic time. A tree, it is pointed out, differs immeasurably in every respect—in bulk, in structure, in colour, in form, in specific gravity, in chemical composition—from the seed, so that no visible resemblance of any kind can be pointed out between them. Yet the one is changed into the other in the course of

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a few years,—changed so gradually that at no moment can it be said now that the seed ceases to be and the tree exists. What can be more widely contrasted, asks Herbert Spencer, than a newly born child and the small gelatinous spherule constituting the human ovum? The infant is so complex in structure that a cyclopædia is needed to describe its constituent parts. If a simple cell under appropriate conditions becomes a man in the space of a few years, surely there can be no difficulty in understanding how under appropriate conditions a cell may in the course of untold millions of years give origin to the human race.

Now this sounds very plausible, but when we examine it more closely its incredibility appears. To begin with, the statement is inaccurate in fact. A tree does not differ immeasurably from the seed, especially if the seed is of the same species as the tree, and its principal chemical constituents exist and can be detected in the seed. Without these the development of the tree from the seed could not take place. The seed is not a

fortuitous existence. The production of the seed without a previous tree is as inconceivable as the production of a tree without a previous seed. Besides, the whole argument is one of analogy. The germ becomes an animal passing through various stages, therefore the animal may be descended from some creature, which when mature was as simple as the germ.

The value of such an analogy depends altogether on the similarity of the conditions which in such a case are the efficient causes at work. The germ of a mammal is nourished by the parent that produces it, and in whose likeness it is destined to grow. But it is surely overstepping the bounds of legitimate analogy to maintain that under appropriate conditions an organism which is not a germ but a mature animal shall be developed with a likeness entirely different from the parent. Nobody ever saw this evolution of one species from another. As far as our present knowledge goes, the sterility of hybrids is a fact that cannot be disputed.

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The probability that the creationist view is the right one lies in the undoubted fact that animals as they now exist are divided into well-marked groups. The *onus probandi* lies on the evolutionist. It is for him to show that the intervals which separate species were not part of the original plan, like the walks in a well-designed garden, but gaps caused by submergence in the otherwise unbroken series of life. Let him produce evidence of the missing links, some specimens at least of the intermediary, if what is now markedly separate was once joined together.

According to Professor Huxley, "the weight of this objection is obvious, but our ignorance of the condition of fertility and sterility, the want of careful experiments extending over a long series of years, and the strange anomalies presented by the cross-fertilisation of many plants, should all, as Mr Darwin has urged, be taken into account in considering it." That is all he has to say in reply. Spencer, as we have seen, postulates untold millions of years for the

evolution of one species from another. On physical grounds Lord Kelvin has demonstrated that there could be no life on this planet beyond one hundred millions of years ago, and the immense periods demanded by the evolutionist are not forthcoming.

Besides, the reproduction of the animal is a closed series, beginning at the embryo and returning thither again, while evolution postulates a progressive series: "A reproductive circle once instituted obeys its own laws, but before it can leave its orbit and revolve in some other it requires some new efficient cause." "And what real resemblance, it has been asked, has this to an imaginary development supposed to have started millions of years ago, with an animal already perfect after the kind, and which is supposed, not as an individual but in a succession of thousands of generations produced in the ordinary way, to have passed through a corresponding development to that observed in the short life of the modern individual animal." It is an analogy, but

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an analogy so incomplete that it cannot be held to prove similarity of causation.

There may be progress, and yet the one stage may not be the cause of the other. Take, *e.g.*, our lighting appliances. In rude times there was a blazing pine knot or the solid fat of a candle, then came oil in a cruise, volatile oil in the paraffin-lamp, gas, and last of all electricity. There is a seeming evolution here, and yet the resinous splint at one end in no way led to the discovery and use of solid fat, liquid and volatile oil, nor did gas lead to the discovery of electricity. There is an advance as you pass from the one to the other, but each step does not spring out of, nor is the one evolved from, the other. But, as one says, "the progress from a very rude contrivance to one less rude, and so on to one that displays great skill, might disclose real interdepending steps, and to such a case the term evolution might be applicable, yet without implying the operation of a law, or meaning that it had been the result of increasing mental power in those who made

and used the improved contrivances. Too often *post hoc* is confounded with *propter hoc*.

Let us glance at the proof of evolution from the rudimentary organ and vestigial appendages in men and animals. No doubt such seem to be a stumbling-block to the theory of sudden and perfect creations. They may be held to prove evolution of a kind,—at least to point in that direction.

In certain fishes and lizards there is, in addition to the ordinary pair of eyes, an eye set in the top of the head called the pineal eye. In animals which have no trace of any such middle eye we can still find the stalk of the eye left. This is known as the pineal gland of the brain. The nature of this has long been a puzzle to naturalists, but it seems a somewhat rash conclusion to say that it is of no service save to show the connection between the higher and lower form from which it has been developed. The truth is, many of these rudimentary organs are present either as a provision for certain contingencies, kept in store for future use, or

structures the use of which has not been discovered. Apart from, and altogether irrespective of, recapitulation, they are useful to certain animals in the embryonic stage of their development. And that such structures may be held in store for future use we see in the countless undeveloped buds produced by shrubs and trees which in ordinary circumstances are overlaid by the bark and perish; but if the tree has been stripped of its leaves in spring by frost or caterpillar, the latest buds come to the rescue and may enable it to reproduce its foliage.

If what is said of evolution in past ages is true, we would expect that a similar progress in man would have taken place within historic times, in his intellect and capacity for knowledge. The progress of the living being, evolutionists may say, depends on its surroundings; but when we look at man what do we find? Is there any proof from anything that we know that there ever was a time when there did not exist somewhere men of as good mental capacity and as strong bodily development as any existing

now? In our day the environment is of a higher character and wider extent than ever it was. But this striking fact meeting us is, that growth of the environment in quality and quantity does not involve a corresponding growth either in man's mental or physical powers. There is nothing to show that men to-day, who have command of modern and scientific appliances, steam and electricity, produce an offspring with a development of mental power in keeping with the high character of the environment.

Many naturalists are puzzled with the great array of facts presented by the evolutionist, so that while their better judgment causes them to doubt the possibility of the structures which they study being produced by such blind and material processes, they are forced to admit that there must be something in a theory so confidently asserted and supported by so many great names.

Evolution as a term is used by its advocates in different senses. Sometimes it means the method of development employed in carrying on the changes constantly occur-

ring in both organic and inorganic bodies. It is also employed to denote the proximate cause by which such effects are produced. If used in the latter sense, then it certainly does dispense with God, for this spontaneous mechanical evolution takes His place. It is held to account for the chain of causes and effects which for ages in the past has shaped, and will in the future shape, the development of the universe. The stupendous character of such a claim may well induce a man to pause and wonder whether he is not making an incident a cause, and satisfying himself with a word instead of a dominant idea.

The late Sir J. W. Dawson illustrates this possibility by supposing that a fly has rested on the driving-wheel of a locomotive which has stopped with its train at a station. "The insect observes that when the driving-wheel ceases to revolve the train stops; when it begins again to rotate the train moves. Knowing little of the construction of the engine, and nothing of its principle or the manner of its development from its first rude beginning, and ignorant of the terminal

points or connections of the railway, the fly philosopher may naturally conclude that the secret of the whole is embodied in one process of revolution. Given the rotation of the driving-wheel, and the how and why of railway locomotion is explained by the one magical word 'Revolution,' and all the flies may buzz in concert in praise of the magnificent and all-embracing generalisation." It appears to us that the sarcasm is not unwarranted as regards the notion of evolution as a power and not merely a process.

Viewed as a mode of operation, evolution does not dispense with God. In Darwin's view it not only does not dispense with, it exalts our ideas of, the Creator. "There is," he says, "a grandeur in this view of life with its several powers having been originally breathed by the Creator into a few forms or into one, and that, whilst the planet has gone cycling on according to the fixed law of gravity, from so simple a beginning endless forms most beautiful and most wonderful have been and are being evolved." Waiving the greatness and the grandeur, we

emphasise the admission, the force not impersonal but personal that sets the process of evolution in action, the endless succession of changes producing the endless varieties of complex life we see around us. However long the chain may be, at the beginning we find not a law but a will, not a link but a hand.

There is not a scintilla of proof that matter can produce life, and such a thing as spontaneous generation has never been known to occur. Professor Huxley himself admits that the present state of our knowledge furnishes us with no link between the living and the non-living. "Give me matter," said Kant, "and I will explain the formation of a world; but give me matter only, and I cannot explain the formation of a caterpillar."

Evolution thus predicates involution. The leaf and flower lie packed up in the bud. The bud will not unfold except the environment be favourable: in the dark or in an ice-house it will not expand. But be the surroundings ever so favourable, they will

evolve nothing but what was there before. It thus appears that prior to organic evolution we must have something of a creative act introduced by one at least, perhaps more, species of human beings. Darwin's expression, "life breathed into," seems to be borrowed from the first chapter of Genesis, where, however, it is used in regard to the rational and moral nature of man.

In regard to the lower animals it is said God commanded the waters to bring them forth, showing that the physical conditions necessary to life were complete before its introduction, and presenting the idea of creation under law, mediate creation, and thus avoiding, as one says, "the solecism of breathing life into creatures which have no breath properly so called, and which do not possess the inspiration of the Almighty, which gives man understanding."

Agassiz, who by his researches discovered many of the data upon which evolutionists base their theory, says: "I know those who hold it unscientific to believe that thinking is not something inherent in matter, and

that there is no essential difference between inorganic and living and thinking beings. I shall not be prevented by any such pretensions of a false philosophy from expressing my conviction that as long as it cannot be shown that matter or physical forces do actually reason, I shall consider any manifestation of thought as evidence of the existence of a thinking being as the author of such thought, and shall look upon an intelligent connection between the facts of nature as a direct proof of the existence of a thinking God as certainly as man exhibits the power of thinking when he recognises their natural relation."

Agassiz is dead, and we are told that knowledge of biology has made much progress since his time; we shall therefore cite the latest witness on the question, who has faced the problem of the origin of life under certain new phases.

At a meeting of the Victoria Institute in London in April 1899 Professor Beale, President of the Royal Microscopical Society, gave an address descriptive of the result of

forty years' work as a professor of physiology and of microscopical research in regard to matter. In the course of his speech he described how all organisms, including man, himself, were in the earliest step of development represented by a minute particle of living matter from which numerous particles also living were derived. The embryonic point upon the yolk of an egg bears no resemblance whatever to the future animal. But even here an immaterial principle which no external influence can modify or prevent is at work, and it determines the future form, so that the egg of a hen can only produce a chicken, and the egg of a serpent a serpent. All living forms were once bioplasm, and owe their peculiar structure and properties to the vital power of living matter by which they were formed. He concluded as follows:—

“I have failed to discover any facts which would tend to cause a thoughtful student of living nature to hesitate as to the existence of vitality, and, so far as I have been able to discover or frame any hypothesis, which

could be advanced as a reasonable explanation of the facts of any kind of living matter, without admitting the influence of infinite powers, prevision, and wisdom. All my efforts to obtain evidence which in reason could be regarded as adequate to account in some other way for the facts have entirely failed.

“Looking from a purely scientific view only, it seems to me that the cause of all vital phenomena from the very beginning of life—in the present state of our knowledge—can only be referred to the direct influence of an Almighty Power; and I feel confident that each succeeding advance in natural knowledge will be found in the words of the Victorian Institute motto, ‘Ad majorem Dei gloriam.’”

Even granting that evolution within certain limits has been proved, it only discovers a process, and explains how life as we find it came to be. Mr Huxley calls it the hypothesis that the successive species of animals and plants have arisen, the late by gradual modification of the earlier. But what does

all this amount to? Simply a theory of how creation came to be. It says nothing whatever as to the cause. You have not explained why nature is, by such phrases as interaction, play of organism and environment, or the survival of the fittest: this may be a description of the process, it is no description of the force that has set the process agoing. The mode and cause are two very different things.

The question still awaits an answer, Whence came the primal organism? Evolution can determine nothing as to this—it is simply a model theory. It shows how the creative force works, and what the creative cause is.

We have already referred to the striking words with which Darwin concludes his 'Origin of Species.' The grandeur in this view entirely depends upon the relation between the Creator and evolution. Did He simply breathe life into a few forms, and then His intervention was abandoned to physical necessity? There is no grandeur to our mind in such a thought, in a creator thus cutting himself off from his own creation. Not such is the Biblical conception.

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Nature lives, moves, and has its being in Him. Its commonest processes are His acts. "Who covereth the heaven with clouds, who prepareth rain for the earth, who maketh grass to grow upon the mountains. He giveth to the beast his food, and to the young ravens which cry." It would have been a thought inconceivable to a Hebrew that God should be absent from nature, that it should subsist without Him.

In the speculations of Greek philosophy God was conceived as standing to creation in the same relation as a thinker to his thought. Aristotle speaks as if the truth might lie in the union of the two ideas of transcendence and immanence: transcendence he compares to the general of an army, immanence to the order and discipline he institutes and maintains.

It is evident on reflection that God is separate from nature, as greater than it, and not in any way entangled in His own work. But He is also present, working through nature: we demur to any conception that would leave out the divine energy. "My

Father worketh." He is the life moving within the process He conducts.

And here, it seems to us, is the value of evolution in enhancing our thought of God. Take the old conception, where nature was viewed as a construction like a watch or a machine. Such a conception makes it easy to think of God apart from the structure He has formed, standing without, leaving it to the working of its own laws. But take the new idea, which represents nature as a growth, like an animal from its embryo or a plant from its seed, then we cannot conceive of the Creator as standing apart, but as the energy working within. God is transcendent, inasmuch as His will, the eternal reason, has set in motion the processes of nature. But He is also immanent; we feel His presence throbbing every returning spring, "where tides of grass break into foam of flowers."

But while this is so, the divine immanence in nature does not exhaust the divine activities. If it did so, we should be landed in a pantheistic conception. God is in nature,

but He is not nature. It exists by Him, but it does not sum up all He is. He was before it ; it exists for His purpose, and He can exist without it. That it may become the instrument of His will He works through all its processes. "As there is no point in a man's body unaffected by his thought or untouched by his will, so there is no point in the universe without the divine presence or closed to the divine action."

Clearly evolution, viewed as the mode in which the creative process manifests itself, gives us a larger and truer idea of God. In the old idea there was a tendency to put God afar off and confine man in a universe bereft of its Maker ; but this immanence of God in nature is a worthier conception, more Scriptural and inspiring. The universe then, as we have seen, is intelligible to us only because it is the product of intelligence. In this respect it has been compared to language. Language is only intelligible because it is the creation and embodiment of mind. A few years ago the cuneiform Assyrian characters were blind

signs that only excited wonder as to what they might mean. By reason, however, of certain discoveries, and the use made of these by men of genius, patience, and skill, the signs became intelligible, and a long dead language awoke to life. But if these signs had not been originally the product of mind, no genius or skill in the world could have made them intelligible. So by the reason which it manifests the universe is intelligible to the human mind. And this discovery of reason at the root of all things is really man's discovery of God, a reason without and above him, and therefore claiming his obedience.

The theory of evolution as modal and not causal, so far, then, from interfering with the argument from design and being and attributes of God, really strengthens it. "It," as one well puts it, "has supplied us with a standpoint which by transcending unifies the old ontological and cosmological arguments for the existence of Deity." The more intelligent the universe becomes to reason, the more assured are we that it

must be the product of reason. It is the last stage of the process that determines the first. Nature terminates in man, and in man there is nothing great but mind. To reach the process we must study nature at her work; to reach the cause we must study the result not in its lower developments, but as it stands expressed in him who is the crown and head of creation. There, and there alone, can the cause be found. "Man is the key to the meaning of the universe, and to the nature of its Maker. He is the end the Creator had in view in making the world."

You cannot express man's history in terms of matter, motion, and force. You cannot translate such terms as duty, conscience, religion, and responsibility into the speech of physics. If you cannot do this, then man as a moral being must be governed by moral laws, and this implies a supreme Being to whom obedience must be rendered.

Existence as the subject of knowledge has been compared to a mine with three storeys, where the excavators work on three dis-

tinct levels into the order of facts belonging to each. If they would confine themselves only to their own spheres, there would be no collision. But there is in the human mind a passion for unity, and so in all ages men have tried what will make a synthesis of the three. They have asserted either that mind is but a modification of matter or that matter is simply the outcome of mind. This unifying point is to be found not in the material but in the moral sphere, or rather in the supernatural as verified in the moral.

We no longer look upon the Creator as a skilful artificer whose work was done when He constructed the world, but as the ever-present energy working through Nature. Full of energy as Nature is, she does not exist for herself. She is but the instrument of His purpose by whom and for whom all things were created. He is before all things, and by Him all things consist.

II.

EVOLUTION AND THE ENTRANCE
OF EVIL.

THERE is a growing tendency to look upon the story in the second chapter of Genesis as legendary. Some writers identify the serpent with the malicious Ahriman of Persian mythology, who takes delight in spoiling the work of the good creator Ormuzd. This idea may be dismissed at once. The whole passage is cast in a simple archaic mould, and was certainly composed long before the Jews returned from Babylon, where they may be said to have come into contact with Zoroastrianism. As for similar legends among the primitive peoples of earth, they may be explained as variants of this.

No doubt the story as we have it in Scripture presents many difficulties to the modern mind. These have been felt to be so great that many have surrendered the strict historical interpretation, and there is a growing disposition to seek the solution in some form or other of the mythical theory. Even so conservative a theologian as Professor Denny says, "The plain truth is that we do not know the beginnings of man's life, of his history, of his sin; we do not know them historically on historical evidence."

Without dwelling upon this, it may be asked whether the summary solution of a myth does any justice to a narrative which embodies profound truths peculiar to the religion of revelation? It gives us what we can find nowhere else—an account of the entrance of sin into our world, its origin in connection with the divine plan of redemption. Kant calls attention to the fact that, even if we do not take it literally, it must be regarded as presenting a view of the beginning of the human race.

The problem of evil has called forth man's

bewilderment from the beginning. Ancient Greek and Hebrew thinkers were oppressed and saddened by the spectacle of prosperous wickedness. Voltaire and Goethe felt that their idea of God's justice was shaken by such a catastrophe as the earthquake at Lisbon. Is there a God? Then either He is not good, or if good, not powerful enough to prevent the evil.

This latter was the theory of the late Mr J. S. Mill. Looking at things as they are in the world, he discovered so much good as might be made the basis of an argument for the existence of a benevolent deity. But along with this there was so much evil as to suggest the hypothesis that the beneficent purpose of the deity had been thwarted by some counter-working power.

The Scripture represents man as in a state of original moral perfection, only that did not mean that he was temptation-proof, and the devil under the form of a serpent draws him aside from the straight path of obedience.

Here we would refer to a somewhat re-

markable corroboration of the Scripture by a modern writer in a book entitled 'Evil and Evolution; or, An Attempt to turn the Light of Science on to the Ancient Mystery of Evil.'

The author holds no brief for orthodoxy. He has no interest in theology as such. He accepts without reserve the theory of evolution by the survival of the fittest, implying the destruction of the less fit, as true to the actual facts of the universe.

The actual, however, is not to him the original ideal state of nature. Something must have gone wrong far back in the evolutionary stage, and to the question whence came the disarrangement he frankly and without hesitation answers, "The devil."

Then as a scientific man living in the close of the nineteenth century, aware that to many the idea of a devil is the exploded dogma of an obsolete theology, he apologises to his readers for reviving so antiquated a conception. And the essence of his apology is this, that such a conception alone makes the origin and nature of evil in any way

intelligible, "that to eliminate Satan is to make the moral chaos around us more chaotic, the darkness more impenetrable, the great riddle of the universe more insoluble, while retention of belief in his existence is the only condition upon which it is possible to believe in a beneficent God." The Creator, he says, works by means of law, Satan by producing flaws and failures in the established order of nature. And the picture he paints of what the world would have been had not this marrer entered to defile it is a very beautiful one.

In this world, according to the mind of God, the struggle for existence would have had no place. Hence birds and beasts of prey would not have been evolved. Tigers and hyænas, vultures, hawks, and sharks, ferrets and polecats, wasps, spiders, and puff-adders, would have been conspicuous by their absence. For, according to him, it is the struggle for existence that has produced birds and beasts of prey, and in all probability it is the malignity of the struggle that has produced the venom of so many reptiles.

And this ideal animal world has its counterpart in the human sphere. War would have been unknown, animals would not have been killed for food. It would have been a world where pain was practically unknown, man a perfect creature in a perfect environment, thinking always right thoughts on questions of good and evil, innocent of evil tendencies, making progress but without sin, drawing his moral stimulus not from pain and sorrow but from pleasure and joy. In such a happy world death would not be unknown, but it would be like sleep to the tired labourer, or like the "fading of a flower, the dropping of a fruit in the late autumn; the dying out of the light of day to the dreamy music of the birds and the babbling of the brooks." It would be as easy to die in such a world, as in a world of perfect health there is abundant reason to believe it would be to be born.

Of course this is all very open to criticism. This author's conception is really a modern revival of Persian Zoroastrianism, an anti-god counter-working the beneficent purpose

of the Creator rather than the Satan of Scripture, and his picture of what the world would have been had Satan not marred it partakes more of an Eastern sensuous paradise than a moral world, but it is interesting not only as an independent corroboration of the Scripture account, but as showing that, with the utmost desire to take an optimistic view of things, candid thinkers find dualism in some form unavoidable.

The apostle Paul believes in Satan. No one can study his epistles without being struck with the intensity of his belief in one who in the universe is the persistent and malignant marrer of God's work. But this being has a much more restricted range than the Satan of modern dualism. According to the latter, the adversary begins his work almost at the dawn of creation, at the point where the principle of altruism first makes its appearance in the animal world, long before man, the crown of creation, appears.

The Satan of Scripture, on the other hand, makes his first appearance in attempting to wreck the moral world, which had been

made possible by man's advent. "The writer of Genesis conceives of the creation up to that point as good, no fault to be found in the inanimate or lower animate world,—herein differing both from Plato, who imagined that even the primitive style was not free from fault, and from the author of 'Evil and Evolution,' who places Satanic activity far back in the history of creation."

It is to be noted that the Genesis narrative does not touch the origin of sin itself; it only gives a representation, in a form natural to the early stages of human thought, of the entrance of sin into humanity. At the same time, it seems to us that it is quite possible to conserve the essence of the truth taught while granting that the details are thrown into a symbolic or parabolic form. Thus we have the fact of original innocence. Scientific study of the speculations arising out of it may seem to set aside the historical interpretation, but it is evident that no advance of scientific knowledge as distinguished from mere speculation will ever be able to disprove that

man may have stood at first in an exceptional relation of happy fellowship with God, nor can any scientific discovery tell us what the spiritual possibilities of humanity originally were.

The account of Genesis stands by itself, shaped by the writer under the inspiration of the divine Spirit, and not conceived under the influence of legends common to the Hebrews and their heathen neighbours. What it teaches is, that man was created and began his career with such mental and moral endowments that he could justly be subjected to a decisive test of his virtue, that he had no bad characteristics, and was without bias to moral evil, but possessed the *temperamentum æquale* belonging to one who was about to pass out of the stage of unconscious innocence into that of moral struggle; that God tested him by special prohibition, that he was tempted from without, and the consequence was the Fall, his free choice of one course of action when it would have been for his profit to have chosen another.

Man is represented as placed by God in a position where he had free access to the means of life, only one restraint being put upon him. So long as he lived in obedience, his intercourse with God was uninterrupted.

In man God's creative purpose reached a new stage—viz., self-conscious being, which was the crown of all preceding development. The savage and turbulent passions, which assume one aspect in the mere animal, assume a totally different one when the creature is endowed with moral perceptions. What in non-moral animals were the conditions of progress now become obstacles to progress. The very things which in a lower stage fostered life now prevent it.

The Fall has been accounted for by saying "that the self-conscious will in man was newly born and feeble, while the other parts of his complex nature—the animal appetites and passions—were stronger in proportion, and the will succumbed before them, becoming their slave instead of their master." This is certainly not the idea presented to our minds in the Scripture account. In this

case the result would have been a foregone conclusion, the choice a mere name and nothing more.

If man's freedom of will was a reality, then we must assume that involved an "equipoise of flesh and spirit." Nor is this assumption irrational. "Can we believe it," as one writer says, "to have been according to God's will that man should carry over into association with his newly given rational consciousness the wild impulses, which though formerly the means of development in the mere animal, would be the sure cause of his degradation and misery, that that which was normal before should be retained when it had become abnormal? Just as natural history shows that each species of the lower creation has conditions appointed for it that enable it to live a normal physical life, so analogy would suggest that the human species was at first placed under such conditions as would enable it, subject to temptation, to live a normal moral life."

The third chapter of Genesis gives us a striking picture of the nature of sin, and of

its entrance into humanity, but we must not overstrain its statements or read more into them than they naturally convey. Nothing is said of man's holding an unnatural or supernatural position. On the contrary, the apostle says the first man was of the earth earthy. So the saying of South, "Aristotle was but the rubbish of an Adam," has no warrant from Scripture. All the record in Genesis bears is that man originally was in a state of innocence; there is no ground for crediting him at the beginning of his career with advanced intellectual qualities.

Even in his state of innocence we would imagine that he must have come gradually into possession of his powers. Potentially his from the outset, they became actually his only by experience of their use. The effect of his disobedience has not been to obliterate the intellectual attainments once his, or to make development no longer the law of his life, but to make the development, which under any conditions must have taken place, destitute of that harmony and completeness that would otherwise have belonged to it.

Whatever moral perfection attached to man in his state of innocence, it must have been of an implicit character. The term childlike might be applied to that state, only that in the child as we know him there is an innate bias to evil which in man's state of innocence did not exist. His perfection was that of a nature morally sound, to which good was attractive and evil abhorrent. His act of disobedience, his surrender to temptation, was wilful wrong-doing; for the rightness or wrongness of an act does not depend, it has been truly said, upon clear intellectual perception, but on the immediate verdict of the moral consciousness.

Let us look at the content of moral consciousness as we have it now, and see how far the facts that here emerge tally with the narrative in Genesis. When a man gives way to temptation his conscience authoritatively tells him that this is in no sense the expression of the divine will, however that will may overrule and control it; that he has the responsibility for it himself, and in the doing of it has perverted his freewill. Be

the temptation ever so strong, he feels that he is to blame and cannot acquit himself. Every sin emerges in human consciousness as an incident. It is something for which he is personally responsible, the voluntariness and the guilt of it are patent, but a little experience shows that sin is something more than a chain of incidents. Human life is one whole, and actions, however separated and isolated they may seem, have their antecedents and consequents.

If sin consisted only in separate acts there could be no moral character, either good or bad: character is the cumulative effect of such acts. And these acts affect a man's nature. His will even at the first is not natural, a power of choice which remains unaffected by the choice made; on the contrary, it is coloured by the choice. The verdict of conscience in regard to one and all such acts is that, be the temptation what it may, for the surrender the man is himself to blame; and reflection shows that each of these acts is not only an individual sin, but the evidence of a depraved nature,—as a rock

cropping up on the mountain-side is not something by itself, but an evidence of the character of the underlying strata.

The depraved nature has been inherited; it is not the creation of past acts of evil in the man, though aggravated by these. The act shows far more than any intrinsic wrongfulness that may attach to it,—it is the symptom of a sinful corruption of nature much more serious than any single manifestation, however heinous that may be. And it is found that this extends to the whole man, no part of his nature being exempt. The break-down at a single point has produced effects through the whole nature not the less real that they may for a time be beneath consciousness.

Now, as this corruption, this moral taint, is universal, the presumption is that there was a condition in which man was in a different state, a condition of primitive innocence which by an act of will he forfeited, and so brought about this depravity of nature. But this bias to evil does not destroy his moral obligation. Man is still

conscious that his will is free. Hence we are brought face to face with two jarring elements which we cannot reconcile—the universal experience of the race that testifies to this evil bias, from which it appears inevitable but that man must give way to sin, and yet at the same time the universal consciousness that always pronounces sin to be an evil and forbidden thing, and never in any case a necessity. The bias to evil is not a physical defect but a moral deflection, and this can only result from the perverted will of a free personality.

The most natural way to account for it is just to accept the Scripture narrative, which testifies to a time when the moral taint did not exist in man, but which came about by the Fall, when in the exercise of his freewill man chose to disobey the divine command.

What Christianity is concerned in maintaining is that sin *is* a *fall* and evil in itself, however in the long-run it may be overruled for good. It is not the only means whereby man could have developed intellectually and morally. On the contrary, it has hindered

his development. Had man not sinned and fallen, but followed the path of the divine will, in that case his development would have presented a steady and gradual spiritualising of his animal nature reaching on unto perfection.

As we have said, it is not necessary to credit man with the very highest intellectual and moral qualities in his innocence ; but, on the other hand, we have no right to infer that his being devoid of sin implies that he would go on with no more consciousness or volition than the deftly contrived machine that picks up raw material at one end and turns it out a finished product at the other. Was there no possibility of the production of character save through disobedience ? Was the tasting of the forbidden fruit a necessity if man was to become a being of higher order than the beasts of the field ? To put such questions is to answer them.

It is argued that we cannot know anything except as contrasted with something else, through its opposite ; that if there were no colour but red it would be the same thing

as if there were no colour at all. In a world of unqualified redness our state of mind in regard to colour would be precisely like our state of mind in the present world with regard to the pressure of the atmosphere if we were always to stay in one place. We are always bearing up against the burden of this deep aërial ocean, nearly fifteen pounds on every square inch of our bodies; but until we get a chance to discriminate, as by climbing a mountain, we are quite unconscious of the heavy pressure. In the same way, if our ears were filled with one monotonous roar, as of Niagara, it would be the same as if there were no sound—absolute silence. So it is argued that without knowing what was morally evil it was impossible for man to know what was morally good. “Type needs anti-type. As night needs day, as shine needs shade, so good needs evil.” The only conclusion to all this is that evil was a constituent part of the universe from the beginning. If this be true, the Fall is a misnomer; we ought to call it a Rise.

Hegelianism maintains that the Fall, dis-

obedience, was the only means by which the human spirit could arrive at conscious freedom. This robs sin of its guilt by making it only relatively evil. We know now that it is God's will that man should advance to a condition of conscious and resolved obedience by wrestling with sin. Morality is possible to us through an alternative presented of leading better or worse lives. The part played by pain in the brute creation has its analogue in the part conscience plays in the human species. As pain preserves from physical danger, conscience keeps from moral wrong. To the mere love of life, which is the conservative force that keeps the whole animal world in existence, is added the stimulus of religion, the yearning after the higher life of the spirit.

But to say that man in his state of innocence could not become moral and consciously obedient without the Fall is to make God contradict Himself. For what have we here? Man, by the very act of disobedience which defies God's authority, is doing what nevertheless is indispensable to

the fulfilment of the divine purpose. It is mere mental confusion to say that the ends of good would have been otherwise unattainable than by disobedience. Such a statement is not only at variance with the Christian idea of God; it does violence to human experience, and practically abolishes sin as it exists for man's consciousness. Sin is felt to be an evil, a thing which ought not to be, whatever good results it may be overruled to elicit in ourselves and others.

A recent writer (Dr W. W. Clarke) who is willing to surrender the historicity of the second chapter of Genesis says: "It may be true that abuse of freewill could not be shut out from a world of free beings, but this does not deny the guilt of such abuse; for this is only to say that free beings could not be kept from doing wrong. It may be true that in a complex being made up of body and spirit, and rising from animal to spiritual life, conflict of higher and lower was unavoidable, and the lower was liable, or even certain, to prevail; but this does not

deny the guilt of the spirit in yielding to the lower element when once the strife had become conscious and intelligent. Theories relieving sin of guilt are easily produced, and in some moods we find them attractive; the difficulty with them is that the deepest and abiding human judgment is against them. If sin is not different from a blameless disease or misfortune, we have no moral certainties."

Allowing for the symbolic drapery in which it is presented, we submit that the state of innocence depicted in Genesis is a real state historically, and man by an act of perverted will fell from that state.

It does not, however, follow, as Mr Goldwin Smith says, that with disbelief in the doctrine of a historical Fall disbelief in the Atonement must follow as a necessary consequence. The facts and verdicts of conscience are what they are, independent of any theories as to the entrance of sin into the world. Christianity is shut up to the affirmation that sin is not the only means of man's moral and intellectual development,

—that, on the contrary, it has hindered this. Any difficulties men have felt in regard to the serpent scene in Eden, or how satisfactorily to conceive the possibility of man's being able to stand in his original state, do not affect the conviction of Christians that man as he is at present needs redemption, and that he can rise only in Christ.

The story of the Fall, whether we take it literally or not,—and we may grant that the great truths it sets forth are presented under a symbol,—has a permanent value for all time, in showing that it is a total misconception of sin to regard it as a necessary stage in man's moral development, that its essence and chief characteristic lie in the perversion of the will, a lapse from the path of true life for man as laid down by the divine Spirit. “In a word,” says a recent writer, “it sets forth the ideal purpose of God concerning man as His child, and Christ's redemption may be called a restoration, because it brings man back to the lines along which alone he could attain the end of his creation.”

The mystery of evil still remains a mystery. In the inscrutable purpose of God sin was permitted to enter the human race, but it is evident that He has overruled it for a greater good. Though present now, it is not eternal and abiding, but evanescent. Even this harsh dissonance will be made to minister to profounder harmony. Conscience revolts against it, man struggles hard with it, its course is marked with sorrow and tears. But through the vicissitudes of his pilgrimage here, rising even by his falls to higher levels, by this very discipline man is made meet for his inheritance, equipped for his final sojourn

“In the blest kingdoms meek of joy and love.”

III.

DEGENERATION.

APART from the direct statements of Scripture, we have reason to believe that the primitive state of the human race was not one of barbarism from which civilisation was slowly evolved. There is a curious instinct in man that leads him to put the best in the past. The first advocates for Reform in England did not base their arguments simply on the intrinsic rightness of their demands; they declared that these things were to be found in the original Saxon constitution, they pled for them as lost rights. May not this instance have its origin in the almost universal tradition of a golden age from which men have lapsed.

Countries in a barbarous state have derived their civilisation from other countries more highly favoured. Thus Egypt was civilised from the East, Greece from Egypt, Italy from Greece, just as to-day European civilisation is extending its influence over Africa and the islands of the Southern Ocean.

The oldest written and monumental records show that in the earliest periods of human history there were nations in a high state of civilisation. And the evidence of philology goes in the direction of establishing the intimate relation of all the great branches of the human family and their origin from a common centre, the nucleus of the earliest civilisation.

But perhaps the most convincing proof that man's original state was not that of barbarism is that we have no evidence that any savage nation ever rose by its own unaided efforts from a state of barbarism to one of civilisation. The uniform testimony of travellers is that savages are not only feeble in mental powers, but that they

will not use their faculties unless pressed by want to do so. Under the pangs of hunger they will put themselves to more trouble digging for roots than would suffice for breaking up and planting a piece of ground that would supply them with sustenance for all the weeks of the year. From this it would appear that if left to a state of nature with his powers undeveloped, not drawn out by education, savage man never did and never can raise himself from that condition.

This being so, the question arises, Whence did civilisation first originate? and why is the whole world not peopled by savages to-day? This would doubtless have been the case if the human race had received no instruction from a higher Being, if it had managed to subsist at all. It is questionable, indeed, whether it would have been able even to subsist. The likelihood is that the first generation would have perished for lack of those rude and scanty appliances and knowledge which savages possess, and which, as Archbishop Whately says,

probably did not originate with them (for savages never seem to discover or originate anything), but which are remnants retained from a more civilised state. What fruits or roots are wholesome and what poisonous, the art of making bows and arrows, the rude apparatus for hunting and fishing, of digging canoes with stone implements such as savages possess, — men left untaught would probably all perish before they could acquire the absolutely indispensable knowledge.

For it should be noted that man left wholly to himself is far less fitted for supporting and taking care of himself than the beasts. He talks about the inferior animals, and yet in how many respects he is inferior to them. He cannot match the antelope in speed, the lion in strength, or the polar bear in the endurance of cold.

The beasts are better provided by nature with tools for supporting themselves. Instinct teaches a bird to build a nest, but man uninstructed does not build his house. Instinct prevents the beasts from taking

poisonous herbs, but no instinct keeps the child, attracted by their brightness, from eating berries that may injure and even destroy him. It has been pointed out that almost all animals swim by nature, but man, falling accidentally into deep water, is drowned if he has not learned to swim. And to say the least, it is very doubtful if man, left wholly without instruction, would have survived at all, even in the condition of the lowest barbarism. At any rate, it is clear that unassisted he could never have risen above that state.

These conclusions have been opposed by Sir John Lubbock in his book, 'The Origin of Civilisation and the Primitive Condition of Man.' He argues against the theory that any tribe has ever sunk from a higher to a lower condition, on the ground that there are certain facts so simple and useful that once known they could never be lost. So it might seem, but what is the fact? Enamelling pottery was a lost art in Europe till it was rediscovered by the Florentine sculptor Lucca della Robbia for Italy, and

by Palissy for France. It is a perilous conclusion to come to that because an art does not exist now in a country, it never existed there.

As an indication of progress among savages by the unaided exercise of their own faculties, Sir John instances the case of the Cherokee Indians, who have become agriculturists and possessors of cattle, entirely ignoring the fact that these are surrounded by civilised tribes who have been instructed by Christian missionaries in the useful arts.

Again he cites the case of the Australians, who formerly possessed canoes of birch-bark, which they have abandoned for others hollowed out of the trunk of a tree which they buy from the Malays. To us this would seem to prove the very opposite of that for which it is adduced. It evinces more skill to make a birch-bark canoe than a dug-out from a log of wood. His conclusions seem to run counter to the teachings of history, and do not, as far as we can see, follow from the facts he adduces.

It is easier for a man to sink than to rise, to lose what he has than to acquire what he has not. "There is no inherent necessity in society or in nature that man should progress from the savage to the civilised man; all progress must be bought by struggle, and must be preserved by struggle, lest in giving way to nature men fall back into the beast again. The law of historic progress describes, but does not prescribe, the course of human development."

The conclusion that man, left untaught, would inevitably lapse into barbarism, is supported by many of the most renowned travellers and observers. Humboldt says: "The important question has not yet been resolved, whether the savage state is to be looked upon as the dawning of a society about to rise, or whether it is not rather the fading remains of one overthrown and shattered by overwhelming catastrophe. To me the latter seems to be nearer the truth than the former." Niebuhr is reported, in the published reminiscences of his conversation by a friend, to have strongly ex-

pressed his conviction that all savages are the degenerate remnants of more civilised races, which have been overpowered by enemies and driven to take refuge in woods (hence the word *silvaggio*, savage), and there to wander, seeking a precarious subsistence, till they have forgotten most of the arts of settled life and sunk into a wild state.

Accordingly we submit that the presence of man on the earth as a civilised being is a testimony not only to a divine Creator, but to a divine Instructor. Nature, as we have seen, has furnished the lower animals with many and powerful instincts to direct them in the choice of their food, but man without an instructor must have been the most forlorn of all creatures; "cast out as an orphan of nature, naked and helpless, he must have perished before he could have learned to supply his most immediate and urgent wants."

Genesis represents man as originally existing, if not in a civilised state in the full acceptation of that term, in one certainly

far removed from that of the savage. It represents him as beginning life, not in the direction the operation of his own faculties might suggest, but as receiving divine communication and instruction. From the beginning there was diversity of labour; of the first two men born of woman, the one was a tiller of the ground, the other a keeper of sheep.

In keeping with this picture in Genesis is the conception of the early Greeks as you find in Hesiod, whose 'Works and Days' was written before Homer:—

"First the golden race of articulately speaking men
 The immortals made. . . .
 They lived as gods, having a breast free from care,
 Wholly without toils and sorrow; nor was wearisome old
 age
 Present to them. . . .
 As overcome with sleep they died. Excellent was all
 To this race; fruit the nature-yielding land bore to
 them
 Of its own accord in rich abundance, and willingly the
 men
 Wrought their work here in peace."

No countenance is given to man's original

state as one of barbarism by the conceptions of Hesiod and Homer—quite the contrary. Both presuppose a nobler past, which sheds its expiring light on their own age.

Traditions of other nations point in the same direction. The Chinese tell of a primitive condition of “great harmony when man as yet dwelt in the midst of the animals upon an earth where all things grew spontaneously, all fruits of themselves sprang out of the soil, where virtue was exercised without the aid of science, and man lived in innocence without feeling the incitements of the flesh.” “Immoderate desire for knowledge first plunged man into sin.” “After man was corrupt,” says another legend, “the wild beasts, the birds, the insects, and the serpents waged war against him; hardly had he attained knowledge before all the creatures became hostile to him; in a few hours the sky was changed, and man no longer saw the sun.”

It has been said that the existence of civilisation at all can be accounted for only on the supposition of its existence in its

first degree from the creation. The existence of savages is a proof of degeneration. Le Maistre says, "The present savages of all regions are the scattered ruins of a much higher original family of our race." We have already referred to the testimony of Niebuhr. He further declares "that no single example is to be adduced of a savage people which of its own accord has become civilised, and that when civilisation has been forced on such nations from without the complete disappearance of the tribe has been the result."

Regarding Archbishop Whately's statement that utter savages never did, and never can, raise themselves to a higher condition, Professor Zoekler, while admitting that as respects technical progress it needs some modification, goes on to say: "Abundant and solid as are the historic proofs to be adduced for the sinking of domiciliated peoples or semi-civilised nomadic tribes to the stage of wild hordes, subsisting by the produce of the chase or of fishing, not a single instance is to be observed of the

opposite—namely, the independent and unconstrained advance of wild tribes to the settled life of civilisation.”

Reasoning from the known, what we have before us is the indisputable fact that man is capable of degeneration. For the other hypothesis, that he is of himself capable of developing himself out of a state of savagery, not a single proof that will stand examination has been adduced.

The degeneration observable in the arts of industry and means of subsistence, characteristic of the savage state, is patent also in the sphere of religion.

We have seen that in various savage races along with fetichism and worship of ancestral spirits there has always existed a belief in a supreme God, Maker of all things. He desires not sacrifices ; what is pleasing to Him is well-doing, the avoidance of falsehood, impurity, theft, and murder.

There are two streams of religious thought, the one having its source in the conception of a supreme ethical being, eternal and omnipotent ; the other having its source in the

ghost theory : and as the blue Rhone is contaminated by the union with it of the muddy Arve, the one stream may and does contaminate the other. Of the two conceptions, it seems beyond doubt that the purer is the primal one.

The polytheistic deities and departed spirits, hungry and requiring sometimes human sacrifice, are degenerate from such a conception as the Australian Daramulum, who "receives no sacrifice save that of men's lusts, who desires obedience, not food of kangaroos." The truth is, the religion of the once thought godless Australians and Andamanese is higher even than that of such a cultivated people as the Greeks.

How this degeneration has come about it is not difficult to see. A moral Creator who does not need gifts, who is to be served only by righteousness and will not help man to take advantage of his neighbour, will not favour one at the expense of another, who cannot be constrained by charms, is not at all to the liking of the average man. On the other hand, the ancestral spirit can be

propitiated and bought over to his side. Once let this idea possess his mind, and it will be sure to oust that of a moral creator.

Besides, to receive the unseen and the spiritual is a tax upon a man; he would prefer something he can carry about with him like an image or a fetich. Meanwhile primitive and simple conditions of life gave place to the more complex, arts and crafts arose, and with each new department there came the need for a new god. The gods became localised; they had their temples and priesthood, whose self-interest was involved in their maintenance. The welfare of the State was thought to be bound up with their cult.

In the Old Testament this process of degeneration is frequently exemplified. The Israelites were ever going a-whoring after other gods. The ethical unseen judge of men's actions, who was no respecter of persons, who could not be bribed,—won over by greater gifts to another side, as Balak, son of Zippor, king of Moab, seems to have thought,—was too lofty and spiritual for

them: they preferred a god like that of their neighbours, whose image they could see,—one dependent on offerings, venal, and capable of being bought over.

St Paul is speaking of pagans when he says, "They did not like to retain God in their knowledge, and He gave them over to a reprobate mind." His terrible indictment of heathen depravity in the first chapter of his Epistle to the Romans finds its explanation in the aversion of the natural heart to God. The contrast between the idea of God mirrored in their conscience and their lives was so painful that they were glad to get rid of the idea. Idolatry was the means of escape they invented. Behind the pillars of their temples, and beneath the smoke of their sacrifices, they thought to hide themselves from the Omniscient One.

There were two ways in which the original conception was got rid of. The one conserved the divine unity, but at the expense of His personality. It identified God with His works—the pantheistic idea. The other conserved the divine personality, but at the

expense of His unity, broke down the unity into gods many and lords many—the ordinary polytheistic idea we find everywhere among savage races. Whenever there is the localisation of a god, the tendency is to lose the idea of his universality.

We can see the process of degeneration at work also in Israel. To Jonah, Jehovah was the God of Israel alone, and rather than preach to the Ninevites that by repentance they might taste of His mercy, he fled to Tarshish.

Daramulum is not localised. His worshippers have neither house nor tabernacle, and so he has no temple.

Dr Robertson Smith, in his 'Religion of the Semites,' asserts "that nomad Arabs could not assimilate the conception of a God as a landowner, and apply it to their own tribal deities, for the simple reason that in the desert private property in land was unknown." The Australian savages being in the same position, Daramulum could not be attached to a district. Under the Semites a god could be associated with a particular

spot by sacrifice having been offered to him there. This, again, could not be the case with Daramulum, for no sacrifice is offered to him. The degeneration begins when God is localised, and instead of being universal, interested in all mankind, He becomes merely a deity attached to hill, or tree, or stream, worshipped only in the tribe that dwells in that district.

Polytheism is, as we have seen, an escape from the conception of a supreme moral being. In early Greece aristocracy in politics produced an aristocracy of gods; but the Australians, having no aristocracy, escape it, and so their god Daramulum, the Supreme Being of all their tribes, is on a far higher plane than the gods of the Greeks, far advanced beyond them in culture as they were.

As Mr Andrew Lang says, "A god whose precepts soften the heart, who knows its secrets, who inculcates chastity, respect of age, unselfishness, who is not bound by conditions of space or place, who receives no blood of slaughtered man or beast, is a con-

ception from which the ordinary polytheistic gods of infinitely more polite people are frankly degenerate."

In missionary accounts of savage religions we have to guard against the bias that leads the writer to look for traces of a pure primitive tradition of God. At the same time, missionaries have often found a native name so nearly answering to their conception of God, that in teaching they have adopted both the name and the idea. On the other hand, savages have recognised the missionaries' account of God as somehow familiar to them. Livingstone, speaking of the Bakwain, says, "There is no necessity for beginning to tell even the most degraded of these people of the existence of God and of a future state, these facts being universally admitted." Intelligent men among them have scouted the idea of any of them ever having been without a tolerably clear conception of good and evil, God and the future state.

According to Mr Lorimer Fison, the god of the Bure-tuhe, a tribe of Fijians on the Ra coast, was called Tiu Laga or Lord of

Heaven. When the missionaries first went to convert this tribe, they found the heathen priest their staunch ally. He declared that they had come to preach the same God as he had been preaching, the Tiu Laga, and that more had been revealed to them than to him of the mysteries of this God. He was told of the saying of St Paul at Athens, "Whom ye ignorantly worship, Him declare I unto you."

We find traces of a Supreme Being among those utterly innocent of any missionary influence. Take the case of the ancient hymns of the Zunis in South America, composed long before Christianity was introduced, and chanted in presence of their Mexican masters. Here is a passage from one of them: "Before the beginning of the New Making Awonawilona, the Maker and Container of all — the all Father solely had being. He who, in whom all things potentially existed, evolved all things by thinking himself outward into space." Now here is a god certainly not due to missionary influence, and equally unaccountable on the

animistic theory. That in which all things potentially existed cannot be the ghost of a departed chief.

How easily a pure religion may become degenerate we have already seen. Animism is more attractive, as it holds out the prospect of a god who can be exploited, thirled by bribes to a particular side, constrained by sacrifice and charms to do service: such a god, as we have seen, is more to man's liking than an unseen Creator, who, being moral and opposed to wrong-doing, is no respecter of persons, but holds the balance level.

Ghost-gods, on the other hand, are to the savage a useful constituency. A fetich that he could carry with him in his wallet was sure to supplant in the long-run his regard for the Creator, in time regarding Him only as the head of this venal rabble of spirits to sacrifice to, as to them. Animism is capable of endless expansion. You can locate a spirit anywhere—in a stone, a hill, a tree, or a person. On this principle you can assign a deity to any department of human activity.

It is, however, to be noted that although

animism was a degeneration from the idea of a moral Supreme Being, it is a necessary element in the evolution of the true idea of God. It only could supply the stimulus of a soul to be saved, and satisfy the advancing metaphysical instincts of mankind; only it could provide the idea under which God could be envisaged by thought—*i.e.*, as a spirit. In the religion of the New Testament these two currents—belief in a Supreme Being who makes for righteousness, and concern for the individual soul—are combined and purified.

“God is a Spirit, and they who worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth.” Man also is a spirit, and falls into the hands of God, who is not to be propitiated by any sacrifice man can offer, who cannot drink the blood of bulls and goats, and can as little be pleased by any mere ritual.

The Supreme God of the savage, whose dwelling-place is among the stars and not in any hill or house, seems to be a broken light of that “God that made the world

and all things therein," and "seeing that He is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though He needed anything; . . . and hath made of one blood all nations of men, . . . that they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after Him and find Him: though He be not far from every one of us: for in Him we live, and move, and have our being."

Note.—What has just been said about degeneration of religious belief receives remarkable confirmation from the mission-field to-day. Years ago a great sensation was caused by the discovery that Christian negroes of Hayti had relapsed into Voodooism. (The word *voodoo* is a Creole form of the French *vaudois*, and means witch or wizard: Voodooism is a peculiar form of witchcraft and serpent-worship.) To-day we have there a recrudescence of this abomination. Living in this beautiful island, one of the fairest of the Indies,

they have long enjoyed self-government, and this is the result! Their liberty has but led them into licence. The ritual of heathenism and the foul worship of the African forest are being performed in secret by crowds of nominal Christians.

But other places besides Hayti are becoming notorious. At the present moment Swaziland has been left to itself, with the result that we hear daily of the revival of witchcraft, the smelling out of miserable victims, the murder of defenceless people. Chiefs and people together have turned their land into a very Aceldama. The verdict of past history seems to be to the effect, unless kept up to the mark by others, the negro retrogrades very fast into the savage state.

IV.

COSMOGONY AND THE CREATOR.

“IN the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” The importance of this announcement cannot be overrated. Did the world come into existence itself, or was it created? Could matter of itself generate itself? If so, then matter is not only self-existent but self-originated, and the world or the ultimate development of matter would be a kind of god.

Plato conceived of matter as existing independently of God, a datum for the divine architect of the cosmos unalterable in its essential character, and thus in a measure intractable to divine power, so that with the best intentions God could not make the world absolutely good.

But matter had a beginning. It did not originate itself; it was originated by one who Himself possessed all those powers which He bestowed on His creation.

Pantheism, which makes nature God, and Dualism, which asserts that God and nature are two antagonistic principles, are equally ruled out by the announcement that in the beginning God created the heavens and earth. Their existence was not independent of Him, but according to His mind and will: as they had a beginning so they will have an end.

It is difficult for us to think of God otherwise than as a Creator. We shrink from the thought of a self-originated world, but not from the conception of a self-existent God. It is a natural question which rises instinctively, Who made the world? The question, Who made God? does not occur to us: we recoil from asking it. Why? "Because," says an able writer, "a self-existent God is a thought that explains itself, that is felt to be in harmony with our nature, though we are not self-existent—yea, more because we are not self-existent; but the thought

of a self-originated world is one that cannot justify itself to our nature, because it is felt to be repugnant to nature.”

There are two records of nature—the record of the rocks, the structure of the world, and the record of Scripture, which claims to be the Word of God. We should expect these two to agree, but as far as we can see now there is on the surface in some parts a palpable contradiction, and this has not been lessened but rather made the most of in the interest of certain preconceived opinions. We have no desire to attempt another reconstruction where so many have failed.

9 Our object is twofold. First, to examine briefly the record of the rocks, and note wherein it agrees with and differs from the record of Genesis; and second, to inquire what the purpose of the Scripture record may be. Both records are very old. “That of Genesis is written,” as a late professor of Hebrew said, “practically in a dead language. The meaning of many of the words cannot be fixed with precision. The significance of several fundamental phrases is at least little

more than conjecture. Since it was penned men's minds have grown and changed. The very moulds of human thought have altered. It is hard to determine with even probability what is said, still harder to realise what was thought."

The physical record is older still. It is often almost illegible, its symbols difficult to decipher. Mistakes have been made in the past, and may be made again. Scientists differ among themselves as to its meaning. The record of the rocks is not a record of processes but of results. No doubt effects imply processes, but they do not put them clearly before the mind in their measure, manner, and origination. "You may," as one says, "dissect a great painting into its ultimate lines and elements, and from the canvas peel off the successive layers of colour and duly record their number and order, but when you have done this, you have not even touched the essential secret of its creation." Science is helpless as regards the question of origin—that is beyond its ken; and when dealing with what has been developed, its

theories are little more than working hypotheses that must always be told subject to revision, and if necessary to reconstruction. Turning to Genesis, it is generally concluded that the days must not be taken literally. That the writer was not thinking of actual days of twenty-four hours with a dawning and a darkening is clear, if from nothing else, from the fact that he does not bring the sun into action till three days have elapsed, and further on he exhibits the sun as the work of one of them. The natural division of human toil is a day, and in Scripture language any great achievement is so designated. Thus we have the day of Midian, the day of Jezreel, the day of the Lord.

The Scripture record opens with the beginning, a time when neither heaven nor earth existed save in the mind of the Eternal. We are brought face to face with a primeval chaos, a vast abyss formless and void, with darkness brooding over it, an inextricable confusion of fluid matter, the raw material out of which the universe was to be evolved.

This stage precisely corresponds with that

indicated by natural science, when "the earth, having not yet ceased to be a whirl of vapours, and before it became a shining sunlike ball with a photosphere, rolled through space a vast gaseous and misty mass, destitute of its present features, and incapable of being the abode of life."

Over this vast abyss broods the Spirit of God, sending through its cold emptiness His life-giving warmth. This action is, however, only preparative—the full result is attained, the work begins, when the Almighty Word breaks the silence with the personal fiat, "Let light be"; then the work of reducing chaos to order and life commences.

The result of the first day's work is the production of light. Science has dispelled the old difficulty as to the existence of light before the sun. Milton, with that poetic prescience (insight) which sometimes anticipates revelation of science, describes the earth as now

"Sphered in a radiant cloud, for yet the sun was not."

The theory of light as a mode of motion makes it independent of the sun. It is held

to be an undulatory, incomprehensible ether, whose vibrations are so arranged as to give light with its prismatic colours, and heat with all its capabilities, and the still stranger actinic faculty which sets in motion all plant organisms, and so becomes the material source of life. It is wonderful that the writer should use language which will fit into our modern theory, though we do not say that this is due to any prescience on his part.

The divine decree on the second day brings into existence the firmament. The idea is one common in the Old Testament, that of a dome or vaulted roof above which roll the primeval waters of chaos. Here the language is popular. It is not the modern notion of space filled by an interastral ether, though this also is not an ascertained fact, but simply the figment of the scientific imagination. This firmament is not an end in itself but a step towards the making of our world by the production of the intervening aerial space between the upper and lower expanse of waters. The result of the second day's work is the formation of the realm of ocean and air.

The third day witnesses the greatest of all the physical changes, in the preparation of the dry land and the clothing it with vegetation. These two, so distinct yet so closely related together, make up the habitable earth. Geology explains the appearance of the dry land. At the end of the second period the earth was left a solid crust supporting a universal ocean. As the mass of the globe cooled this would become too large for its shrunken size. It would be wrinkled into folds, presenting the appearance of ridges of land with shallow ocean between. The old rocks show evidences of this. With this upheaval of the dry land began "volcanic phenomena"; the metamorphosis of the rocks; denuding actions of the rains, waves, and breakers on the land; the deposit of the sedimentary strata in the sea; the uneven thickening of the earth's shell; the establishment of the great oceanic currents—in short, all those ceaseless causes of change by which in the progress of geologic time our continents have acquired their present form and structure.

The result of such changes we see in the variety of mountain and plain, hill and dale, rivers and sea, which the earth presents to us, fitting it to be the abode of the highest forms of life and beauty. This upheaval of the dry land is perhaps of all cosmological facts the most referred to in after-Scripture. This is what is meant, and not the whole globe, when it is described as upholden by God's power, laid on foundations and pillars above the waters. We have a poetical rendering of this portion of the work of creation in Psalm civ.

The Scripture record goes on to state that on the same day that the land appeared above the waters it was clothed with vegetation. Here we come upon the first discrepancy between the two records. Geologic science knows nothing of a vegetation preceding by a whole period the introduction of animals.

An attempt has been made to get over the difficulty by supposing that these are the plants of the Devonian and Carboniferous periods. This, however, is a straining of

the record, and overlooks the creation of the earlier animals. Besides, the vegetation here referred to is not simply grass, but the higher species of fruit-bearing plants. There is no evidence from the rocks, as we know them at present, for anything like this. The oldest rocks contain only the fossil remains of humble animals of the sea.

Here *primâ facie* the Biblical record does not seem to be in unison with the geological. Of course it is possible that an older plant-bearing formation may yet be discovered. Vegetable life generally precedes animal life, as being that on which animal life is fed; and the late Sir G. W. Dawson held that there may be in this direction discoveries in store for geology, though from the highly metamorphic condition of the oldest sediments it is possible that no remains may exist of the primeval vegetation. Meantime, however, there is a palpable discrepancy between the two records as regards their days' creation work.

The fourth and fifth days witness the calling into existence of the celestial bodies, the

sun, moon, and stars. Light, as we have seen, with its allied forces, was the work of the first, but the arrangements of the heavenly bodies in their relation to our earth are not specified till the fourth day. They are called luminaries, not constellations or masses of light. The Biblical account is not a scientific description of their place in the universe, but only their relation to humankind. They are adduced as evidences of the grand unity of nature in God, and in opposition to the almost universal tendency to worship the heavenly orbs and to assign divine attributes to them. According to Calvin, Moses, speaking to us by the Holy Spirit, did not treat of the heavenly luminaries as an astronomer, but as it became a theologian, having regard to us rather than to the stars.

The sacred writer describes things as they appear,—his language is not to be interpreted scientifically; and when he says God made the great lights and set them in the firmament, it would be doing gross violence to his language to insist that he meant to say that God first made the sun

and moon and then put them in the heavens. It is clear that he is accounting for the phenomena of the sun and moon, and he declares that God put them there for a particular purpose—viz., to minister to the daily life of man in his agriculture, navigation, and other operations—and that from God their light was derived, they shine in obedience to His word and will.

The fifth and sixth days have as their result the production of creatures that fly and swim—*i.e.*, birds and fishes. The language again is popular, and makes no attempt at scientific precision in the classification. The first animals are produced by the waters,—not the shoreless expanse of the first day, but the sea in its depths, shallows, and estuaries, possibly freshwater lakes and rivers also. It is clear from the record of Genesis that the first animals belonged to the lower orders of the animal kingdom.

The term “creeping things” does not refer to their locomotion but to their reproduction. “It implies their fecundity, and

this again implies that low grade of organisation which admits of reproduction in its most prolific forms, since the lower and simpler types of animal life are those which can multiply in the greatest variety of ways and with the greatest rapidity."

When it is said "God created great whales," the word should rather be rendered saurians, a generic term for reptiles of the larger sort, of which the crocodile is an example. The term "creation" is applied to these—a term only once used, and that in the initial act at the beginning. One creative day is given to the introduction of invertebrate life, with that of the fish, the reptile, and the bird, while in the last creative day the herbivorous and carnivorous mammalia are introduced along with man.

It is not till we come to the fifth and sixth days, when animal life appears, that we can properly bring the two records side by side and compare them. Of the earlier stages of creation geology knows nothing except by inference. Fossils are found in all geologic formations down to the lowest,

the Laurentian, so named from its covering the whole country north of the St Lawrence river, and the reproduction of animal types to fewer and lower forms seems to point to this period as near to the introduction of life on the earth.

Both records agree in this, that the general arrangements of inorganic nature were perfected before animals were introduced; both agree in describing the earliest existence of animal life to the sea, which for ages seems to have been the only theatre of its development. This accords with the physiological fact that the conditions of animal life are easier in the sea than on land. Both records agree as to the orderly procession of life beginning in the lower forms and culminating in man. The sixth day witnesses his appearance along with the land animals. The animals are described as cattle — *i.e.*, domestic quadrupeds — small creatures that creep and crawl, and the wild beasts of the field.

When we look, however, at the classification, while on the whole the two records

agree as to the rise in elaborateness of structure, the historical order of palæontology and the physiological grouping of zoology are alike traversed by the Biblical account. The language again is popular, as best suited to its purpose, which is not scientific but religious. Man is represented as the crown and climax of creation, made in the likeness of God; he is endowed with dominion over the creatures—all things are put under his feet. With his creation the circle is complete, and the perfection of the whole is expressed in the declaration, “And God saw every thing that He had made, and, behold, it was very good.”

The creative energy of the six days is followed by the divine rest of the seventh. This, it has been well said, accomplishes for our idea of God what the Sabbath does for our bodies and souls. On that day the weary toiler, whose back has been bowed in daily work, can lift himself up, assert his superiority to the secular and the mechanical, and give free play to the higher capacities of his being that have affinity to

the divine. This repose of God is an emphatic reminder that He is a free, unfettered, conscious Being whose personality is in no way entangled with His work. By this stroke, a masterpiece of inspired imagination, Scripture rescues the personality of the Creator from being merged in His work, thus presenting a marked contrast to other cosmogonies, where the creative process is represented as necessitarian or pantheistic, and personality invariably disappears in mere abstractions.

The record bears in its simplicity and sublimity the evident inspiration of the Spirit of God, and any likeness to it we find in other cosmogonies must be because they have borrowed from it, not it from them.

Having thus compared the two records and noted wherein they agree and are at variance, we come to the question, For what purpose was the Scripture record given? There is a discrepancy between the geological record and that of Genesis which has not yet been removed. But the

question arises, Was this order in Genesis ever intended to be physical? if not, the discrepancy only exists to those who so interpret it. The ruling thought of the writer may not have been time at all, but some other idea. His object may have been purely religious, and not to formulate a scientific theory. "There is a principle," says a writer on Genesis, "frequently insisted on, scarcely denied by any, yet recognised with sufficient clearness by few of the advocates of revelation, which if fully and practically recognised would have saved themselves much perplexity and vexation, and the cause they have at heart the disgrace with which it has been covered by the futile attempts that have been made through provisional and shifting interpretations to reconcile the Mosaic Genesis with the rapidly advancing strides of physical science. The principle referred to is this. Matters which are discoverable by human reason and the means of investigation which God has put within the reach of man's faculties are not the proper sub-

jects of divine revelation, and matters which do not concern morals or bear on man's spiritual relations towards God are not within the province of revealed religion."

The Scripture writer's chief concern is to show creation as the operation of the divine will,—not to set forth the order of nature, which man can find out for himself. Science will show him this; but what science cannot do revelation does in this chapter—links nature with the Creator. But revelation was not intended to forestall the discoveries of science—these were in due time to yield to man's diligent study of God's works. Yet it was much—it was indeed indispensable—that man should be supplied with a right view as to the relation of the creatures that surround him and the world of matter to God on the one hand, and to himself on the other, as the basis for further revelation.

The revelation of God in nature has been grossly misunderstood by man in his natural state. Ancient philosophies and religions all proceed upon perverted ideas of the

relation of creation and creatures to God, and this perversion in turn destroyed men's religious feelings and impressions.

Consider how Israel was surrounded by nations, each of which had its own cosmogony! Diverse as these were, they all agreed in this, that they dishonoured God by ascribing to Him imperfection, and making a god to account for every effect they saw. What better protection against such views could there have been than this simple, clear, dignified narrative, which you have only to place beside the crude, grotesque, and degrading accounts alike to man and God in pagan cosmogonies in order to appreciate its sweetness, purity, and elevation?

Take, for example, the Chaldean legend of the Creation of the World and the Fall of Man. It is impossible to doubt that there existed some relationship between them and the Scriptural account — they have so many points of resemblance in common. But if the resemblances are striking, so are the contrasts. The solemnity, chaste-

ness, and reticence of Genesis stand out in vivid contrast to the mode of treatment of the same subjects in the legends. The writers may have been of the same race—writing, it may be, at a period not far removed from one another—but the Hebrew prophet is separated by a wide gulf from the Chaldean legend-monger. The difference in the two narratives is the difference between the diamond and the crystal.

But it may be asked, How is it that the periods and procession which geology shows, and which are to us the most impressive glory in the universe, do not appear in the narrative if it be a divine record, to impress us with a sense of the wisdom and majesty of God's works? The answer is, that the Scripture record was not intended to forestall the discoveries of science. The writer has an order of his own, though it may not agree with the physical, his object being not to anticipate geology but to reveal and enforce religious truth. His arrangement is literary and logical. To show the creatorship of God, he passes in review the great

elements that go to make the world of matter and creatures.

“The stately succession of created things springing into being beneath the living breath of God,” to quote the words of Richard Hutton; “the evenings which see each fresh work accomplished, the mornings which see the next begun; the orderly separation of earth and sky, of sea and land; the growth of grass and trees; the first circles of the sun, moon, and stars in the heavens; the new-born seasons; the creation of living creatures; the birth of man in God’s image; the gift of the supremacy into his hands; and the divine sentence upon each new ‘kind’ as it arises, and finally upon the whole, that it is good,—are all so familiar to us that we are apt to overlook the characteristic thought contained, that each lower nature refers upward to the next above it, and the highest created nature to God; the light to the heavens; the heavens to the sun, moon, and stars; these to the earth; the earth to the vegetable world, this again

to the animal world above it; this to man, who rules over it, and man to God.”¹

Of course no end, however important, would justify a false and misleading account, and we may be very sure that the items in this are in themselves absolutely true. It bears on the face of it the stamp of divine inspiration; it speaks of things of which men in Mosaic times had no idea. Any information that science gives now, or will furnish in the future, can only touch the edge of this great deep, “God creating and arranging.” And if it please God to reveal His relation to the creation in a way that will be for the religious well-being of men in all ages, it is manifest that it will be from a different point of view, and along a different line, than that on which geological science moves—projected on a different plan, with a different array of facts, than the record science finds in the rocks.

¹ The writer takes his own order, which, though it agrees not with the order of science, is the best adapted for his purpose.

It is absurd to suppose that the account in this chapter of Genesis should speak in the language of present-day science, for that would have meant a premature reference to matters not yet discovered, and which it is not the province of revelation to discover, but which are left to man's own ingenuity and observation to find out. And a few years hence the language would be antiquated, and the old objection would be brought up again, that the Scripture does not speak as if its Author knew what men had discovered. These things lie outside the scope of revelation.

It is also to be noted that the order in this chapter is not always adhered to in Scripture. It appears under manifold variations in Job, and in the Psalms and Proverbs.

There are two things in creation, the cause and the effect: Scripture concerns itself with the cause, science with the effect.

Working thus on different plans, there need be no collision or contradiction.

Where science finishes the tale revelation takes it up: this is its true function. It gives what science cannot give, what some of the wisest searching for half a lifetime have not discovered—it links creation with the Creator.

To conclude, in the words of the late Duke of Argyll, "The first chapter of Genesis stands alone among the traditions of mankind in the wonderful simplicity and grandeur of its words. Specially remarkable—miraculous it really seems to me—is that character of reserve which leaves open to reason all that reason may be able to maintain. The meaning of these words seems always to be a meaning ahead of science, not because it anticipates the results of science, but because it is independent of them, and runs, as it were, round the outer margin of all possible discovery."

V.

THE ORIGIN OF THE IDEA OF GOD
AMONG PRIMITIVE PEOPLES.

THE theory most in favour at present that secures the largest following is that laid down by Dr Tylor in his masterly work on 'Primitive Culture,' and also 'Anthropology, Animism, or the Ghost Theory.' According to this, man got the idea of soul from dreams, and the phenomena of sleep, trance, and death. Given the soul, the spirit, this, carried to its highest power, is God. From the nation of ghosts, says another writer of the same school, a belief has risen, but very gradually, in higher spirits, and eventually in a Highest Spirit, and keeping pace with the growth of this be-

lief, a habit of reverence for and worship of spirits. But how an eternal, creative, moral God, such as we find among even the lowest savages, was evolved out of ghosts or surviving souls of the dead, is not so clear at first sight, nor, as we shall endeavour to show, does it square with known facts.

It might seem that the idea of God would improve in direct ratio to rising stages of culture. It is not, however, necessarily so, frequently the reverse. According to Mr Huxley, the alliance between religion and morality belongs almost or wholly to religions above the savage level, not to the earlier and lower creeds; and among the Australian savages, in its simplest condition, theology is wholly independent of ethics. But, as we shall see, such statements are not in accordance with the facts that have come to our knowledge.

The problem is, how this animism or ghost theory can yield an ethical Being, a God who makes for righteousness. The savage looks upon the spirits of the dead as malig-

nant beings ready to do him hurt, with no kindly beneficent traits about them. The terrible terrifies, and there is nothing so paralysing to intellectual progress as terror. And how can man's loftiest ideals be evolved from his most dismal terrors? Deified ancestors may be regarded as kindly spirits, for each new generation among the Zulus has a new ancestor to worship. The father and his very name are soon forgotten. How, then, could a deified ancestor serve as Supreme Being, and a man once known, though now forgotten, be taken for the Creator and Ruler of the World?

We find the conception of a Creator where there is no ancestor-worship, according to Dr Tylor. As kings and chiefs are among men so are the great gods among lesser spirits. "With little exception, wherever a savage or barbaric system of religion is described thoroughly, great gods make their appearance in the spiritual world as distinctly as chiefs in the human tribe." Yes, but whence the idea of supreme gods among Australian and Fuegian savages, who have no

chiefs nor any distinction of rank among them? God cannot be a reflection from human kings, where, as Mr Andrew Lang says, "there are no kings nor a president elected out of a polytheistic society of gods, where there is no polytheism nor an ideal first ancestor, where men do not worship their ancestors, while, again, the spirit of a man who died does not answer to the usual savage conception of the Creator."

The theory of Dr Tylor demands so great ingenuity, such vigorous power of abstract reasoning, that we may well doubt whether this was the original process in the mind of the savage as he pondered on the phenomena of sleep and death. He came by these to decide (1) that man has a life which leaves him partially in sleep and altogether at death; (2) that man has also a phantom which appears to other people in dreams and visions. Then he combined the life and the phantom as manifestations of the same soul. The result would be a ghost-soul, conscious, capable of leaving the body yet invisible, impalpable yet existing, reappearing after

death, able to act on the bodies of other men, beasts, or things. And thus the powerful ghost of a dead man lived on, and its original owner being forgotten, it became a god.

Very good, but is not this reading into the mind of the savage modern processes of reasoning, taking it for granted that they move on the same psychical plane as ourselves, of whose mental condition and experience we know no more than we know of the mental condition of the lower animals?

It has been too much the custom to make rash statements about there being no trace of any belief in God among certain savages. We shall see later on how high the conception of God is among some of the very lowest; but meantime let us consider the question whether these ghost-gods, fetiches, or totems were not altogether in another category, a later introduction, one having no connection with the Supreme Being.

Take the case of Daramulum, the supreme deity of the Australians, deathless, omniscient, moral, and unpropitiated by sacrifice. How was such a conception evolved from

the idea of the ghost of a dead warrior soon forgotten? A ghost implies the previous death of its proprietor. It is the phantom of a dead man. But Daramulum and other supreme beings of savage faiths never die. Anthropologists tell us that savages have no idea of death as a universal ordinance. To them it is not a natural but an abnormal thing in the economy of the universe. It came through the operation of spirits and magicians. It came by an accident, the decision of a God who was before death was. The sinless Being was not envisaged as spirit; the question of spirit was not raised at all, as the Father in heaven was merely regarded as a deathless being. We speak of God as a Spirit, and we cannot think of Him otherwise, but this idea was not necessary to a primitive thinker who had not reached the conception of a ghost.

Dr Brinton, in his 'Myths of the New World,' speaking of a heaven-god, says, "It came to pass that the idea of God was linked to the heavens long ere man asked himself, Are the heavens material and God

spiritual?" Are we not, then, introducing animistic ideas into the conception, which originally had no existence there, when we call the Supreme Being of a savage spirit?

We have referred to Daramulum of the Australians, and the case here is so interesting that we may go a little into detail. Mr Huxley, as we have seen, has plainly challenged the existence of any ethical God or any worship, properly so called, among low savage tribes. In its simplest condition, such as it may be met with in the Australian savages, theology, he declares, "is a mere belief in the existence, powers, and dispositions (usually malignant) of ghost-like entities who can be propitiated or scared away; but no cult can properly be said to exist, and in this stage theology is wholly independent of ethics."

Now, no statement could be more opposed to the real facts of the case than this. The Australians are confessedly in the lowest stage of civilisation. They have no fixed habitation; they are not agricultural, and

possess neither bone, metal, nor pottery. Their only weapon is the boomerang, a crescent-shaped stick with points hardened in the fire. With such a people it is evident that their religious ideas, such as they are, are their own, and not due to European influences. For long it was supposed that they were a people without gods, and it was only comparatively lately in connection with the "Bord," their ancient and secret mysteries, that the real truth came out. In their case, as in the case of other early races, their religion is quite distinct from their mythology. These tribal mysteries are quite beyond suspicion, for they were in existence long before missionaries appeared. Mr Howitt, who was initiated into their mysteries, writes in his journal: "The supreme spirit, who is believed in by all the tribes here [South-Eastern Australia] either as a benevolent being, or dreaded as one who could severely punish the trespasses committed against the tribal ordinances and customs, whose first institution is ascribed to

him, Daramulum, watches the youths from the skies, prompt to punish by disease or death the breach of his ordinances, moral or ritual. His name is too sacred to be spoken except in whispers. At the mysteries his name may be uttered, at other times he is Master or Father; an omniscient Being, he punishes or rewards the conduct. He is the maker of all things. His abode is in the heavens. Their worship is that of the heart expressed in moral conduct, such as respect for old age, avoidance of selfishness and greed, abstinence from unlawful love, an ethical ideal appearing rather above the ordinary standard of practice."

Such facts, for which other authorities besides Mr Howitt could be cited, plainly contradict Mr Huxley's dictum. The moral code, such as is implied by public opinion, draws no sanction from theological dogmas. It rests for its origin and sanction on such dogmas.

When we turn to Africa we find traces of belief in an all-powerful Supreme Being. Writing of the Gold Coast, Mr Kemp says :

“Above and beyond the polytheism which everywhere prevails among pagans, there is the acknowledgment of a Supreme Being who controls the affairs of the universe. The name given to this Being is Nyankupon (the great friend), otherwise Otcherampare (the never-failing one), the literal idea being that of leaning against some stupendous object which never yields, as the rock never yields from under the limpet.” Sir Samuel Baker declares the Dinkass of the Upper Nile pay a kind of homage to the all-powerful Being dwelling in heaven, whence he sees all things. He is called Dendid (great rain) — that is, universal benediction. He is omnipotent. They use this chant:—

“At the beginning, Dendid made all things.

He created the sun.

And the sun is born and dies and comes again!

He created the stars.

And the stars are born and die and come again!

He created man.

And man is born and dies and returns no more!”

Among the Yaos in the South-East Central Africa, there is a being, M'lunga,

who resembles the Daramulum of the Australian aborigines. He is said to be the great spirit of all men, a spirit formed by adding all the departed spirits together. In the world beyond the grave he is represented as assigning to spirits their proper place, whether for ethical reasons or not we are not informed. From Mr Duff Macdonald's report we gather that these people, the Yao, believe in an eternal being, maker of mountains and rivers, existent before man, not liable to death, which came late among them.

Mungo Park, who in his travels had good opportunities of studying the religions of the natives, says, "I have conversed with all ranks and conditions on the subject of their faith, and can pronounce without the shadow of a doubt that belief in one God and in a future state of rewards and punishments is entire and universal among them." It is not often that the negroes make their religious opinions the subject of conversation: when interrogated in particular concerning their ideas of a future state they express themselves with great reverence, but endeavour to

shorten the discussion by saying no man knows anything about it.

To quote the experience of a more recent writer. Mr Samuelson, the Under-Secretary for Native Affairs in Natal, in the course of a recent address answered many questions that occur to those at work among the natives there. Have the Zulus any idea of a God? Does any thought of Him occupy their minds or come into their lives? The following remarks will answer these questions. God is a Supreme and Almighty Being, known more by name than recognised as reality. He is spoken of as Ukulunkular, the great great one. He is also referred to as Une Velinggagi, the one who appeared at the beginning; Somandltia, the Father of power; Um Dali, the Creator.

He is recognised in a certain measure as the rewarder of good deeds, and as one who visits with punishment the evil-doer. Although he is admitted to be the maintainer and sustainer of all things, he is nevertheless regarded as a God afar off and not near at hand. Natives admit that there must con-

sequently be a designer. Their arguments are akin to those of Cicero in his book, 'De Natura Deorum': "If this beautiful world, with all its rich variety of form, originated in an accidental combination of bodies, without any divine intelligence, why should not we say that accidental mixture of the letters of the alphabet produce verse, or artistic buildings arise by a fortuitous concurrence of atoms?"

The following questions, which have been asked by natives, will exemplify their thoughts in this respect: "The waters are never weary; they know no other law than to flow without ceasing from morning till night and from night to morning, and who makes them flow thus? The clouds also come and go and give rain to the earth. Whence come they? Who sends them? The rain-doctors do not give us the rain, for how could they do it? Why do not people see them when they go up to heaven to fetch it? The wind cannot be seen, but what is it? Who brings it and makes it blow? Do we know how the corn sprouts?"

One day there is not a blade in the field; go the following day to the field and you will find some. Who has given the earth the wisdom and power to produce it?

This idea of a Supreme God with ethical attributes among the African peoples is so extensively spread that it has been explained on the theory of its being a loan god borrowed from the Europeans. This is the opinion of Major Ellis in his book, 'The People of the Gold Coast.' He mentions that when Europeans reached it in the fifteenth century they found a northern Tance and a southern god, Bobowissi, still adored; but after an intercourse of some years with Europeans the villagers nearest European settlements added to their system a new deity, whom they termed Nanu Nyankupon. This was the God of the Christians, borrowed from them and adopted under a new designation, meaning "Lord of the Sky." A more recent authority, Mr Kemp, as we have seen, translates it differently as the Great Friend.

Before we accept this theory two questions

would need to be answered. How came it to pass that a god picked up from contact with the Portuguese became widely known through these impenetrable forests? An isolated people take from Europeans a new god, not under priestly influence, but, in direct opposition to this, a god who, spreading, becomes universally known! Is this at all likely?

The second question is, How comes it that this new god is unpropitiated? Presumably the natives adopt him because their superiority proved that the Europeans were protected by a deity of much greater power than any to whom they offered sacrifice. Then, as more powerful, the new god should receive their best sacrifices! But how stands the fact? Nyankupon had no priest and received no sacrifice. Is it again likely that an immense extent of country should adopt a new god and leave him unhonoured? One tribe of Fuegians near Magellan Straits worshipped an image called Christo picked up from a Spanish captain who visited the district. They took both effigy and name.

But these peoples of the Gold Coast took neither effigy nor name from the Portuguese. They neither imitated Catholic rites nor adopted their own; they prayed not nor sacrificed to the new Nyankupon.

The solution is improbable and inadequate to explain the facts of the case. Here again the problem meets us, How can such a being be explained on the ghost theory? Mr Kemp says that while acknowledging Nyankupon, they worship the spirits of the departed together with the images which their priests consecrate for their homage, and in which the spirits of the dead are supposed to reside. There are deities for particular houses and others for a whole town. But how are we to evoke, out of a crowd of hungry ghosts needing to be fed and propitiated by an offering, a supreme being who has no priest and no sacrifice?

Among the Andamanese there is no ancestor-worship. They used to be called the godless Andamanese, but, as in the case of the Australians, this was only because they had been glanced at superficially.

A closer examination on the spot by Mr Mann, who knows their language and lived with them, tells quite another tale. They have an absurd mythology like the Australians, but, like them, a highly ethical religion. This is not due to missionary influence, as Mr Mann has been their visitor, and they have no tradition of any other. Their god Pulugu is invisible. Fire is his symbol. He is immortal. By him were all things created except the powers of the soul. He is angry at wrong-doing, falsehood, theft, murder, and adultery. To those in pain or distress he is pitiful, and sometimes deigns to afford relief. He is the Judge of Souls, and the dread of future punishment to some extent is said to affect their course of action in this present life. Mr Mann gathered this from one of the elders of the tribe well instructed in their religion. Here again we ask, How could such a being be evolved from ancestor-worship where ancestral spirits are not worshipped?

In such investigations it cannot be kept too prominently before the mind that re-

ligion is one thing and popular mythology another. There are the two currents flowing, and possibly anthropology has been too much concerned with the impure stream, full of magic mummerly and ghost propitiation. There is no difficulty whatever in getting savages to speak of their superstitions and mythological ideas. That side has no sacredness for them, and if we study it we shall come away with an altogether false impression as to the real state of the case. As well might a foreigner describe our religion from superstitions and practices still existing among the remote peasantry.

This has been well put by Prof. Lewis Campbell in his 'Religion in Greek Literature.' "Suppose," he says, "that a stranger in describing Scottish religion were to say that our temples open generally to the west, though with less precision than that observed in some other lands; that we have abjured hero-worship, but still keep the vigil of the day that was formerly sacred to all heroes, and that on this occasion certain rites of divination are maintained,

such as that of burning hazel-nuts upon the open hearthstone, and of dipping a garment in a stream and looking backward, with other strange observances which are described by the poet of the nation; that horse-shoes are hung outside doors as a protection against evil spirits or the evil eye; that offerings are made at sacred wells to which the sick and infirm are carried for miraculous cures; that in some districts if a pig is met with in the road the person who encounters it must immediately touch cold iron; that on the vigil preceding the first day of the year, a time sacred to a local Bacchus whom the inhabitants call John Barleycorn, a custom has been introduced from over-seas, of lighting up a pine-tree on which offerings are suspended, and round which the children move (that this remnant of tree-worship should have come from abroad is more remarkable),—would this be an adequate description of Scottish religion?"

These things are not the influences that mould the home and purify to a certain

degree our national life. These things are mythology, presenting an interesting field to a student of folk-lore, but they are not religion. They form, as Prof. Campbell says, the leaf-mould which surrounds the trunk, but have little to do either with the deeper roots or the spreading branches. In the case of the savage nations, such as we have been considering, the contrast is not so sharp, but there it is, and failure to note it will lead to an entirely false view of the situation. Students of anthropology admit that even the lowest forms of fetichism are based upon, and spring out of, a recognition by the human spirit of a power and presence above man and nature, and that the existence of crude conceptions or superstitious practices in the midst of a certain age does not by any means give the key to the understanding of that whole age. And to us it is as plain as anything can or will be, that these savages lowest in the scale of civilisation could never, even where ancestral worship exists and fetichism prevails, have

come by these things to the conception of a supreme ethical Being who made all things. As an account of the origin of the idea of God animism seems to be a failure.

VI.

NATURALISTIC THEORIES OF JEHOVAH.

THESE theories are as many as the different theories of the origin of religion.

Totemists and animists will see in Jehovah a developed ghost-god, or a derivative from the worship of bulls and the golden calf; while those who find the origin of religion in the worship of natural forces will see in Him the Thunderer whose emblem was the fire on Sinai.

As an example of the animistic theory we may take the assertion of Mr Huxley: "For my part I see no reason to doubt that, like the rest of the world, the Israelites had passed through a period of mere ghost-worship, and had advanced through ancestor-

worship and fetichism and totemism to the theological level at which we find them."

The proof of this which he advances is, however, of the most unsatisfactory description. He finds a reference to ancestor-worship in the passage in Deuteronomy, "Of all the hallowed things I have not given ought for the dead" — *i.e.*, of the tithes dedicated to the Levites and the poor. If this be a reference to ancestor-worship picked up in Egypt, where the ghosts of the departed were religiously fed, it is a condemnation of such a practice, and one fails to see how the God who forbids can be evolved from the very thing He warns them against.

Again Mr Huxley finds that the Fifth Commandment as it stands would be an excellent compromise between ancestor-worship and monotheism, a most fitting reason surely for a command that has its roots in nature. He thinks further that the ark of the covenant may be a relic of ancestor-worship. Conscious of the weakness of his proof, however, he falls back on the sup-

position that all references to ancestor-worship in Scripture have been deliberately obliterated by late monotheistic editors. And yet other deviations from the prescribed mode of worship are held up to reprobation: why should this, if it existed, have been passed over? We may depend on it, that if such a thing as ancestor-worship existed, it would have been held up to condemnation by the prophets.

Mr Herbert Spencer argues in the same line, but to as little purpose. He practically gives away his case at the beginning by the admission that nomadic habits are unfavourable to the evolution of the ghost-theory. He endeavours to find in the regulations against self-mutilation an argument for his theory. In Jeremiah we read, "Neither shall men lament for them, nor cut themselves, nor make themselves bald for them; neither shall men tear themselves for them in mourning, to comfort them for the dead; neither shall men give them the cup of consolation to drink for their father or for their mother." And in

Deuteronomy we have the command, "Ye shall not make any cuttings in your flesh for the dead, nor print any marks upon you." But what, we ask, has all this to do with sacrifices to the ghosts of the departed? These are simply conformable to the oriental custom, ways of showing grief, tokens of sorrow, that have for the time being swallowed up all regard for personal appearance. The cuttings and mutilations may be intended to dull grief by the counter-irritant of bodily pain.

Even the passage cited from Psalm cvi. 28—"They joined themselves unto Baal-peor and ate the sacrifices of the dead"—may not mean anything more than acquiescence in foreign burial rites.

There is a reference in Deuteronomy which might with some plausibility have been quoted as a proof of ancestor-worship, but then it is introduced only as a disclaimer on the part of the offerer. He makes a solemn vow in presenting his offering of first-fruits: "I have not eaten thereof in my mourning, . . . nor given ought thereof for the dead:

but I have hearkened to the voice of the Lord my God, and have done according to all that Thou hast commanded me."

In a popular manual entitled 'A Short Introduction to History of Ancient Israel,' the author, Mr Oxford, finds a proof of ancestor-worship in David's excuse to Saul for his absence, that he had gone to the family sacrifice. But was the sacrifice to the ancestral ghost? His second proof collapses because it is founded on the baseless assertion that the chief of the tribe was the priest of the cult. For Micah, in Judges,—the illustration he cites,—was not the chief of Ephraim; he was not even priest in his own house. He consecrated one of his own sons to be priest till he got hold of a wandering Levite, to whom he said, "Be unto me a father and a priest," for ten shekels a-year, a suit of clothes, and his victuals. Again we ask, What is there in all this as to a chief being priest of his ancestral ghosts in the fact that a band of marauding Danites seized a Levite and some household idols (teraphim) Micah had made?

We should have said that Mr Huxley finds in the story of the witch of Endor, which he regards as a true statement of what occurred, a proof of ancestor-worship. The witch cries out, "Iace Elohim!" This Elohim he takes to be the ghost of the dead seer. But the word is used in a very vague, indeterminate sense, meaning something supernatural. Even supposing you translate it as "gods," the idea is simply the awful appearance of Samuel in his venerable majesty, and it is surely a precarious thing to find in this natural epithet in the circumstances any reference to a ghost-god.

Stade, the German critic, cites the story of Micah to prove that the different tribes in Israel had different religions; but the mere fact that the Danites asked the Levite whether it was not much better to be a priest to a tribe than an individual, rather goes to prove that their religion was the same, while they were willing to pay him better for his services.

Whence came the moral element in Jehovah that presents such a contrast to the

deities of the nations? Mr Huxley thinks it was derived from Egypt. No doubt in the Egyptian Book of the Dead we have the ghost of the departed telling his judges in Amenti what sins he has not committed, and many of these are forbidden in the Ten Commandments. But these morals are so simple in character, written as they are on the natural conscience, that the cult of Jehovah had surely no need to go for them to the Egyptian Book of the Dead. Besides, these are but as grains of wheat in a mass of chaff, minute regulations in regard to the body, the ritual of the ghost, animistic things for which Israel cared little and brought nothing out of the land of Egypt.

The Israelites may have borrowed something from Egypt in regard to the externals of their worship. The white linen dresses of the priests may have been modelled on the white robes of sacred state in which Joseph was arrayed. The form of the ark borne by the Levites may have had its prototype in that we see on the Egyptian monuments. But this, supposing it to be true, only re-

gards the outward ritual: we may be very sure that Israel was not indebted to Egypt for anything of doctrine. Certainly it was not from thence that the moral element in Jehovah was derived. It was not a new thing, it did not come with Moses' revelation of Jehovah, it was known to their ancestors before any of them set a foot in Egypt. So much for the derivation of Jehovah from a ghost-god.

Those who find the origin of the Jehovistic cult in natural religion connect the word with a root, "to fall down"—in its transitive form, "to cast down." Thus Jehovah would be the Destroyer, the Being who casts the thunderbolt to the earth. But if this were the case, why should such a title be selected as giving a new and higher name?

The patriarchal stage had run its course when the names of God, Elami, Shaddai, embodied the simple ideas of strength and power. Is the title of Thunderer any higher than these? When Moses proclaimed this name to Israel, while it was new, the God whose name it was was not new. "The God

of our fathers," he said, "hath appeared to me, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob," only assuming a new name to mark a new and more signal deliverance.

The critics of the modern school represent the Jehovah of pre-prophetic times as a Being of power rather than of moral greatness, a nature-God rather than a God of nature. But if this be so, what distinguishes the worship of Jehovah from the religions of surrounding nations?

Stade finds one distinguishing element was His jealousy of the worship of other gods. His power as at first conceived was a terrifying attribute, the God of the storm, and it takes time before the idea can be reached that this divine power may be exercised on the side of good. His holiness was merely jealousy of His honour, so that He might have due reverence. For illustration he refers to what befell the people of Bethshemesh when they looked into the ark, and Uzziah, who touched what was the symbol of the divine presence.

This representation of Jehovah gradually

assumed a kindlier aspect, from the fact that He will use His power to defend His people. The counterpart of His faithfulness to Israel is His anger against Israel's foes. "The distinguishing thought," he continues, "that made the religion of Jehovah different from that of the other members of the Semitic family can only have been that Jehovah was the only God of Israel, and therefore His worship excluded that of all other gods. Had not this idea been firmly held from the beginning, considering the temptations that lay on every side to polytheistic views from the time the tribes entered Canaan, the result could not have been the view of Jehovistic unity that came to prevail. It goes back for initiation to the Founder of the religion. This much is due to the work and thought of Moses."

We fail to see that all this is any explanation whatever of the distinguishing mark of the cult of Jehovah. The writers of this school are always maintaining that Jehovah is the God of Israel, as Chemosh was the god of Moab, as Moloch of Ammon.

It was a common belief that the national god would follow his worshippers and defend them in strange lands. What Stade makes the distinguishing thing about the worship of Jehovah was a common belief among the surrounding nations, and critics of his own school point to an obscure passage in the Book of Kings, where Mesha, King of Moab, sacrifices his own son to appease the jealousy of the god of the Moabites. In this contention he practically gives away his case for the Jehovistic religion being at the beginning nature-worship. He has no answer to the question how a mere nature-god was adopted by Israel and made from the beginning contrary to what obtains where nature-gods are worshipped, the sole object of regard, except that Jehovah from the first was so worshipped. But this pre-eminence must have been because of some distinguishing mark, owing to the presence of a higher element than he ascribes to Him,—its basis must have been ethical.

M. Renan would explain the unique position Jehovah holds by what he calls the

monotheistic instinct of the Semitic nations. We quite understand the term instinct when applied to the animal creation; but it seems a misuse of the term to apply it to the conscious thoughts of conscious beings. It is the use of a word to avoid a definition. And can there be any instinct without an instigator? Who was it that prompted the Semitic mind to worship only one God? As the late Max-Müller says, "Could the monotheistic instinct of the Semitic race, if an instinct, have been so frequently obscured, or the polytheistic instinct of the Aryan race, if an instinct, so completely annihilated as to allow the Jews to worship on all the high places about Jerusalem, and the Greeks and Romans to become believers in Christ? The only true explanation of the unique position Jehovah occupied among the Jews is, that His place there is the result of a primitive revelation."

An attempt has been made by the school of critics to whom we have already referred to identify Jehovah with Moloch, the god of fire, because of the constant association

with Him and application to Him of terms denoting fire and light. It is evident, however, that these are merely metaphorical.

There would be some foundation for the theory if it could be shown that these expressions were statements of fact literally made. But the symbol is a natural one, and has been used among many peoples to image the divine. In its swift energy to destroy, its purifying tendency, taking up dead matter and transforming it into its own brightness, apparently the least gross of visible things, fire lends itself to be a symbol of God.

Another argument for the identity of Jehovah and Moloch is founded on the rite of circumcision and the dedication of the first-born, which, though toned down into innocent religious ceremonies, are held to prove that Jehovah was a bloodthirsty being like Moloch. The principal passage relied on in proof of this, as regards circumcision, is that in Exodus where in the caravanserai Jehovah essays to kill Moses, and his wife Zipporah circumcises her son and throws the foreskin

to Jehovah, who thereupon lets Moses go. Such is Kuenen's interpretation of it. The passage is obscure, the text uncertain, but we fail to see, whatever the meaning be, that this is the interpretation. At most you can only draw from it that an uncircumcised person was liable to death, but that is a very different thing from saying that Jehovah demanded human life as a sacrifice. It may be quite legitimately construed to mean that circumcision is a mode of purification and dedication,—that Jehovah claims not the destruction of life but its sanctification.

By a similar mode of reasoning Kuenen comes to the conclusion that there is a connection between Jehovah and Moloch from the fact that Jehovah slew the first-born of the Egyptians and spared those of the Israelites, who henceforth belong to Him. That is to say, the same idea of the character of the Deity lies at the root of the dedication of the first-born and of human sacrifice. But here again we see only in these rites symbols of consecration to God: there is nothing whatever in them

to suggest a deity of a repulsive sanguinary character, but rather one in whose sight life is precious, and who desires that it may be consecrated and set apart to Him.

Reference is also made to Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac to prove that human sacrifice was offered to Jehovah, and that He was a deity in character akin to Moloch. But the question naturally arises, If, as is asserted, human sacrifices to the Deity were common at the Abrahamic stage, why is so much made of this as a singular triumph of devotion?

No doubt there lay at the root of God's command to the patriarch the same idea as was at the bottom of the heathen rite—viz., the best to God; but in the act of obedience Abraham finds out that the character of Jehovah his God is different from that of the deities worshipped around. Living as he did among neighbours whose worship demanded at its highest point human sacrifice, it is possible to conceive that the command to slay his son did not strike Abraham as it would strike us—as

utterly irreconcilable with true religion. He may have had the misgiving at times that he was not willing to do for his God what heathen worshippers were at times doing for theirs.

If it be asked how the all-merciful Father could stoop to issue a command that seems to reduce His own worship to the level of the inhuman rites of Moloch, the answer is, that it was an accommodation to the stage on which His worshippers stood. What took place was this. "For once," as Principal Dykes says, "a command was issued which, while it perfectly tested in the first instance the willingness and thoroughness of Abraham's loyalty without doing outrage to his previous knowledge of God, served also in the end to teach, in a far more memorable and impressive fashion than any verbal lesson would have done, that the true God is one who has no pleasure in such unnatural offerings. The issue of the transaction ought to have been the banishment of cruelty for ever from the worship of Jehovah." This is at

least clear, that the worshippers of Jehovah in Abraham's time served a God who did not delight in destroying human life but in saving and sanctifying it.

Nothing is more extraordinary in the way of attempted proof of Jehovah's connection with Moloch than the citation of that passage in the prophecy of Micah, "Wherewithal shall I come before Jehovah? Shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?" In these words, we are gravely told, "is expressed without doubt the prevailing belief that Jehovah has pleasure not only in animal sacrifices but also in human offerings, and that in the offering of a first-born son there was the efficacy of wiping out sin." Can you imagine a better example of how dominion to a pre-conceived idea can blind one to the plainest meaning of a passage? A more wooden interpretation of a sublime burst of poetry you can hardly conceive. It is perfectly clear to any unprejudiced observer that the prophet is not speaking of ordinary

offerings at all: occupied with the solemn question of man's acceptance with God, he rises from one costly service to another, and finds the costliest of all insufficient.

Prof. Robertson puts the case well when he asks: "Is there no such thing as rhetoric for our critics? When St Paul, in one of his most eloquent flights, says, 'Though I give all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, I am nothing,' are we to conclude that the early Christians of his day, having, as at Pentecost, given all their goods to a common fund, were also in the habit of worshipping this same fiery Moloch? One would say that there was less reason for St Paul making such a rhetorical supposition of self-immolation in his day than for Micah, with the Moloch-worshippers around him, making it in his."

The attempt to show that in pre-prophetic times Jehovah was worshipped like the deities of the nations as a Being of might rather than of ethical qualities, the only national god indeed, but, except in this

particular, not differing from other gods in the estimation of His own worshippers, falls to the ground from lack of proof.

Some critics insist that it was owing to the prophets that in Jewish thought Jehovah was raised from a tribal or national to a universal moral deity; but from the Book of Exodus we learn that this had been reached at the period of the Egyptian sojourn by the hardening of Jehovah's heart: "For I will at this time send all my plagues upon thine heart, and upon thy servants, and upon thy people; that thou mayest know that there is none like me in all the earth."

The moral consciousness of God possessed by the prophets, it has been truly said, sprang out of a religious consciousness centuries old awakened in the national heart during this creative time.

It will not do, then, to say that at first Jehovah was only the private god of a petty tribe, the Lar of a wandering household, but has been developed and expanded into the vast conception of universal Deity.

For how could this be? A petty god thus increasing to infinite proportions, like the genie emerging from the sealed jar in the Arabian tale, until from his first foothold on the tent-floor of a nomad family he has towered above the stars and his form filled the universe!

The prophet lays it down as a thing not to be challenged or disputed but universally recognised: "Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith Jehovah." Why, we ask, should the development have taken place in this instance and not in any of the deities of the more powerful tribes around? Why do men to-day in the East adore Jehovah and not one of the gods of Egypt or Babylon? or we in the West, why do we not honour Odin or Thor, the deities of our Saxon and Scandinavian forefathers? There is but one answer: The Hebrew prophets are right; Jehovah is the God of creation, the Maker and Moulder of all things.

The Biblical account is the most natural, the easiest explanation. If early Israel had higher religious conceptions, such as we

know to have existed among many lower races, they might be revived and strengthened by a prophet like Moses in a crisis of tribal fortunes, and become the rallying-point of a new national sentiment.

We know that it was so. "Obscured," as Mr Andrew Lang says, "in some degree by acquaintance with the idols of Egypt, and restricted and localised by the very national sentiment which they fostered, these conceptions were purified and widened far beyond any tribal or national restrictions—widened as far as the *flammantia mœnia mundi*—by the historically unique genius of the prophets, blended with the doctrine of our Lord and recommended by the addition of animism in its pure and priceless form—the reward of faith, hope, and charity in eternal life—the faith of Israel enlightened the world."

VII.

IS MAN A SON OF GOD BY CREATION?

WE have seen, in discussing Evolution and the entrance of evil, that we must not overstate the statements of Scripture in reference to Adam and the period of innocence, or read more into them than they naturally convey. No doubt it has been largely the custom with certain writers to indulge in elaborate delineations of the perfect state of the first man. Eden with them is heaven indeed, and Adam furnished with every excellence and adorned with every grace. But such pictures are the creation of the imagination; they find little corroboration in the brief and somewhat meagre statement of Scripture.

The record in Genesis says, "The Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and he became a living soul." St Paul contrasts the first Adam with the second: "The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit." The apostle almost speaks disparagingly of Adam, declaring that "he was of the earth earthy." When he calls him a living soul ($\psi\upsilon\chi\eta$), the adjective corresponding to this noun he uses in 1 Cor. ii. 14, where it is translated "natural": "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God."

Adam was a natural man, a being endowed with intelligence, perception, moral sense, and a capacity for the divine fellowship. More than this he does not seem to have been. When he is said to have been created in the likeness and image of God, that is not to be interpreted, as it sometimes is, to mean some super-excellent and divine condition which was lost at the Fall, for in Noah's time the continuation of

this condition is implied in the command, "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made He man." It in all likelihood points to the divine pattern and archetype, after which man's intelligent nature was fashioned, reason, volition, conscience being divine attributes, and man alone of all creatures resembling God in the possession of these.

It seems to us that the imperfection in the physical sphere had its counterpart in the human. Eden was not in all respects ideally perfect. It was before the Fall that man was put into the garden to dress and keep it. The fact that such dressing and keeping were necessary clearly shows that even then nature was not at first in her perfect ideal. The calling in of man's toil and skill presupposes that there were "luxuriant growths to be pruned, tendencies of vegetation to be checked, weeds to be extirpated, tender flowers to be trained and nursed, and fruits to be more richly developed."

Does not such an environment preclude us giving to man the very highest position? Are we entitled to say that he was constituted by creation a son of God? That those who rest upon Christ for salvation are sons of God goes without saying. Provision has been made by which they are not only adopted into God's family and become titular children; by regeneration they become actual children, partakers of the divine nature. But apart from the work of Redemption, is there on the platform of creation any relation between God and man which may be properly termed fatherhood on God's part and sonship on man's? In other words, is there such a thing as sonship by creation?

The question, it should be noted, does not refer to the existence in God of certain attributes, such as goodness, love, tenderness, sympathy, or the exercise of such feelings towards His creatures. It is much more precise and definite. "It is," to quote the words of the late Principal Candlish, "about the existence of a certain real and

actual relation of fatherhood and sonship between the Creator and His intelligent creatures, such a relation as implies reciprocal obligations, having certain reciprocal rights, privileges, and endearments associated with them. It is not a divine feeling that may be called fatherly, as it might be equally well named from some other kindly human analogy, that we are in search of, but a real and actual divine fatherhood."

This is the question, and the whole of it. If certain objectors had kept this better in view they would not have wandered into irrelevant surmisings as to what feelings must exist in the bosom of God towards His creatures drawn from the human analogy of father and son, which are really beside the question. All the love, pity, and tenderness which they found upon as proving fatherhood on God's part might exist, and did exist, in His relation as Sovereign to His creatures so long as they continued obedient.

Is there anything, we ask, in the idea of

fatherhood ascribed to God in Scripture with respect to man as created other than origination? Does creation involve pater-nity? We cannot see that it does in any special or particular sense. The fatherhood thus obtained is of too vague and compre-hensive a kind to establish what is sought, embracing not only the higher intelligences, fallen and unfallen, but all mankind, saved and lost alike. What, as regards relation between God and His creatures, does creation necessarily involve? Simply this, that they are "capable of understanding His will, feeling their responsibility under it, and receiving reward or punishment in terms of it."

It is quite aside from the question to ex-patiate on the moral rectitude and high endowments of primeval man, his capacity of loving God and being loved by Him in turn. All this may be granted, and yet the question of filial relation remains un-touched. To love God, to rejoice in His favour, to trust Him, supposing these capac-ities to have been part of man's original

constitution, are possible on the platform of subjectship, and do not in themselves imply anything higher.

So we, looking at the creature as formed by God, can only see that he is the subject, and God's relation to him is only that of sovereign ruler. This is Principal Candlish's position, and Dr Fairbairn, in his 'Christ in Modern Theology,' attempts to traverse it. In this effort he himself manifests decidedly Arminian proclivities. These colour his view of sovereignty, and he charges Principal Candlish with borrowing terms from political history, because he describes God's rule over His creatures as of the most thoroughly royal, imperial, autocratic kind.

But it is surely understood that when we attribute to God terms drawn from human analogy, what is harsh, one-sided, exaggerated, or objectionable in them can have no place in His perfection. He draws a distinction between the rule of the sovereign and the father, and maintains that the former so reigns as to strengthen his authority, that his government is in the

proper sense legal and judicial. God willed to create. The willing was a sovereign act, but the motive and ends made the act paternal. Thus the sovereign and the father both appear in the creation of man.

Now it seems to us that Dr Fairbairn errs here, by applying the full revelation of God we have in Christ to the act of creation, forgetting the progressive character of revelation and the divine dealing with man. "That is not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural, and afterwards that which is spiritual." So in the creation. The legal precedes the gracious; man is treated, to begin with, only as a subject. Is it possible to co-ordinate the two relations of father and sovereign on the original platform of creation? Do they not clash and conflict with one another, the one qualifying, weakening, restraining, and limiting the action of the other? One must dominate and assert its supremacy at the expense of the other.

Dr Fairbairn allows that sovereignty may be said to begin with creation, and if it

begin, then it leads, it holds the field, for where is the fatherhood? "In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." "This is the dictum of a judge, a sovereign. There is no word of sparing in the case of disobedience, 'as a man spareth his own son that serveth him.' There is no hope held out of fatherly chastisement; no hint given that when judged he will be chastened so as not to be condemned."

In the whole transaction we mark no trace of a father's dealing, we hear no tone of a father's voice until the terrible penalty is pronounced. Then, but not till then, the father appears in the dim but gracious intimation of the coming of a true Son, who is to repair the breach and restore the forfeited inheritance. Apart, however, from gracious covenant arrangement, on the basis of creation, or in the sphere of man's original probation and fall, there is not, it appears to us, a single trace of his standing towards God in any other relation but that of subject to his sovereign Lord and King.

There are, however, certain passages of

Scripture which are held to prove creation sonship, to some of which we may briefly advert.

Luke's genealogy may be dismissed with the remark that the writer is simply tracing the successive generations up to Adam, who was the son of God. Any paternity other than origination seems to be absent from the writer's mind, and sonship is predicated of Adam in the vaguest sense.

A strong point is made of St Paul's quotation from an early Greek poet, "For we also are his offspring"; but all that can really be drawn from it seems to be that God is the Father of all in the sense of being their Creator. *Ex nihilo, nihil fit.* "The Athenians are not to imagine that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone graven by art and man's device: intelligent beings postulate an intelligent Creator." This position the apostle would strengthen by quoting from their own admitted beliefs. Here again the fatherhood has nothing specific in it, but is used in the widest sense, even as Abraham is called the father of many nations.

But if it be said that here we have a heathen witnessing to the fact of God's fatherhood, and that therefore it must be something inherent in the natural constitution of man, we reply, If it be meant that there is in man an innate sense of creaturehood on his part and creatorship on God's, we might be disposed to grant it; but if it be meant that by nature man has an innate sense of fatherly feeling on God's part towards him, we cannot allow that it is so, for the experience of the creature belies it.

The early Greek religion, while the purest, was also the sternest and saddest. "Except," says Prof. Shedd, "where religion was converted into the worship of Beauty, as in the instance of the later Greek, and all solemn and truthful ideas of law and justice eliminated from it, every one of the natural religions of the globe is filled with sombre and gloomy hues and no others." Man by nature, as we have already seen, knows that God is just, that He will punish sin. God's rectitude is written on the human constitution, but no trace of His

fatherhood, using the word in the strict sense, is written there.

The parable of the Prodigal Son is also pressed into service to prove a creation sonship. "There God appears," says Prof. Bruce in his 'Kingdom of Evil,' "as one who takes pleasure in the repentance of sinners, such as the reprobates of Jewish society, because in these penitents He sees prodigal children returning to their Father's house." But the question is not, as has been already said, about the existence in God of certain attributes, as love, tenderness, sympathy towards men, but about a real and actual relation of fatherhood.

It is of the utmost importance to the right interpretation of any parable to remember that it is designed to teach a special truth, which truth must be kept ever before the mind in the elucidation of details. The details are not of the essence of the parable, they are merely accessories meant to throw light upon the main truth taught. Keeping this principle in view, we find that the end and aim of this parable

is to show on the one hand God's love in Christ to the returning penitent, and on the other to condemn the malignity of the Pharisees in objecting to Christ's gracious dealing with sinners. This is the sole object of the parable, and he is a bold man who would found a doctrine on its mere drapery.

Besides, any one attempting this would prove too much; for not only would he prove that God has fallen sons who are restored from the swine-trough, but un-fallen ones who need no repentance, to whom it is said, "Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine," who nevertheless show anything but a pliant spirit, expostulating with God on account of His grace and compassion. "If," as the late Dr Martin says, "people will prove sonship by the prodigal, they must go on and take his brother too,—at least, they must not object if the opposite counsel call for him. But the kind of sonship which comes out of court in the end of the contention is not much worth the having, not quite what is contended for."

VIII.

THE USE OF NATURAL THEOLOGY.

NATURAL THEOLOGY is, as the term would lead us to infer, of very early date. Its origin is prior to the Christian era. Cicero's treatise, 'De Natura Deorum,' is really a treatise on Natural Theology. The argument there is; that design in nature proves the existence of a Creator—that we might as well expect an accidental mixture of letters to produce verse, or a heterogeneous jumble of stones to produce artistic buildings, as suppose the universe to be the result of a fortuitous concourse of atoms. He reasons to a creative and organising power.

It may be fairly questioned whether in his view that creative power be single or

multiple, personal or impersonal ; the passages were too rhetorical, too undecided, too deficient in argumentative precision, to be absolutely clear on this point.

The teleological argument for the existence of God has been rightly termed peculiarly Western. It regards the world not as a pageant but as a reality—"a grand and fruitful combination of rational ends and proper means." It is in Stoicism that you come upon the earliest occurrence of the title Natural Theology. Augustine, in his 'City of God,' states on the authority of Varro, who in this epitomises the teachings of Stoicism, that there are three species of theology—the poetic or mythological, the civil or political, and the physical or natural.

The first is the scheme of divine acts and beings which is suitable to the theatre, the world of literature and art, and its hierophants are the poets. The second is the mode under which a political community acknowledges its dependence on higher powers, and is in the charge of sacerdotal officials. But the third is the way in which

the thinker and the man of science sees the great paradox of things.

He is not content with the reflection of reality in myth and legend of gods and demigods. He looks at the whole range of things, at the great system of nature above the range of art and popular religion, where alone is to be found the true vision of the essence of things.

The oldest example of Natural Theology, restricting the term to the physico-theological argument from design in the Christian and pre-Reformation period, is the 'Theologia Naturalis' of Raymond de Sabunda, published in 1438. The author was a Spaniard, and his work is chiefly known by a translation published by Montaigne about 1569.

The scope of the treatise is as follows. God has given man two books — first, the book of Nature. By his blindness man was unable to read it, so God gave him another, the book of Holy Scripture. But this key, according to our author, is a dubious gift. It requires in its obscurity an interpreter with a special training; its authenticity re-

quires to be corroborated by reason and argument. To use the key aright we require philology, grammar, logic, and rhetoric; it cannot be studied without a master.

It is different with the book of Nature. It needs no master to enable you to understand it. There is no possibility of mistaking its meaning, and no risk from forgeries. He calls it an infallible science which any one without labour may acquire in a month, and it requires no effort of memory, the light of all science containing the rule of nature which shows the whole duty of man. In these latter days it is necessary to every Christian that he may be established in the Catholic faith. He says the universe of things and beings is set up, as it were, a natural ladder having firm and immovable steps by which a man may ascend into himself.

Natural Theology, viewing it as the argument for the existence of God as exhibited in the evidence of design in nature, attracted much attention in England during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

Bacon described it as that "knowledge or rudiment of knowledge concerning God which may be obtained by contemplation of His creatures." "It suffices," he adds, "to confute atheism, but not to inform religion." Newton lent the weight of his great name to encourage this department of study. As against the Cartesian hypothesis, which sought to explain the stability and symmetry of the planetary world by a purely naturalistic and mechanical evolution according to fixed laws, he declared his conviction that all these regular movements do not have their source in mechanical causes: "The diurnal rotations of the planets could not be derived from gravity, but required a divine arm to impress them."

Thus fostered by Christian scientists, the study was popularised by works like that of John Ray, 'The Wisdom of God manifested in the Works of Creation.' Such attempts to make the book of Nature a commentary on the book of Revelation gave rise to the Boyle Lectures.

The growing study of nature, which had

hitherto been left pretty much to its own resources to win what favour it could by its own intrinsic attractiveness, had now the ægis of the Church thrown over it, and gained a status which it had not before. The Church allied herself to the new spirit of research, and sought, as one says, "to make the sciences pay tribute to the religious and theological interests of the age and country."

The Boyle Lectures were delivered in England, but they found imitators elsewhere—*e.g.*, in Germany. Our theologians to-day very much take their cue from Germany, but then Germany took the cue from England. In 1711 W. Derham published his Boyle lecture under the title of 'Physico-Theology, the Evidence in Nature of a Superhuman Designer and Contriver.' This was followed in 1714 by his 'Astro-Theology,' illustrating how the heavens declare the glory of God. These two works were translated into German by the well-known scholar John Albert Fabricius. Wolff, the philosopher, dealt with

the subject in his 'Theologia Naturalis.' Among ourselves the succession was carried on by Butler's 'Analogy,' Paley's 'Natural Theology,' and the Bridgewater Treatises.

The tendency to-day as regards Natural Theology is to go to extremes, to make either too little of it or too much. To many it seems an antiquated anachronism, something that may have been useful once but has outlived its day. It seems a "belated stranger, if not an impertinent intruder into the circle of the sciences."

The argument from design has been pronounced unsatisfactory. It is said to have lost its naturalness. We do not now believe that God's relation to nature is that of a maker to a watch or an architect to a building, who makes the best of the materials which come to hand.

In the evolutionary hypothesis J. S. Mill was inclined to see the supplanting of the old Creator by what Darwin called "my deity," natural selection. Formerly he thought that the argument from design satisfied the requirements of inductive in-

ference, so far at least as to suggest a considerable probability in favour of an intelligent and powerful being as the guide of the cosmic movements; but its cogency is minimised in his opinion, if upon the Darwinian hypothesis the same facts could be explained as the cumulative effect of accidental variations, and of the natural actions and reactions of all existences.

But, as we have already seen, even granting evolution, that does not dispense with God. It only means, as Charles Kingsley held, that "Deity created primal forces capable of self-development in all forms needful *pro tempore* and *pro loco*. In our view the theory is as yet unproved: we incline to a creation in which species are persistent and unalterable as more conformable to present facts; but a theory of development and evolution need not rule out acts of implanting. Life when its time came may have entered by direct creation—the life of animal and man."

It is to be noted that the idea of design in nature was, in Greece especially, the

discovery of men who by it were more anxious to lay down a theory of the universe than to prove the being of God. It was cosmic and scientific in its origin rather than religious and theistic.

It is said that the argument from design regards only the dead mechanism as a structure built by an architect who planned all its parts, and that while design might well fit in with this idea, it is less applicable now, as nature is considered not as a manufactured product but as a system which is the outcome of growth.

But to our mind the recent researches of science have only brought to view adaptations of means to end, instances of wisdom and care that far transcend those drawn from the inanimate universe as arguments for the divine existence. The philosopher of old said he could prove the existence of God from a straw; we do it to-day from a microbe invisible to the naked eye. We hear much of the deadly microbes of disease, but those infinitesimal organisms

that are harmful are by far the minority. The majority are helpful. They hasten putrefaction. Were it not for their labours, whereby life's refuse is broken up into its original elements, and so turned into material that can be built up again into the living tissue of animals and plants, the whole surface of the globe would be simply choked up with the useless *débris* of bygone generations — a wonderful testimony to the divine wisdom and foresight.

It is also objected that such a truth as the existence of God is intuitional, and therefore does not admit of proof—does not, in fact, need it. You cannot, it is said, prove the self-evident: as well attempt to prove a thing to be beautiful to a man who sees no beauty in it.

Now, in a sense it is quite true that intuitive truths neither need nor admit of proof. All the same, they lend themselves to be illustrated, and their denial can be proved to involve contradictions and absurdities.

The axioms of Euclid are the basis of which geometry is the structure. As the man who denies these can be proved to believe impossibilities, so, while the existence of God, in whom we live, move, and have our being, is an innate perception, yet His existence may be shown to be a supposition so absolutely necessary to account for the facts of consciousness and the external world, that to deny it renders the problem of the universe an insoluble enigma.

But there are those again who discount Natural Theology on the score that it is entirely out of place, now that the darkness is past and the true light shines. Of what use is it now that we have a supernatural revelation? The Son has come to show us the Father. Life and immortality are brought to light in the Gospel. The natural man cannot by his reason know God. If he is to know Him, he must be enlightened by God Himself through the Word and Spirit.

It may be well to remind those who take

up this position, that the Scriptures themselves clearly recognise the place of Natural Theology. The works of nature are there represented as revealing the being and attributes of God. The 19th Psalm begins with God's revelation of Himself in nature before it turns to the revelation of Himself in the written Word: "The heavens declare the glory of God. . . . Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night showeth knowledge. This is no speech and no word; their voice is not heard. Through the whole earth hath their line gone forth, and their words to the end of the world." In dealing with the heathen the writers of Scripture appeal to the evidence nature bears to God. "Understand, ye brutish among the people: and ye fools, when will ye be wise? He that planted the ear, shall He not hear? He that formed the eye, shall He not see? . . . He that teacheth man knowledge, shall not He know?" (Ps. xciv. 8-10.)

The apostle uses this evidence in dealing alike with the ignorant and the learned.

Speaking to the rude inhabitants of Lycaonia, he said: "We also are men of like passions with you, and preach unto you that ye should turn from these vanities unto the living God, which made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all things that are therein: who in times past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways. Nevertheless He left not Himself without witness, in that He did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness" (Acts xiv. 15-17).

To his audience of philosophers on Mars Hill he said: "God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that He is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though He needed any thing, seeing He giveth to all life, and breath, and all things; and hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; that

they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after Him, and find Him, though He be not far from every one of us; for in Him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also His offspring. Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device" (Acts xvii. 24-29).

In the first chapter of his Epistle to the Romans the apostle goes further, and asserts not only that the existence of God, but His eternal power and Godhead, are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, so that men are without excuse if they do not glorify Him. If so, we have a sure foundation for Natural Theology. But while some make little of Natural Theology, others go to the opposite extreme and make it everything. The knowledge of God that it gives, say they, is all that a man needs, precluding any necessity for a supernatural revelation.

But looking up from nature to nature's

God will not meet man's deepest need. Nature's God is a Being of infinite power, unerring wisdom, and unswerving justice. But man's conscience has everywhere testified to his sinfulness. His knowledge of God through nature has not turned to his betterment.

Scripture declares men to be without excuse, "because that, when they knew God, they glorified Him not as God, neither were thankful, but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things."

The knowledge of God that nature gives has nothing in it to satisfy an awakened conscience, or answer the question, "How shall sinful man be just before God?" It is mercy that puts hope into the sinner, but nature gives no hint of the existence of any such attribute in God. In pagan religions men clearly perceived the justice

of God, that of necessity He must punish sin. It is a principle implanted in the human constitution, inwoven with the very texture of the soul, that transgression of law must be followed by retribution.

This is abundantly clear from the Greek poets and philosophers. The message of *Æschylus* is that the gods render to every man according to his works: "To him, as to the Hebrew prophets, history is a revelation of the will of Providence, and the ruin of enemies and the overthrow of nations are but examples of the handiwork of God."¹

Other specimens of ancient Greek drama find their material in the mythology of Greece, but the "*Persæ*" is a play taken from history. It is a sermon on the fact that ruin overtakes pride, as shown in the disastrous end of the attempt of the Persian despot to subdue Greece. The gist of the whole you have in these lines—

"For wanton pride from blossom grows to fruit,
The full corn in the ear of utter woe,
And reaps a tear-fraught harvest."

¹ Haigh's Tragic Drama of the Greeks.

Or more tersely—

“Zeus is the avenger of o’er-lofty thoughts,
A terrible controller.”¹

As to the divine vengeance in the individual experience of the evil-doer, you have it in these lines:—

“Justice from her watchful station
With a sure-winged visitation
Swoops, and some in blazing noon
She for doom doth mark,
Some in lingering eve, and some
In the deedless dark.”²

Not only does our poet believe in retribution, but we have a strange echo in his lines of these words in the Second Commandment, “Visiting the iniquities of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation”:—

“I tell the ancient tale
Of sin that brought swift doom,
Till the third age it waits.”³

He has caught the idea of heredity in

¹ Persæ, 816-819, 823, 824; Plumptre’s translation.

² Choëphoræ, 61-65; Blackie’s translation.

³ The Seven against Thebes, 739-741; Plumptre’s translation.

moral evil and the descending curse on the offspring of evil-doers :—

“ But wickedness of old
Is wont to breed another recklessness,
Sporting its youth in human miseries,
Or now, or then, whene'er the fixed hour comes.”¹

Sophocles is no less emphatic than Æschylus, that the sign and proof of divine order in the world is to be seen in the retribution that inevitably falls upon guilt. According to his teaching, wickedness can never prosper : “ If a man walks proudly in word with no fear of justice, and follows unrighteous gain, how shall he escape the arrows of the gods ! ”²

Sometimes evil-doers are cut off in the very moment of their triumph by the “ swift-footed vengeance of Heaven.”³ At other times punishment seems to be delayed ; but “ the gods, though slow, are sure in visiting crime, when men abandon godliness and turn to evil.”⁴

¹ Agamemnon, 737-740 ; Plumptre's translation.

² *Cædipus Tyrannus*, 883-892 ; Haigh's translation.

³ *Antigone*, 1103.

⁴ *Cædipus Coloneus*, 1536, 1537.

With Sophocles, Zeus is generally but the supreme god of Greek mythology, the son of the Earth and Cronos; but occasionally he abandons the language of popular religion, and, speaking in a loftier strain, gives his own conception of the Supreme: "He is sole disposer of the future, owner and guide of all things. His power is everlasting, and neither all-subduing sleep nor the unwearied mouths of heaven can overmaster it."¹

He holds in his hand the administration of the law to which the whole universe is subject, and—

"Justice proclaimed from of old
Sits with Zeus by everlasting decree."²

Take now one illustration from the philosopher and moralist Plutarch. He wrote about sixty ethical essays—"Moralia." One of these is entitled "The Slow Vengeance of the Deity," in which he adduces reasons for the apparent delay in this world of the punishment of the wicked. His theme is

¹ *Antigone*, 604-610.

² *Œdipus Coloneus*, 1381.

very much that of St Peter in his Second Epistle when he deals with the objection of the scoffer, "Where is the promise of God's coming judgment?" The apostle's answer is that the Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness, "for to the eternal Mind one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day."

Plutarch answers the question in a different way, but he is equally clear and decided that vengeance will ultimately come. We look in vain in the speculations of this thoughtful moralist for any scintilla of the doctrine of divine mercy. He believes in Tartarus for the wicked and Elysium for the good, but men go to these places on the principles of the strictest justice.

From nature the human mind has no proof that God will forgive sin. Our reason perceives intuitively that God is just and must of necessity punish sin, but we have no certainty that He will forgive it. We can only reach this assurance through a revelation. We do not need a revelation to

teach us God is just: that we perceive to be an innate truth, written on the human constitution, and so, as we have seen, familiar to the heathen world.

But it may be objected, if justice is a necessary attribute of God, may not mercy be also; and if it belong to the conception of a perfect Being, may it not be assumed as present by the pagan? True, but the existence of an attribute is one thing and its exercise another.

This has been well put by the late Prof. Shedd. "Omnipotence," he says, "necessarily belongs to the idea of the Supreme Being, but it does not follow that it must necessarily be exerted in act. Because God is able to create the universe of matter and mind, it does not follow that He must create it. The doctrine of the necessity of the creation, though held in a few instances by Theists who seem not to have discerned its logical consequences, is naturally pantheistic. Had God been pleased to dwell for ever in the self-sufficiency of His Trinity, and never called the finite into existence from nothing,

He might have done so, and He would still have been omnipotent and blessed for ever. In like manner the attribute of mercy might exist in God and yet not be exercised. Had He been pleased to treat the human race as He did the fallen angels, He was perfectly at liberty to do so, and the number and quality of His immanent attributes would have been the same as they are now. But justice is an attribute which only exists of necessity, because not to exercise it would be injustice."

Natural Theology is thus insufficient in itself. It is only the outward vestibule of Revelation, where God is seen in all the plenitude of His grace. We must neither unduly exalt nor unduly despise it. It has its place, but only as a handmaid to the realities of revealed religion.

IX.

MAN'S RELATION TO NATURE.

THERE are two ways in which this relation may be conceived — the materialistic and the idealistic.

Nature, looking at it from the view point of the materialist, while controlled by its own laws, seems to be determined in its course by no alien cause. It is sufficient, complete; it has its end clearly before it, to which it moves in a great mass majestically, turning neither to the right hand nor to the left. Against this power proud puny man, the child of caprice and impulse, seems at first sight to set himself to check and prevent. He tunnels its mountains, bridges its seas, builds his cities on its surface, get-

ting the victory only as he continues his operations: let him desist, and nature immediately resumes its sway, and in a few years obliterates all traces of his works.

To a pessimistic materialism man seems "a child born of nature in some foul hour of mysterious incest, doomed from his birth to struggle, but to struggle for ever in vain against his mother and her ordinances, vexing her soul with his vanity and his insanity, his despairs, by his ideals moral and immoral, but doomed also at some distant date to fade away into nothingness and leave the weary world at last at peace from the perverse iniquity of her Caliban, her youngest and most froward child."

Man's advent marks the emergence of something unnatural, what is opposed to and in revolt from nature, and there is a conflict for a time that can only have one issue. The rebellion is doomed to failure, as the shimmer of meteoric light, which flashes for a time but is soon extinguished and only a dead stone left. And yet, foredoomed as he is, there is that in man that

will not let him yield, but fight to the last gasp against the inevitable. Nowhere has this aspect of things been more finely conceived than in the Scandinavian mythology. "Man," as the late Prof. Wallace says, "hears the loud yelp of the Fenris wolf coming ever nearer, more heart-crushing; he sees the powers of ancient darkness, the giants gathering round stonily imminent as the light grows dim, and on the face of Loki the smile of assured triumph settling grizzlier and grimmer; the jaws of the world-serpent open for their prey; he feels the eternal frost creeping to the vitals of the earth; he declares that he cherishes no hope of the ultimate reversal of the doom impending, and yet undaunted as a bridegroom to meet his bride, he goes forth mightier in his mood than the elements which seek to engulf him, and bury him and his revolt out of sight."

It is unintelligible and absurd, you say, but it is magnificent. And is it so unintelligible, after all? Is it not rather, as has been said, "the reason of life sup-

pressing the reason of logic, and of what the short-sighted call science"? When the last struggle comes, a man who in the vortex has lost his religion, whose mind is without hope, will yet with resolution undaunted wrestle with his adversary till death still his pulse. It will not do to dismiss this view as altogether untenable, for, though they may be crudely interpreted, it has certain facts as its foundation.

The other view of man's relation to nature is the idealistic or Christian, for it is the view presented in Scripture. According to this, while man's body is allied to nature, the faculties of his mind and soul come from another source, and raise him above nature, enabling him finally to overcome it. Nature, indeed, seizes and retains what is hers, but the man himself escapes and departs to the unseen not conquered.

In his body man is part of the physical universe. The elements that compose the crust of the earth in varied combination form his frame. It is controlled by the common laws of physical and chemical

action. It is easier to class man physiologically than psychologically. As a constituent part of animated nature, he cannot disown his kinship with nature. But nobody thinks that by classifying him with the other creatures that live on the earth you give an adequate account of him. The term supernatural has become associated with direct interference by God in nature, but there is a sense in which man is supernatural—*i.e.*, he is above and outside nature. It is implied in the common use of language, as when we speak of the works of a man as of a different kind from the works of nature.

Materialistic evolution would rule man in his higher aspects out of nature, in the sense that he cannot see in it any analogue with his own intelligence, will, or affection. It seems a very illogical position to make man the product of evolution in every atom of his body, and in every function of his mind a child of nature, and then condemn him for seeing in it some image of himself. Those who tell us we are not at one with anything above us are the same who insist

that we are at one with everything beneath us.

“Whatever,” as one says, “there is in us purely animal we may see everywhere, but whatever there is in us purely intellectual and moral, we delude ourselves if we think we see it anywhere. There are abundant homologues between our bodies and the bodies of the beasts, but there are no homologues between our minds and any mind which lives and manifests itself in nature. Our livers and our lungs, our vertebral and nervous systems, are identical in origin and in function with those of the living creatures around us, but there is nothing in nature or above it which corresponds to our forethought or design or purpose.”

This is the language of a philosophy than which no system ever lay under a greater weight of antecedent improbability, and which, we venture to say, becomes more incredible at every discovery of the unity of nature by scientific research.

Man, he whom the Greeks called *anthro-*

pos, because he was supposed to be the only being whose look is upwards, is part of nature, and no philosophy can displace him. His upright posture was given him, we believe, by exoteric intelligence — “God made man upright”—and is not, we make bold to affirm, the result of any exoteric mental evolution.

Dr Munro, in his address as President of the Anthropological Section of the British Association, deals with the erect posture of man, which, unique as it is among vertebrates, he considers one of the chief factors in his intellectual supremacy. “No other animal,” he declares, “has ever succeeded in completely divesting its anterior limbs of their primary functions of support and locomotion, thereby setting them free for manipulation and prehensile purposes.” The development of the human hand out of a forefoot until it became the most perfect mechanical organ hitherto produced by nature stimulated, and in turn was quickened by, the mental faculties. “From the first moment that the being recognised

the advantage of using a club or a stone in attacking his prey or defending himself, there came into existence the direct incentive to a higher brain development."

If this contention of Dr Munro were true, and man's erect attitude the outcome of his own mental evolution and consequent ascendancy, we should expect to see the same thing in the lower animals as their attitude approaches the upright.

In the Sussex Weald have been found bones of a gigantic saurian, the iguanodon. Only scattered fragments have been found there, not sufficient to give any adequate indication of the complete animal. This, however, has been supplied from the coal-fields of Belgium. A group of these skeletons in Brussels Museum gives us not only a startling impression of their size, but, what is still more remarkable, these animals are supported entirely on their hind-legs.

The reason we have for assuming them to have been bipeds is that, while their fore-feet have five fingers, the hind-feet

have but three toes, and the footprints are exclusively three-toed impressions. The occurrence of these footprints in British strata was familiar to geologists, but they were looked upon as those of a bird. The mystery is now solved by the discovery of the real authors of the marks.

The iguanodon was a saurian that walked as erect as it was possible for an animal that had to carry a huge tail clear of the ground, and with its anterior limbs—to use Dr Munro's phrase of man—divested of their primary functions of support and locomotion, free for use of the five-fingered hands at the end of these.

Here there is very much of the erect attitude and freedom of the anterior limbs postulated by Dr Munro for extraordinary mental development. If the iguanodon's posture was not perfectly erect, the hands at least were at liberty to serve as ministers to the brain, at once stimulating that organ, and structurally accommodating themselves to its behests. "Are we free," as Sir Herbert Maxwell pertinently ob-

serves, "to believe that had terrestrial conditions remained favourable to the maintenance of a vigorous saurian population, lizards would have attained to the lordship of creation now exercised by man?" This seems to be a natural inference from Dr Munro's line of argument.

But while man is part of nature, in another aspect he is above and outside of it, the very type and image of the supernatural. How the supernatural is linked to the natural in man no one can tell. We know that the functions of the mind are intimately connected with the organ of the brain.

"The brain physiologist," says Prof. Wallace, "will perhaps reply, 'Oh, but we have localised the faculties in the brain.' I understand they have localised, to a not very great extent and with some dispute, something in the brain, but I doubt whether it is the faculties. I doubt whether you can, if words are to be used plainly, speak of localising faculties. Perhaps first you will have to settle whether

mind itself is localised in the brain. That, some may answer, is a foregone conclusion, to which, if I may give a full meaning to the words, I assent. 'If not there, then where is it? It must be somewhere.' Well, these are questions I cannot answer, or you insist on asking. Similarly I cannot tell you where God is,—not that I do not draw a difference between God and the mind. God, it may be said, is everywhere, and my mind—well, is not everywhere. One thing I will say, as I do not know whether God is to be said to be within or without the world, so I cannot tell whether the mind or soul is within or without the body. To fix your faith on such words is to play at metaphors with the devil in a game where he is almost sure to win. You do not, I presume, identify your heart, when you give it away, with the central machinery of the blood-pump, nor is a broken heart necessarily a rupture of the cardiac muscles. But, you reply, mind is a function of the brain, is it not? Happy—or shall I say

unhappy—man to whom that ill-savoured word function gives repose!”

A man, in his mental operations, is unconscious of any connection with the physical organ of the brain, nor does examination of the cerebral structure discover anything of the mind. We can know nothing of a substance save from its phenomena, and when the phenomena are different and incompatible, we must believe that the substances they represent are different. And as the phenomena or properties of mind are so essentially different from those of matter, we are forced to the conclusion that they are two distinct substances.

Whether the relation between the spirit and the brain is one of concomitance, or whether the one is formative of the other, are matters that lie altogether beyond our ken. The spirit acts through the body. Its mode of activity is threefold, and arranges itself under these faculties — the intellect, the sensibilities, and the will. To these we may add the moral faculty,

the conscience ; but some regard the moral nature as the resultant of the three essential powers of the spirit, and the moral faculty, though a distinct element in experience, is not regarded as a separate power. In the union and development of these faculties lies the distinctive mark of man as separated from the lower animals.

We do not mean to assert that animals have no traces of these faculties. The statement has been made in this connection, that probably man possesses no attribute short of his highest, of which he does not find at least the rudimentary traces in the animal world below him. But it is man's part to sit in judgment on his actions, to feel his conscience accusing or else excusing him, to be under obligation to a law above him. He feels that his will is free, the condition of responsibility. This single fact marks him off from the lower animal creation. These are necessarily creatures limited to the groove in which they move, and unable to depart one hair's-breadth from it.

It is easier to believe that higher creatures were developed out of the lower by some principle of natural selection than to believe that any law of transmission should introduce an element into the universe unknown before. That a necessary being should give birth to a being with any amount, however limited, of moral freedom is, as R. C. Hutton says, "infinitely less conceivable than that parents of the insect type should give birth to a perfect mammal."

There is that in man in which God can dwell, and through which he can hold communion with God. The spirit of man is the candle of the Lord. The presence of God in nature has been compared to an intense heat which, however, has not broken into flame. But in man's spirit this heated atmosphere of the divine presence finds the inflammable point which breaks into a blaze, and up to the measure of his capacity man becomes the manifestation of God. In this fact appears his superiority and separation from all the creatures.

Man's moral consciousness is not simply

the echo of his own heart; it speaks, as Pressensé says, "in the name of a law which is neither that of our senses nor of our mobile and impassioned soul; it brings us into the presence of another than ourselves, who has an absolute right over us, and its 'Thou shalt' sounds yet above the wrecks of all other convictions, establishing in us an immovable certitude." The categorical imperative, as Kant called it, is the rock on which rests the whole moral life of individuals and societies.

Nature dies: "The grass withereth, and the flower fadeth;" the spirit of the beast goes down with it to the earth. But man has said in all ages, "Non omnis moriar." Belief in immortality has become part of the experience of the race. It is found among all nations; even the savage knows that he is more than body. From the phenomena of sleep and dreams he comes to the conviction that man has a spirit. He has seen the body die, but no man ever saw a spirit pass out of existence. The fact of the spirit's invisibility is no bar to its existence: he is conscious

of his own mind as an existing fact though he never saw it. And so to the savage the death of the body becomes the preacher of immortality. And if he so reasons, with still more assurance may those who are by education and culture better able to analyse their consciousness and consider its results.

Hence the most profound thinkers of the ancient world were the clearest in their assertion of immortality. Plato teaches it, and represents Socrates as teaching that the soul of man is in its own nature immortal and indestructible. Both in his 'Phædo' and in his 'Republic' he employs such language as the following, *e.g.*, ψυχὴ ἀθανάτου καὶ ἀνώλεθρον, and ἀθανάτος ἡμῶν ἢ ψυχὴ καὶ οὐδέποτε ἀπόλλυται. Such terms are perfectly clear as to his meaning. He founds on this doctrine a moral warning in 'Phædo': "If the soul is really immortal, what care should be taken of her, not only in respect of the portion of time which is called life, but of eternity! and the danger of neglecting her from this point of view does indeed appear to be awful. If death had

only been the end of all, the wicked would have had a good bargain in dying, for they would have been happily quit not only of their body, but of their own evil together with their souls. But now, inasmuch as the soul is manifestly immortal, there is no release or salvation from evil except the attainment of the highest virtue."

To the same purpose Cicero argues in his 'Tusculan Disputations.' He uses the phrase "immortalitas animorum." He mentions that Pherecydes, a Syrian, first said that the souls of men were eternal ("animos esse hominum sempiternos"), that his disciple Pythagoras held the same, and that in Italy Plato became acquainted with the Pythagorean teaching and adopted it.

Thus man by his intellectual and moral nature, by the attributes that belong to him as a spirit, is enormously raised above material nature and the other creatures that inhabit the earth. By virtue of the possession of these he belongs to the same order of being as God Himself, and is therefore capable of communion with his Maker.

Man's part, as Bacon says, is to interpret nature, and by interpretation master it. Because the things that are, are not the outcome of themselves, but of a will and power behind them, knowledge of nature is possible. There must be in nature the evidence of an intelligence analogous to his own if man is to interpret it. Every advance in science is a fresh testimony to this sovereign intelligence and the correspondence between the mind of man and that which is supreme in nature.

Science has made it impossible for man ever again to worship nature. If the sun be a globe of solid and gaseous matter in a state of incandescence, then there is no more room for reverence, or gratitude, or adoration, however we may benefit by its beams. It can never be to us what it was to the grey fathers of our race, the very image of God-head. Our duty is not to worship nature, but to master it; but this, again, can only be by our yielding to the laws the divine Intelligence has imposed upon it.

Man's observation of the facts of nature

will not yield him this mastery. It is only when the facts point to the law—that is, the divine idea, the thought and will of the Creator, which we in a measure can comprehend, because we too have thought and will—that we become in our degree lords over matter.

“We reach,” as one says, “the secret principles on which He makes, not made merely, but is ever making the world; and when we thus know His mind, or on what lines His will moves, we enter upon a share of His dominion, we fall in with His working plan, we too govern by imitating Him.”

X.

THE BIBLICAL CONCEPTION OF NATURE.

THE increasing extent to which the universe is intelligible, as is proved by the remarkable discoveries of those who have sought to penetrate its secrets, is to our mind a convincing proof that it itself is the product of an intelligence. This is the Biblical conception of nature. Creation, whatever its mode may have been, was the act of one outside the material frame He has brought into being. All natural phenomena are traced to a personal will. As the will in us moves all the faculties and members of the body, so this will is conceived as ordering and utilising the things he has made. "Thy word, O

Lord, which is for ever, is in the heavens and in the earth," says the Psalmist, as a creative formative power; for he adds, "Both heaven and earth continue to this day" in virtue of that indwelling word, "and all things are Thy servants."

We are too apt to think of God's word as confined within the bounds of a single book, whereas we are told here that that word speaks through nature, and all things in heaven and earth throughout the whole course of time serve the will of the Almighty and All-wise. God has uttered Himself in the physical universe. The Psalmist knows nothing of a fortuitous concourse of atoms, of molecules impelled by forces and moulded by laws: to him all is the outcome of His word who orders all things according to His good pleasure. Such, according to Scripture, is God's relation to the material universe.

It is evident that in considering this relation men may fall into two extremes,—they may immerse God in nature, or they may isolate nature from God. The correc-

tive to these is the Scriptural idea of nature as the product of one all-wise and omnipotent will. In much of our modern natural science matter is endowed with the properties of mind, but will is an attribute of personality. He who thus wills must be greater than His own creation, and so we are saved from the extreme that immerses God in nature—imprisons Him in His own universe.

This conception is also a corrective to the other extreme that isolates God from nature, as if it were a machine wound up like a watch to go a certain time, having within sufficient store of energy to carry it through its course. Such a universe would only be a whirl of material change without spiritual meaning, whereas Scripture represents it as the thought of God, an expression of His idea to all who will take the trouble to study it.

The relation in which the soul stands to the framework it inhabits may be taken as a type of the relation of God to nature. Behind the outer framework is the inner

man, who thinks, feels, wills, and acts. The soul is apart from its work and its surroundings, and such is the relation of God to nature. The thing formed is less than that which formed it; but while God stands apart in His personality, not entangled in His works, He still makes them the expression of His thoughts.

When we read that by the word of the Lord the heavens were made, that means more than that at His fiat the universe came into being. The word is the utterance of the will; but it is more, it reveals the character. Through their words as well as their deeds we know men, the wealth of their brain and the treasure of their heart. Not otherwise is it with God: if the universe come by His word, then it must be replete with His thought, radiant with the truth, beauty, and goodness that are His characteristics. Hence the apostle says, "His eternal power and Godhead are clearly seen, being understood by the works which He hath made."

This fact is the basis at once of ancient

religion and modern science. The cosmic changes, the revolutions of the sun and moon, the cycle of the seasons, were the data upon which primitive religion was built. At first the dawn and the night, the sun and the moon, the green earth and the grey, the sea and the lake, were only emblems—the invisible Deity was behind them all. But as time went on the idea of the divine Being became obscured, and what was once worshipped only as a symbol began to be invested with the attributes of deity. The descent from this to polytheism and fetichism is easy. But these nature religions would have been impossible had not nature been charged with ideas of the divine.

In Scripture we find, what is not to be found to the same extent, if at all, elsewhere, the distinct recognition of the absolute dependence of the universe on the Creator. "Even in the idealistic philosophy of the Greeks," says Prof. Pfeiderer, matter remains, however sublimated, an irrational something with which the divine

power can never come to terms. It was only in the consciousness which the prophets of Israel had of God that the thought of the divine Omnipotence fully prevailed."

This idea pervades the whole Bible. It is especially the basis of the 104th Psalm, that divine ode of creation, as Calvin calls it. Manifestly the writer has before him the story of creation in the first chapter of Genesis. In it he finds alike his subject and his inspiration. But the psalm is no mere copy—it has a force and originality of its own. It is a remark of Sanchez, a Spanish commentator on the psalm, that the lyric verse, while losing nothing of its freedom and fire, contrives at the same time to preserve all the force and simplicity of the picture of nature presented to us in Genesis.

But creation here is not represented as a thing of the past. The universe is not a machine set agoing and left to its own laws. The great Worker ever works. "My Father worketh hitherto," says Christ. The

present frame of things owes its existence, not to the past, but to the present energy of God. The creation of the psalm is the creation of the present. The difference between it and the record in Genesis is the difference between a photograph and a cinematograph. The one is a picture of still life, the other is crowded with figures full of movement.

How vivid are the images! The brooks rushing down their torrent-beds, at which the wild beasts quench their thirst; the birds building their nests and singing among the trees; the wild goats leaping from rock to rock; the beasts of prey moving through the forest at night; the young lions roaring, seeking from God their food; the great and wide sea, the depths teeming with fish and creatures small and great—there the huge leviathan plays—the surface studded with sails, the image of the world's commerce and enterprise; concluding with man, the crown of creation, the orderly unobtrusiveness of whose daily toil is in fine contrast to the restless

activity of animals led by their appetites,—make a picture which, “for truth and depth of colouring, for animation, tenderness, and beauty, has never been surpassed.”

In Scripture there is no tendency to make a god of any natural object, or to attribute divine energy to it. The Hebrew names for natural objects, such as the bright sky, the night, the dawn, are mere appellations, not in any sense proper names. In the primitive mythology of the Aryan race the rain is represented as the fruit of the embrace of heaven and earth. The bright sky, Æschylus says in a passage which, according to Renan, might have been taken from the Vedas, loves to penetrate the earth, and the earth on her part aspires to the heavenly marriage: “Rain, falling from the loving sky, impregnates the earth, and she produces for mortals pastures of the flocks and the gifts of Ceres.”

But in Scripture, on the other hand, it is God who tears open the “water-skins of heaven” (Job xxxviii. 37), who opens courses for the floods, who engenders the

drops of dew. We quote from Renan's translation :—

“ He draws towards Him the mists from the waters,
Which pour down as rain and form then vapours.
Afterwards the clouds spread them out.
They fall as drops on the crowds of men.”¹

“ He charges the night with damp vapours,
He drives before Him the thunder-bearing cloud ;
It is driven to one side or the other by His command
To execute all that He ordains
On the face of the universe,
Whether it be to punish His creatures
Or make thereof a proof of His mercy.”²

Or again : “ Who hath gathered the wind in His fists ? Who hath bound the waters in a garment ? Who hath established all the ends of the earth ? What is His name, and what is His son's name, if thou canst tell ? ”³

When the dawn is mentioned in the Book of Job, it is God “ who commandeth the sun, and it riseth not, and sealet up the stars.” His power also causeth “ the dayspring to know its place, that it may seize on the far

¹ Job xxxvi. 27, 28.

² Job xxxvii. 11-13.

³ Prov. xxx. 4.

corners of the earth and scatter the robbers before it. It is turned as clay to a seal, and all things stand forth as in gorgeous apparel." The allusion is to the cylindrical seals used in Babylon. Just as such a seal rolls over the clay, and immediately there starts into bold relief a group of objects, so the dayspring revolves over the space which the darkness has made void, and immediately, as if created by the movement, all things shine like a fair garment. Shaha, the dawn, never becomes an independent agent; it does not figure in mythological presentation, as among the Greeks Eos rises from the bed of her husband Tithonus, the setting sun. At the same time, nature in Scripture is never merged into God, as the tendency is among many peoples — an extreme into which even monotheists sometimes fall.

Some who have spent their days in the study of nature have come to the conclusion that matter is nothing, that the Supreme Intelligence is the universe. They find the highest fact of science, the noblest truth

of philosophy, expressed in the words of an American poetess :—

“ God of the granite and the rose !
 Soul of the sparrow and the bee !
 The mighty tide of Being flows
 Through countless channels, Lord, from Thee.

It leaps to life in grass and flowers,
 Through every grade of Being runs,
 While from creation's radiant towers
 Its glory flames in stars and suns.”

The Hebrew conception is not what we find among the earliest layers of primeval religion, the intuition of something divine in nature. The morning feeling for nature which seems to have vanished with the world's childhood has never been reproduced by any modern poet in the same degree as by Wordsworth. Some have not scrupled to say that in his earlier poems — “Tintern Abbey,” *e.g.*—there are passages which are pantheistic in their tendency. Of course Wordsworth believed in a personal God ; but the presence of nature, when he was in the heyday of his imagination, seems to

have stirred in him what is called the pantheistic feeling in the highest form.

“The truth seems to be,” remarks the late Principal Shairp, “that the outer world, which to commonplace minds is no more than a piece of dead mechanism, is in reality full of an all-pervading life which is very mysterious. Not to be grasped by the formulas of science, this life is apprehended mainly by the imagination, and by those most deeply in whom the imagination is most ample and profound. Possessing this faculty, larger in measure and more generous in quality than any man since Shakespeare, Wordsworth felt with proportionate intensity the life that fills all nature. In her presence he felt, in some measure, as only the first fathers of the Aryan race in the world’s infancy felt, the

‘Something far more deeply interfused,
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
And the round ocean, and the living air,
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man :
A motion and a spirit, that impels
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
And rolls through all things.’

“As years increased, the mystic gleam grew dimmer as his moral faith grew stronger. His later poems contain more of those truths Christianity reveals, and by which conscience lives.”

That there is a hiatus between the mysticism of nature as expressed in Wordsworth's early, and the lofty religious truths of his later poems, Principal Shairp admits. But the reconciliation between these two aspects of thought, which, we submit, is not to be found in any writer, we claim for Scripture. It welds these together in the Psalms, Isaiah, and in some passages of the Gospels.

In the Sanscrit hymns there is a religious contemplation of nature that approaches the region occupied by Scripture ; but, it has been truly said, the ideas which inspire them are colossal rather than sublime. They are awed and crushed in the presence of a Universal Life rather than kindled into devotion at the spectacle of a Universal Order. The recognition of, and appeal to, the personal God you find in the Psalms is lacking:—

“How manifold are Thy works, O Lord ;
In wisdom hast Thou made them all ;
The earth is full of Thy riches.”

The classical writers, Greek and Roman, are not serious in connecting nature with God. Homer gives us an account of the origin of the Eleusinian Mysteries. The lines, though intended to be used in devotion, are not cast in the spirit of prayer. The colouring is splendid ; the charm of the ever-fragrant Eleusis is depicted ; the glory of the goddess when she throws off the disguise of old age, and beauty breathes around her, — “Her golden hair flowing over her shoulders, the house filled with light, and the earth becoming heavy with leaf and fruit and flower,” — all this is told beautifully, but without a sign or tear of prayer. Here, as in all the Homeric hymns, there is an epic cast, with the action, variety, and manners of epic poetry.

In Plato we come for the first time upon the contemplation of the heavens as the

abode of a creative Power in something of a religious spirit. Cicero also in his treatise, 'De Natura Deorum,' seems to bow before a God external to the world; but, as we have seen, his language is too loose and rhetorical to show whether the divine power is personal or not. At all events, he reasons up to a creative Power.

Virgil gives us something more approaching to our modern nature-feeling, and this is still more noticeable in the later Latin poet Claudian. He marks a distinct departure from the great classical poets. "These," to quote the words of a recent writer, "either mythologise nature or describe it accurately, but coldly, as some beautiful statue. With Claudian it is otherwise: he has this peculiarity distinguishing him from all other Roman poets, a strong sense of colour, an intense personal delight in the beautiful in nature more approaching our modern sentiment. There is a perennial joy in the pageantry of the natural world, in the passing of the seasons, the singing of birds, the flash of bright water, the

colour of the sky,—a direct love of nature for herself which is utterly unclassical.”

As an illustration we quote from an unpublished translation a free description of a landscape from the Rape of Proserpine:—

“ More fair is the form than the flower,
Soft hills and the slope of a plain,
Where springs from the rock ever shower,
And fall on the grasses like rain.
The cool of the leaves of the forest,
A shade from the shafts of the sun
Makes winter, when heat is the sorest,
And spring hath begun.
Here tosses the box with its shiver
Of leafage, here ivy doth twine,
While over the elm-trees for ever
Are wound all the wreaths of the vine.
Beyond is a lake, and the water
Grows grey with the gloom of the glade,
All girdled with woodlands, the daughter
And child of the shade.”

Surely we have something approaching to modern nature-feeling here. But we realise that the Scripture references are cast in another mould. An instinct tells us that such description could have no place there. The writers move in a different plane.

The spirit in which they contemplate nature is well brought out in the 29th Psalm. We quote from the commentary of Reuss :—

“There are in this psalm, properly speaking, two scenes, each of which is the pendant of the other. One passes upon earth, where we see the hurricane raging in a way unknown to our climate. The colossal cedars of Lebanon are split in pieces, their gigantic trunks are torn from the ground, and leap as lightly as the ox in the meadow. The mountain itself groans and trembles, scourged by the tempest. The lightnings furrow a sky darker than the deepest night. Vast deserts, such as that of Kedesh in the south of Canaan, where nothing stops the elements, are swept by the hurricane. Their sand becomes a moving sea, the atmosphere an ocean chasing over its tossed bed, and sweeping with it all it meets in its passage. The trees which can resist are peeled and stripped bare. Beasts are seized with terror, and their convulsive shudderings make them antedate the hour of nature.

“Man is nowhere in the description. He is mute, and retires before the terrible majesty of the spectacle. But we feel, in contemplating it with the poet, that an involuntary anguish is mixed with that other impression of which man alone is capable.

“Above the terrible turmoil the Lord is seated majestically upon His throne. The flood which is about to sweep over the earth is the footstool of that throne. He contemplates it with a serene eye, and with His royal hand He will stay the elements when He pleases. Round Him the powers which are His messengers, almost the priests of His heavenly sanctuary, clad in sacred robes, press on to glorify Him. What a magnificent antithesis in a few lines!”

Dean Stanley compares this with that story of Sir Walter Scott, who, when a child, was found by a servant lying on the braes at Sandy-Knowe during a thunderstorm, clapping his hands at every lightning flash, and crying, “Bonny, bonny”;

but this exhibits a curious instance of failure to catch the spirit of the Psalmist. It is not wild exhilaration in the darker side of nature, but awestricken contemplation.

Nor can we agree with him that in the Psalms the bright side of creation is everywhere uppermost, and the dark sentimental side of the outer world hardly ever seen. Do we not have frequent references like this?—

“Deliver me out of the mire, and let me not sink;
Let me be delivered out of the deep waters.
Let not the water-flood overflow me,
Neither let the deep swallow me up.”

The 36th Psalm gives us a picture of nature's softer aspect. The writer, turning from a description of the wicked to the praise of God's mercies, finds words fail him,—he can only say that they mount up to the blue sky and reach to the drifting cloud; His righteousness is great as the mountains He has piled, His judgments deep as the ocean He has made. He looks at the brook and says, “Thou hast made them to drink of the brook of Thy pleasure.”

Then comes a passage, one of the most wonderful in the Old Testament, "an anticipation of the profound teaching of the apostle John"; "the blended image of the fountain," to quote the eloquent words of the Archbishop of Armagh, "rising with drifted spray, and the delicate shadows cast on the silver jet; the light in which it sparkles; the life which is the sum of all we yearn for, which the great sculptor Carpeaux cried for in the death agony, 'La Vie! La Vie!'"

"With Thee is the fountain of life.
In Thy light shall we see light."

In another psalm the light is compared to seed sown for the righteous. Milton uses the same figure of the dew:—

"Now Morn her rosy steps in th' Eastern clime
Advancing, sow'd the earth with Orient pearl."

Some men possess the faculty of transfusing their own life into the landscape, pervading nature with their own being. Such a man feels as if he grew with the grass and the trees, flowed with the river,

conversed with the clouds, sang with the birds, sported with the fishes—in a word, he enters sympathetically into every object, and so may be said “to inherit all things.”

It is not, however, this physiopathy, which is a more modern product, that we meet with in writers of Scripture. The gladness and exhilaration exhibited in the various aspects of nature—an almost affection for birds, beasts, and plants, and sun and moon and stars—is not a reflection of the writers’ own feelings, as a modern poet says—

“Oh, heart, ’twas thine own happiness that gave
The beauty that has been upon the earth,
The glory stretching from day’s golden birth,
Unto her crimson grave.”

This transport has a deeper origin than any mere love of nature. It is for that Jehovah hath comforted His people, and will have mercy on His afflicted. This is the solemn spiritual fact with which the prophet calls on the heavens and the earth to sympathise.

Nature in our sense of the term—neither

word nor thing—ever seems as a separate entity to be present to the minds of the writers of Scripture. The visible creation is only the garment of Jehovah. The whirlwind is His chariot, the sea His path, the light His vesture, and the thunder His voice. Heaven is His throne and earth His footstool.

And this, it has been remarked, has the effect of making the Scripture estimation of the external world of a peculiarly sober and truthful character. There is no temptation on the part of the writer either to understate or to overstate. This faithfulness to fact, this veneration for reality, this fundamental conviction that things are too sacred to be coloured or distorted, springs from their habit of recognising all visible nature as continually upheld by an omnipresent God. Nature is only employed by them to set Him forth. Fire and hail, snow and vapour, stormy winds, are referred to as fulfilling His word.

Where a modern poet would be carried away with the gloom of the waste or the

sublimity of the mountain, the prophet only uses these as the vestment of his thought. The wild winds, the storm, and the stars have to him no beauty in themselves—they are but as a fleeting glimpse of the Eternal Power.

“Lo! He that formeth the mountains and createth the wind, and declareth unto man what is his thought, that maketh the morning darkness, and treadeth upon the high places of the earth, the Lord, the God of hosts, is His name.” “Ye who turn judgment to wormwood, and leave off righteousness in the earth, seek Him that maketh the seven stars and Orion, and turneth the shadow of death into the morning, and maketh the day.”

How differently the Hebrew poet describes a storm at sea from the manner one of to-day would adopt. He would make a picture of it in detail: the white-crested billows like the manes of Death's pale horses, the blue becoming gloom beneath the cloud, the bark whirling like a nutshell, the terror of the crew. But in the Hebrew poet there is an

utter absence of any recognition of the artistic value of the subject. He has no eyes for a picture : it is used simply as an illustration, a passing symbol of divine power, goodness, and discipline. "He commandeth, and raiseth the stormy wind, which lifteth up the waves thereof. They mount up to the heaven, they go down again to the depths : their soul is melted because of trouble. They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man, and are at their wits' end. Then they cry unto the Lord in their trouble, and He bringeth them out of their distresses. He maketh the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof are still. Then are they glad because they be quiet : so He bringeth them unto their desired haven."

With the Scripture writers there is no tendency to theorise ; everything is referred to the will of God. Not that there are no mysteries. The mystery is freely acknowledged, but it is left with Him. You have many questions that excite wonder proposed in the Book of Job—questions, as Humboldt remarks, "which modern science enables us

to propose more formally and to clothe in more scientific language, but not to answer more satisfactorily."

The faculty the sacred writers possess of seeing and hearing God in everything gives not only, as we have seen, veracity, but a peculiar vivacity and brightness, to their description. The mountains skip, the seas clap their hands, the little hills rejoice, the valleys shout, and the hills break forth into singing,—the favour of God makes the earth young again to them.

It needs no hamadryad to peep through the leaves, no oread to flit like a gleam over its hills, no naiad to laugh in its blue-eyed fountains, for a higher animation fills them; and every bubbling brook, every fluttering spray, every whispering zephyr, is a note in the great anthem, "Praise the Lord from the earth, ye dragons, and all deeps: fire, and hail; snow, and vapours; stormy wind fulfilling His word: mountains, and all hills; fruitful trees, and all cedars: beasts, and all cattle; creeping things, and flying fowl: kings of the earth, and all people; princes, and all

judges of the earth : both young men, and maidens ; old men, and children : let them praise the name of the Lord : for His name alone is excellent ; His glory is above the earth and heaven."

Were we to attempt to gather up the various characteristics of the Biblical conception of nature into one term, we should say it is sublimity with pathos at the heart of it.

Many illustrations might be given of the sublime : we cite one where the moral power is the foundation of the grandeur—the answer the Book of Job gives to the question, "Where is wisdom to be found? Does the earth secrete it? Is it hidden in the grave?"

The answer begins with a description of the miner's work underground, and as it is somewhat obscure in our version we give a slight paraphrase with suggested emendations :—

"Man digs into the darkness,
And explores to the utmost bound
The stones of thick darkness and of the shadow of
death.

He breaks up the veins from the matrix,
 Which, unthought of and under foot,
 Are drawn forth to gleam among mankind.
 As for the earth, out of it cometh bread,
 And underneath it is turned up as it were by fire :
 The stones thereof are the place of sapphires,
 And it hath dust of gold.
 It is a path which the eagle knoweth not,
 Nor has the eye of the vulture scanned it.
 The lion's whelp hath not tracked it,
 Nor the ravening lion pounced on it.
 The miner thrusts his hand on the sparry ore,
 And overturns the mountains by their roots ;
 He cuts a channel through the rocks,
 And espieth every precious gem ;
 He binds up the oozing waters,
 And darts a radiance through the gloom.
 But where shall wisdom be found ?
 And where is the place of understanding ?
 Man knoweth not the source thereof,
 Neither is it found in the land of the living.
 The deep saith, ' It is not in me ' ;
 And the sea saith, ' It is not with me.'
 It cannot be gotten for gold,
 Neither shall silver be weighed for the price thereof.
 It cannot be gotten for the gold of Ophir,
 For the precious onyx, or the sapphire.
 The burnished gold and crystal cannot equal it,
 Nor golden trinkets match it.
 Talk not of corals or pearls,
 For the attraction of wisdom is beyond rubies,
 For the topaz of Ethiopia cannot rival it,

Nor the purest bullion barter it.
Whence, then, cometh wisdom ?
And where is the place of understanding ?
Seeing it is hid from the eyes of all living,
And kept close from the fowls of the air.
Destruction and Death say,
' We have heard the fame thereof with our ears.'
God understandeth the way thereof,
And He knowth the place thereof ;
For He looketh to the ends of the earth,
And seeth under the whole heaven,
When He weighed out the air
And meted out the water ;
When He made a decree for the rain
And a way for the lightning of the thunder,
Then did He see it and proclaim it,
He prepared it and searched it out,
And unto man He said,
' Behold ! the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom,
And to depart from evil is understanding.' "

Here, as elsewhere in Scripture, the natural is the type of the moral.

Of the union of the sublime and the pathetic we have an example in the 102nd Psalm, where man's weakness and the transitoriness even of the solid earth is set over against the everlastingness of God :—

" He weakened my strength in the way ;
He shortened my days.

I said, O my God, take me not away in the midst of my days :

Thy years are throughout all generations.

Of old hast Thou laid the foundation of the earth :

And the heavens are the work of Thy hands.

They shall perish, but Thou shalt endure :

Yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment ;

And as a vesture shalt Thou change them, and they shall be changed :

But Thou art the same, and Thy years shall have no end."

The highest critical authorities consider Job, not, as once was thought, the world's oldest poem, but the latest, and therefore most artistic, product of Hebrew poetry. Accordingly we find in its descriptions of nature a contemplative delight in them for their own sake, and not merely as an illustration of the attributes of God. This book marks a transition from the exclusively theocentric idea to one wider and more human.

The early Hebrews knew nothing of the horse. Its place among them was taken by the ass or the mule. They were forbidden to trust in horses. But now the national vision is widened, and we have in Job a

description of the animal full of minute observation and artistic admiration. Sir Richard Steele in the 'Guardian' says of this: "I cannot but particularly observe that whereas the classical poets chiefly endeavour to paint the outward figure, lineaments, and motions, the sacred poet makes all the beauties to flow from an inward principle in the creature he describes, and thereby gives great spirit and vivacity to his description. What sincere admiration for natural life we have here: 'Hast Thou given the horse strength? hast Thou clothed his neck with thunder? Canst Thou make him afraid as a grasshopper? the glory of his nostrils is terrible. He paweth in the valley, and rejoiceth in his strength: he goeth on to meet the armed men. He mocketh at fear, and is not affrighted; neither turneth he back from the sword. The quiver rattleth against him, the glittering spear and the shield. He swalloweth the ground with fierceness and rage: neither believeth he that it is the sound of the trumpet. He saith among the trumpets, Ha, ha; and he smelleth the battle

afar off, the thunder of the captains, and the shouting.'”

Though still occupied with the divine side, it does not monopolise the view to the exclusion of the human. In former sacred poets man seems to lie down with the darkness of earth around him, like Jacob on his stony pillow, and through an opening in the heavens light shines upon him, in which angel forms ascend and descend. A cloud is o'er the earth, but light shines through the cloud. In Job the cloud seems to break, and the “intrinsic beauty of nature begins to be more closely associated with the spiritual lights of heaven, and humanity especially to have a distinct standing-point and radiance of its own.”

Such is the Biblical conception of nature, a matter worthy of closer study than it has yet received. Too seldom is nature to us what it was to the sacred writers, a spiritual transparency. We are content with the picture without asking what it means, and so we lose what otherwise would be for the

strengthening of our faith. As an old Scottish poet puts it :—

“Of the fair volume which we World do name,
If we the sheets and leaves could turn with care,
Of Him who it corrects, and did it frame,
We clear might read the art and wisdom rare ;
Find out His power, which wildest powers doth tame ;
His providence, extending everywhere ;
His justice, which proud rebels doth not spare,
In every page, no period of the same.
But silly we like foolish children rest
Well pleased with coloured vellum, leaves of gold,
Fair dangling ribbons, leaving what is best,
Of the great Writer’s sense ne’er taking hold ;
Or if by chance we stay our minds on aught,
It is some picture on the margin wrought.”

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XI.

THE PROPHECY OF NATURE.

THE testimony of evolution is to the effect that man is crown and climax of the whole process by which through past ages this present universe, with all its variety of life, has emerged from chaos.

Man is thus at once the culmination of, and the key to, the meaning of nature.

Leave him out of account, and the world is purposeless; its seas, rivers, lakes, mountains, plants, and animals are all matters of haphazard, the result of a fortuitous concourse of atoms.

Consider him, and you see that all these point forward to him. Nature teaches unmistakably that there has been a grad-

ual course of preparation for this present age, that all the time worlds are satellites of the human period.

Everything on the earth hinted of the coming one. There was an echo of his footstep in the whisper of the breezes through groves of weird vegetation that have no representative in our plants; it was heard in the boom of the tide, in the crash of the earthquake, and in the roar of the volcano. The material and configuration of the soil, the arrangement of land and water, the accessibility and abundance of minerals—these were not by chance but by purpose, laid down for the interests of man.

The chemistry of nature was at work preparing an atmosphere in which he could breathe; earthquake and volcano were raising mountains and pouring abroad seas, paving the way for climate, tillage, and opportunities of commerce. The luxuriant vegetation of the Carboniferous period, reared under hot skies in damp reeking soil, perished, and its decayed remains were

covered over that they might be pressed into coal for his warmth and comfort.

What is true of inorganic nature is true also of organic. It points forward to man. There is a successive advance of the creature in organic structure as we pass upwards from the lowest fossiliferous deposits, but every organ as it rises from primordial forms on the ladder of being is a prophecy of man's more perfect frame. "All his parts and organs," says Prof. Owen, "have been sketched out in anticipation in the inferior animals." Step by step the divine archetype unfolded in higher and yet higher forms, till it shone forth in the body God made from the dust of the earth, a vesture that has been found worthy to clothe the incarnate Redeemer. "All tended to mankind, and, man produced, all has its end thus far."

But nature has hints not only of man's frame, she has adumbrations and foreshadowings of his toil. He finds his best work in imitating her work. This is true not only of the fine arts, painting and

sculpture, it is equally true of the industrial. Man's best work has been anticipated by nature.

Long before the appearance of modern engineering the beaver built his dam across the stream, convex towards the current, absolutely water-tight, with sides inclining towards each other, broad at the bottom, narrow at the top. The borer-worm gave Brunel the idea how to construct the Thames Tunnel and get rid of the rubbish while the work proceeded.

The husbandman's object in ploughing is to bring up the soil that has become exhausted to the surface, while that on the surface takes the place of what has been used up, all the nutritious elements of the latter having been extracted by the roots, and thus secures a succession of crops.

There has, however, been from time immemorial a vast system of thorough agriculture taking place in nature by which a constant succession of crops has been secured. The most modern system of husbandry by plough and harrow,

manure and phosphates, has been anticipated, though the work has been done so unobtrusively that only now we are beginning by patient observation to discover nature's secret ceaseless agricultural operations, a system to which man's most scientific methods are only an approximation.

The agencies here are legion. Frost, that, better than any harrow, pulverises the clods by the expansion of the moisture therein congealed; rain, that washes down the soil into the hollows; the decomposing action of the atmospheric gases, and the acids generated by decay, that filter through the ground to enrich the new soil.

But this is not all: a year's crop might thus be secured, but not a succession of crops. In order to have this there must be, as we have seen, a transfer of soils, that on the top, exposed to the chemistry of the atmosphere, taking the place of that exhausted at the bottom, while it again is raised to the top to be refreshed, replenished, and invigorated. This is accom-

plished through the agency of earth-worms, these natural ploughmen that from the beginning have been employed in turning over the earth's crust more slowly but more effectually than spade or plough.

It is to the observation of the late Mr Darwin that we owe the discovery of the valuable work performed by these despised creatures. He calculates that on every acre of land in England more than ten tons of dry earth are passed through the bodies of worms and brought to the surface every year.

The little heaps on the surface of the green field are the voidings brought up from a considerable depth. Though the worm's proper food is the decayed tissue of plants, there are times when this kind of aliment fails, and it has to swallow earth for the sake of the organic matter it contains. So the castings are partly from this cause, and partly because in this way it disposes of the material which has been excavated to form its burrow.

“When we behold,” says Mr Darwin, “a

wide turf-covered expanse, we should remember that its smoothness, on which so much of its beauty depends, is mainly due to all the inequalities having been slowly levelled by worms. It is a marvellous reflection that the whole of the superficial mould over any such expanse has passed, and will again pass, every few years, through the bodies of worms. The plough is one of the most ancient and one of the most valuable of man's inventions; but long before he existed the land was regularly ploughed by earth-worms. It may be doubted whether there are many other animals which have played so important a part in the history of the world as have these lowly creatures."¹

In tropical countries, where the sun-baked earth is impervious to worms except during the rainy season, their place is taken by the white ants, which carry the soil in tunnels up sometimes to the top of high trees. Thus we see a new meaning in the

¹ Vegetable Mould and Earth-Worms, p. 313.

old word, "Speak to the earth, and it shall teach thee."

Nature is a prophecy of man's greatness. An ancient observer once said, "When I consider Thy heavens, the work of Thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which Thou hast ordained; what is man, that Thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that Thou visitest him?" He stands in the fields looking up into the solemn sky, darkness and silence around; the din, noise, and bustle that fills his ears during the day have ceased; his sense of importance, which a sight of his work is apt to engender, is gone; he is alone with the mysterious brightness of the stars.

The vault overhead of apparently limitless immensity, and belonging to a system of things that has no immediate connection with earth, while he is but one among the many millions on earth's surface, makes the contemplative spectator feel his pettiness in the eyes of that Intelligence that must comprehend the whole.

Such a sight not only makes man think

of God, but of the mysteries of his own being. When he looks up and sees the moon and stars, infinite in number, each moving in its appointed orbit as God has ordered, he can but exclaim, "Jehovah our Lord, how excellent is Thy name in all the earth!"

Then he looks into his own heart, his conscious life, and the first thought is his own insignificance in the face of this vast spectacle. "The distance," as Whewell says, "between him and his Creator seems to be increased beyond measure by this disclosure. It seems as if a single individual could have no chance, and no claim for the regard of the Ruler of the whole."¹

To the Psalmist there comes on the back of this another thought, that of man's greatness. Man has that in him which makes him greater than moon and stars. "He is but a reed," according to Pascal. "It needs not that the whole universe conspire to crush him; a breath, an exhalation will do that; but in his destruction he is greater

¹ Astronomy, Book III. chap. iii.

than the universe, for he knows he has been destroyed, whereas the universe knows nothing of the destruction it has effected."

One sentient, thinking, accountable being, bearing within him the evidence of his immortality, little and insignificant as he appears, is greater than an infinitude of merely material worlds. Bulk is not greatness, and duration is not life.

As far as we know—and we know its physical construction better than that of any planet—the moon has no life upon its surface. It has no atmosphere. It swings in its orbit, a vast, dumb, shining mass, insensible to its own movements, and man can scan it through his instruments, measure and weigh it, thus in all his frailty and insignificance showing himself greater than all the planets that revolve in space. Those very objects that at first view seem to humble man and show him his pettiness, on a deeper view testify to his nobleness, that there is something grand in store for the human race.

What is man? how little, yet how great!

The Psalmist turns to the earth and beholds man's position there, wearing God's likeness, thinking, planning, with a power to control and master lower things, and exclaims, "Thou hast made him ruler over all the works of Thy hands."

Man stands beneath the sky a microcosm, a little thought-world within him, while outside him is the great fact-world needing to be subdued. He is not, as the old heathen imagined, the sport and victim of circumstances; he goes forth conquering and to conquer.

The earth is subdued beneath him; under his fingers the shapeless assumes form, the stubborn becomes pliant, mountains are brought low, valleys are exalted. The wilderness is turned into a fruitful land, fields are sown, vineyards are planted, while cities are prepared for habitation, where the hungry dwell. Seas are bridged with his ships. The lightning has become his message-bearer, illuminator, and propelling force. He has cleft the rocks and read their secrets, penetrated the sky and meas-

ured the stars, brought to light strange knowledge, and set in order much wisdom.

While nature is a prophecy of man's greatness, we find in her also hints and adumbrations of the moral and spiritual in man, foreshadowing some of the doctrines of revealed religion.

The laws of nature are swift to avenge themselves on any who neglect them. Those who talk about appealing from Christianity to the laws of nature seem to forget that there are no laws so stern, so utterly merciless, so completely regardless whether a man has transgressed ignorantly or wilfully. There is no place of repentance in them, though it be sought carefully and with tears.

Does not this foreshadow the certainty of punishment that will follow the breach of moral law? Scientists are never weary of telling us how rigorously the conditions imposed on matter and its forces are carried out, how the least violation of natural sequences is promptly avenged.

If it be so in the natural order, the

moral order of the universe is equally scrupulous and will by no means clear those who transgress it. The penalty of setting aside the moral law is death, and there was no mercy for man till the Lawgiver had by His death honoured His own statute.

How judgment processes may be conducted is foreshadowed by nature.

One of her most patent laws is the indestructibility of force, the conservation of energy. In his treatise on Heredity Mr Ribot says: "A nervous impression is no momentary phenomenon that appears and disappears, but rather a fact that leaves behind it a lasting result, something added to previous experience, and attaching to it ever afterwards. Not, however, that the perception exists continually in the consciousness, but it does exist in the mind in such a manner that it may be recalled to consciousness." Again: "Every experience we have had lies dormant within us: the human soul is like a deep and sombre lake, of which light reveals only the surface; beneath there lives a whole world of

animals and plants which a storm or an earthquake may speedily bring to light before the astonished consciousness."

Surely this law of the indestructibility of force sheds light on the coming reckoning, when God shall bring every work into judgment with every secret thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil. In that day the divine sentence will be echoed by the verdict of conscience within. There will be a wonderful resuscitation of memory. As the marks of wave-ripples are preserved in the rock, showing that the sea once flowed there, so our constitution, corporeal and spiritual, may preserve the record of our lives.

"The very brain itself, on which these now dormant but then resuscitated memories have left indelible changes, may bear witness against us." We are told that every atmospheric atom returns the good or evil impressed upon it, the motions which saints impress mingled in myriad ways with all that is mean and base. The air is a vast whispering - gallery, a book on whose page

is inscribed all that man ever said. There, in indelible characters, stand recorded, with the last sighs of mortality, broken vows, unfulfilled promises, bearing pathetic testimony to the fickleness of man.

Another doctrine of revealed religion to which nature may be said, in some sense, to witness, is the Incarnation. Christ is all in all, the centre of the universe; in Him all things consist — “the image of the invisible God, the first-born of every creature; for by Him were all things created that are in heaven, and that are in earth.”

Nature, as we have seen, is a revelation of mind. If mind produced it, mind can interpret it, otherwise it is a dead blank. We must regard the universe as the outcome of reason. The agnosticism that sets at the source of our ordered world a nameless blank, cannot hand over to science an intelligible world to explain.

When the apostle Paul calls Christ “the image of the invisible,” he says what is elsewhere put thus, “No man hath seen God at any time: the only begotten Son,

which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him."

This revelation of Christ is not confined to His incarnation. He was with God before He became flesh and dwelt among us as the Word of God; He was shining in the world; He made a manifestation of God before the Incarnation. The creation becomes a kind of revelation; the invisible things of God are clearly seen (from the creation), being understood by the things that are made. There is, then, an earlier, though dimmer, revelation of Godhead in the changes that matter has undergone. Light, life, order, and beauty have a language that reveals in a measure the attributes of Godhead. For Christ, as well as by Him, Paul says, the universe was created, who is the image of the invisible God.

Now these two revelations must agree, the earlier and the later, the dimmer and the more bright. If Christ in His incarnation has imaged clearly and distinctly the moral attributes of the Godhead, then as Creator

He has also in the universe imaged, though more obscurely, the Godhead.

The primary miracle of Christianity is the Incarnation, the assumption of human nature by a divine Person. This is so unique that at first sight we are apt to suppose there can be no hint or adumbration of it in nature. But the Incarnation does not stand apart by itself; it reposes on an earlier truth, man's being made in the image of God.

Light is light whether it be reflected from a planet or a pool. The Son of God, making human thought, emotion, and activity the glass in which to mirror the divine, implies some measure of affinity between the human and the divine. Unless man had been made in the image of God, man could never have been a medium in which to envisage God. Unless man's reason in some faint degree reflects God's thought, and his virtue the divine holiness, unless there be some points of contact between the human spirit and God, the Incarnation would have been an impossibility.

Now the results of scientific observation

show that the universe is replete with thoughts that are very human. It has been frequently pointed out that our Lord, when with us in the flesh, introduced into His miracles a principle of economy. The miracle does not in any case do what man can do for himself. Only where it is absolutely necessary does it appear, and never at any point where human agency can be used.

Take as an illustration the first miracle at Cana of Galilee. Christ does not interfere till the need appears. The water-pots are filled by the servants. The water is the material upon which His miraculous power operates. Only what is drawn for present use becomes wine.

In the raising of Lazarus human instrumentality is employed both before and after the miracle. The bystanders roll away the stone. Then comes the omnipotent word that stirs the sheeted dead, but there the miracle ends. Lazarus comes out of the grave himself, friendly hands lift the napkin from the veiled face and unwrap the grave-clothes from the swathed limbs.

This principle of parsimony appears in other miracles, notably that of the multiplication of the loaves. Now this economy of power has rightly been called the "broad arrow of divinity stamped on all God's works in nature." The Creator is not found overcoming difficulties by inventing some fresh force to meet each occasion. In His working in nature, as in His miracles, "there is ever the same precise adaptation of power employed to result contemplated, the same emergence of proportional, adequate, but not superfluous force." There is no cutting of the knot without being at the pains to untie it.

This economy is seen in the prevalence of certain types.

Botanists say that the Creator has repeated the same pattern more frequently in the grass tribe than in any other order of vegetation. Animals and plants that look most diverse are found, on closer examination, to be linked by less noticeable structural affinities to their nearest neighbours. Nature, as far as we know, is against the idea of wide chasms and abrupt transitions.

This principle of economy, we must allow, seems to favour the theory of evolution. We do not think that facts sufficient to prove this hypothesis have been adduced, but we grant that this idea of economy in God's work, once it is admitted, has a tendency to dominate the whole field.

Another principle in God's work in nature that has a very human aspect is the subordination of beauty to utility. This is how man works — the merely beautiful is sacrificed to the useful. What will best gain his end is his first thought: ornament is a secondary consideration.

Beauty everywhere appears on the face of nature. The minute care displayed in the ornamentation of a shell, the dust on a butterfly's wing, each particle of which the microscope shows to be a kind of golden feather of most exquisite shape, shows that the divine Artist loves beauty for its own sake as well as for man's.

Yet with all this boundless array of beauty, it is always subordinated to utility. The main thing is, What will best benefit the

creature? So rough skins, uncouth shapes, grey and homely hues are given to creatures when such are necessary to enable them to procure food and escape from their foes.

In numerous instances these creatures take the hue of their surroundings. Polar bears and foxes are white, desert animals are sandy-coloured, while green is a common colour among the birds of tropical forests. Even with ourselves the mountain hare, which is slaty-blue like the rock in summer, becomes white in winter. This conformity of colour to the surroundings in nature is a protection enabling its possessors the better to avoid their enemies and steal upon their prey.

Yet in all such cases beauty is introduced when it may be done with safety to the animal, but it is secondary, not primary. Surely this has a very human aspect, and betrays in nature the working of a Mind like our own. As the Son of God has impressed the image of God upon nature, and as man was made as the highest example of that image, does not this prepare us for

the announcement of revelation, that one day God would take upon Him that nature which He had made of purpose so correspondent to His own? “‘Creation of man in God’s image; incarnation of God’s image in man’—these are two answering facts: to the one science witnesses through her voices, to the other the Christian Gospel.”

In making matter, God stamped upon it, for us to see and interpret, something of His mind: it becomes to us a prophecy which truly, though faintly, foreshadows what is set down with such clearness in revelation that he who runs may read.

XII.

THE REGENERATION OF NATURE.

SCRIPTURE everywhere brings to the front the close correspondence between the natural and spiritual worlds. Paradise corresponded with Adam in his state of innocence, the ground cursed with fallen man; while in Palestine the Promised Land is the type of the future Paradise, the new earth is the inheritance of the redeemed.

Man's sin has infected nature. Not that matter itself is sinful. There is nothing in Scripture to support such a theory. "God saw every thing that He had made, and, behold, it was very good." But the earth was cursed for man's sake,—its desolation is the effect of his sin. Great catastrophes

—such as the Flood, the destruction of the Cities of the Plain, the plagues of Egypt—took place because of man's moral pollution. God turns fat land to barrenness for the sins of them that dwell therein.

It is worthy of notice that matter is thus destroyed not only as a punishment of the moral agent, but because from him “some poison has passed into the unconscious instrument, the stage and circumstance of his crime.”

It would seem that there is a mysterious link of sympathy between man and nature. When Cain slew his brother, the earth that drank his blood cried out against his murderer. Man, fashioned out of the dust of the earth, has such close correspondence with the earth that when the citadel of life is rudely invaded the shock is felt throughout nature.

Man's misconduct affects the physical life of the universe; and as his corruption poisons the place he inhabits and the instruments he employs, so that their destruction is rendered necessary, when man

is forgiven and restored there follows also a regeneration of nature, the barren becomes fruitful and the desert blossoms like the rose.

“The earth also is profane,” says Isaiah, “under the inhabitants thereof; they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, broken the everlasting covenant.”

When in the days of Noah God saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that the earth was defiled by the pollution of its inhabitants, it was cleansed by the Deluge that swept the godless race away. But Noah and his family were saved, and with him God made a covenant, which with a noble universalism included all mankind. The conditions of this covenant also are broken. The race has grown wicked as before the Flood, and the prophet predicts a more awful catastrophe.

As the covenant is not for Israel only but for humanity, and as it is not only Israel but all men who have lapsed from this covenant, so the earth they inhabit

is looked upon as a delinquent,—it too has become profane. As such it must be destroyed. “The earth shall reel to and fro like a drunkard, and shall be removed like a cottage; and the transgression thereof shall be heavy upon it; and it shall fall, and not rise again.”

The prophet foresees the dissolution of the material fabric of things, because it has become polluted. Farther than this he does not see. It is left for a New Testament writer, after the elements melt with fervent heat, to discern a new heaven and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness.

The Scripture, and especially the apostle Paul in his well-known passage in his Epistle to the Romans, ascribes to the whole universe the necessity, equally with human nature, of a transformation. Animal, vegetable, and inanimate nature are represented as unconsciously yearning for redemption and renewal.

There is a dumb inarticulate longing throughout universal nature to be delivered

from the bondage of corruption which is everywhere manifest.

Take the vegetable world. There is a morbid tendency to the development of the most subordinate forms, dwarfs and parasites, the rapid increase of the commoner forms over the noble—in a word, degeneration of all kinds.

Thorns are abortive buds. From lack of nutriment the bud fails to develop. Its growing point becomes hard, the chaffy envelope is solidified into woody fibre, it is sharpened into a spine. Leaves arrested in their development become thorns, as you see notably in the acacia species. Thorns are thus striking examples of nature's failure to reach an ideal perfection. In every case they are arrested growths, abortive structures, not necessary parts of the plant.

When the primal curse was pronounced, "Cursed is the ground for thy sake; . . . thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee," it is not necessary to suppose that these thorns were the direct fruit of

the curse, and hitherto unknown in nature. Man was to cultivate Eden ; but the mention of cultivation implies, does it not, the existence of thorns and weeds? Man's desire to cultivate one species is resented by nature, which persists in throwing in her aboriginal vegetation. And when there is a struggle for existence, some plants are so overcrowded that, from the pressure and the exhaustion of the soil, they necessarily produce thorns.

We are not, therefore, to imagine that man's sin produced any change on the laws of vegetable development, but that what existed before in measure now became intensified and exhibited in a new relation. Thorns became the visible and significant emblem of man's fallen condition. Thorns and thistles added to the burden of that toil and sweat of brow in which he was to eat bread.

If man cease to cultivate, then matters will be worse than if he had never attempted to improve nature. It is a significant fact, naturalists tell us, that no such

thorns are found in a state of nature like those produced by ground once tilled but now neglected. "In the waste clearings, amid the fern-brakes of New Zealand, and in the primeval forests of Canada, thorns may now be seen which were unknown there before. The nettle and thistle follow man wherever he goes, and on the threshold of the crumbling log-hut in the Australian bush these social plants may be seen growing, forming a singular contrast to the vegetation around them."

Now, with man's restoration there will come a corresponding restoration in the vegetable world. Plants, stimulated by the presence of all the elements necessary to their full development, will lose their thorns, dwarfs and degenerate species will disappear, and every abortive branch will be covered with leaf-bearing buds and blossoms.

So also with the animal creation. The parallel to the passage in Romans we find in Isaiah: "The wolf shall dwell with the

lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall take hold of the viper. There shall be nothing to hurt or destroy in all My holy mountain."

It is to mar the beauty and suggestiveness of the passage altogether to allegorise, and find in these beasts metaphors for human kind.

In the coming restoration it is signified that the laws of beast nature shall be changed. "Nature red in tooth and claw" will cease to be. Animals now openly preying upon one another shall in the reign of peace and love receive another constitution. With this change the breach between them and man will be healed.

Visions of what we find in this passage

have floated before the poetic imagination of the heathen. Virgil sings of the time—

“Nec magnas metuent armenta leones
Decidet et serpens, et fallax herba veneni
Decidet.”

Christian poets have all taken the passage literally. To cite one instance, Cowper thus amplifies it:—

“The lion, and the libbard, and the bear
Graze with the fearless flock ; all bask at noon
Together, or all gambol in the shade
Of the same grove, and drink one common stream.
Antipathies are none. No foe to man
Lurks in the serpent now ; the mother sees,
And smiles to see, her infant’s playful hand
Stretched forth to dally with the crested worm,
To stroke his azure neck, or to receive
The lambent homage of his arrowy tongue.”

Thus the benefit of the outpouring of the Spirit upon man will be shared in by the brute creation.

The hostility between man and beast does not impress the imagination in our country to-day as it once did. You have to go to other lands to realise it—India, for example. Next to man himself, snakes and

serpents are the great destroyers of human life. Out of a total of 21,367 persons killed in India during the year 1881, nearly 19,000 were the victims of snake-bites. At present the Government of India offers rewards for the capture and destruction of poisonous snakes.

In earlier times in our own land the hostility of the beasts was better realised—times like those described by Tennyson :—

“There grew great tracts of wilderness,
Wherein the beast was ever more and more,
But man was less and less, till Arthur came.
. . . Then he drave
The heathen ; after, slew the beast, and fell'd
The forest, letting in the sun, and made
Broad pathways for the hunter and the knight,
And so return'd.”

The only way in which man solves the problem of the hostility between him and the beasts is by exterminating them. But there is a more excellent way. “The conflict between man and the beasts is the consequence of his sin, and it is removed only by his redemption. In the brief glimpse Scripture gives of man’s condition

in Paradise, the relation between him and the lower creatures was one of perfect harmony. Milton, after describing the happiness of our first parents, says—

“About them frisking played
All beasts of the earth, since wild, and of all chase
In wood or wilderness, forest or den ;
Sporting the lion ramped, and in his paw
Dandled the kid ; bears, tigers, ounces, pards,
Gambolled before them.”

The picture of Genesis is in a measure countersigned by science, which hints that man is to blame for the hostility of the beasts, and that through his redemption they may again be brought into sympathy with him.

“It deserves notice,” writes Charles Darwin in his book on the ‘Variation of Animals and Plants under Domestication,’ “that at an extremely ancient period, when man first entered any country, the animals living there would have felt no instinctive or inherited fear of him, and would consequently have been tamed far more easily than at present. Quadrupeds and birds

which have seldom been disturbed by man dread him no more than do our English birds the cows or horses grazing in the fields."

The physical universe, in the eyes of Scripture, has become so polluted that it must be destroyed. The description of this destruction in the prophecy of Isaiah has its parallel in the words of the apostle Peter: "The heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat." "The earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up." And the apostle adds—apparently with reference to the prophecy in the 65th chapter of Isaiah, "Behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind"—"We, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." That is this earth restored.

The Deluge did not destroy the natural features of the globe, and we have reason to believe that it will also emerge from the fire-flood, a new earth purified from

all uncleanness, yet the same earth, as the believer, though a new creature, retains the same personality and individuality. The expressions "consumed," "melted," are not to be taken as implying anything like annihilation.

This present constitution of things will without question be dissolved and leave not a wrack behind; but the fire will doubtless only refine and stimulate the powers of nature, and impress upon the whole framework a freshness and beauty like that which made the morning stars sing together, and all the sons of God to shout for joy.

It was the belief of the Westminster divines, as it is of many to-day, that this renovated earth is to be the home of the redeemed.

Only in this way does it seem possible that some of the prophecies can be fulfilled. To Abraham God said, "All the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever," and yet all that Abraham possessed was a grave. He was

promised a seed, and when no seed came after years of waiting, he fell into the notion that a son of his, not by his lawful wife but by his slave, might be his heir. Admonished by God of his error, and commanded to cease from such devices, he was again assured of a seed by Sarah his wife. If thus taught to regard the strict literal interpretation of God's word as the true one as regards the promise of a seed, he would think that it would be so in regard to the promise of the land. It did not come, but Isaac came. And such was his faith that Isaac was his heir, that when God commanded him to slay him, he accounted that God was able to raise him up from the dead in order that His promise might be fulfilled. So, the promise of the land not being forthcoming, he must have believed in his own resurrection to a future life, in which he would inherit it.

The covenant made with Abraham had only a partial fulfilment when the Israelites under Joshua obtained possession of Caanan. As the seed of Abraham is an expression

that contained in it a larger meaning, a shell with a kernel of spiritual significance one day to burst and outgrow the national, and all believers in Christ are the seed of faithful Abraham, so the promise of the land (Canaan) hid within it the larger promise of the earth.

The revelation of this promise lying at the heart of the outer can be traced in the more spiritual books of the Old Testament. We are told in the 37th Psalm that the meek shall inherit the earth. In the 16th Psalm, which the apostle Peter applies to Christ's resurrection (the author, David, being carried beyond himself and speaking as a prophet), the fair heritage which has fallen to his lot is the inheritance of the meek Son of man, and His meek brethren are co-heirs with Him. This we take to be the earth cleansed from corruption and made meet for the ransomed people of God.

Turning to the New Testament, we find the apostle Paul in his Epistle to the Ephesians speaking of the Spirit as "the earnest

of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession." The reference is not to the persons of believers, but to what pertains to them for their enjoyment. It cannot refer to them, for they have already been redeemed, and it is not to them as the Lord's inheritance it applies, but to their inheritance. This is something said to be needing redemption. Whatever it is, it once was man's but has been stolen, and now it must be taken from the usurper and purged from the evil that has polluted it.

As believers have been redeemed from the dominion of sin and Satan, and brought into the liberty of the children of God, so their inheritance is to be redeemed, and the process of recovery is described as making all things new; but only believers are described as new creatures, while yet their individuality remains.

The expression "redeemed" indicates that it is a thing to be restored, not made, a thing so turned aside from its original destination and subverted that it may be said to be alienated from its original owners.

Now this is not true of heaven in the ordinary acceptation of the term as a region far removed from earth. It has never fallen into the hands of the enemy; there is no usurper from whose grasp it has to be delivered. Man never had it in possession—it cannot be said to have been lost; and if so, the expression redeemed cannot with any propriety be applied to it. But earth was his, and that inheritance having been lost, can better be spoken of as needing to be redeemed.

The rich man in the parable is addressed by Abraham as one who in his lifetime received his good things, the sum of all desirable things in the shape of natural blessings.

There are those who make the acquisition of these their one object, and they secure it. As matters stand now the world goes to those who seek it. Satan is described in Scripture as the prince of this world, and in this capacity he tempted the Son of God: "All this power and glory is delivered unto me, and to whomsoever I will I give it." He arrays

the things of earth in their fairest guise, and the multitudes look upon them as the only possession worth having.

Some, however, turn aside from this quest under conviction of its vanity, and seek the kingdom of God and His righteousness. They gain their life and lose the world. But have they lost it? Is their part in the kingdom of God to be had only by the forfeiture of this fair earth? Will God permit His people to lose what they count loss for Him? Nay. As one puts it, "He deems earth worth putting into the covenant, that having withdrawn it from fingers unclean, and purified it by fire, He may make it, after all, His children's heritage and home, a beauty and a joy for ever."¹

The redemption of the world will thus mean the removal of the infection of man's sin from its surface, changing it from a vale of tears into a paradise of delights, from a region of darkness and disorder into one of light and harmony. Nor is there any incongruity, in our view, in taking earth,

¹ Dr Dykes.

thus redeemed and purified, as the inheritance of the saints. It is meet that the place which witnessed man's fall should witness the fulness of his restoration, that the hills and valleys that heard his sighs, being burdened, should re-echo his glad songs of deliverance, and thus with renewal become the bright eternal home of His glorified humanity.

May we not go further still? As the bodies of the saints will not be changed, but that they shall be able to recognise one another, why should not a regenerated earth so retain its present features that the transits of the soul in the flesh will be recognised by it in its glorified condition?

We think, as the infirmities of age increase, of the earth's bright morning, the ecstasy of the first breath of spring; we remember the clear waters and the grasses quivering on the meadow floor, as well as the familiar forms of loved ones that have faded into darkness. What a prospect to have all back again! The forests cool and deep, the quiet valleys, and lakes of peace.

We and our loved and lost shall dwell in the
cities of the new earth, and wander among
its fresh woodlands.

“Thither we hasten through these regions dim.
But lo! the wide wings of the seraphim
Shine in the sunset: on that joyous shore
Our lightened hearts shall know
The life of long ago;
The sorrow-burdened past shall fade for evermore.”



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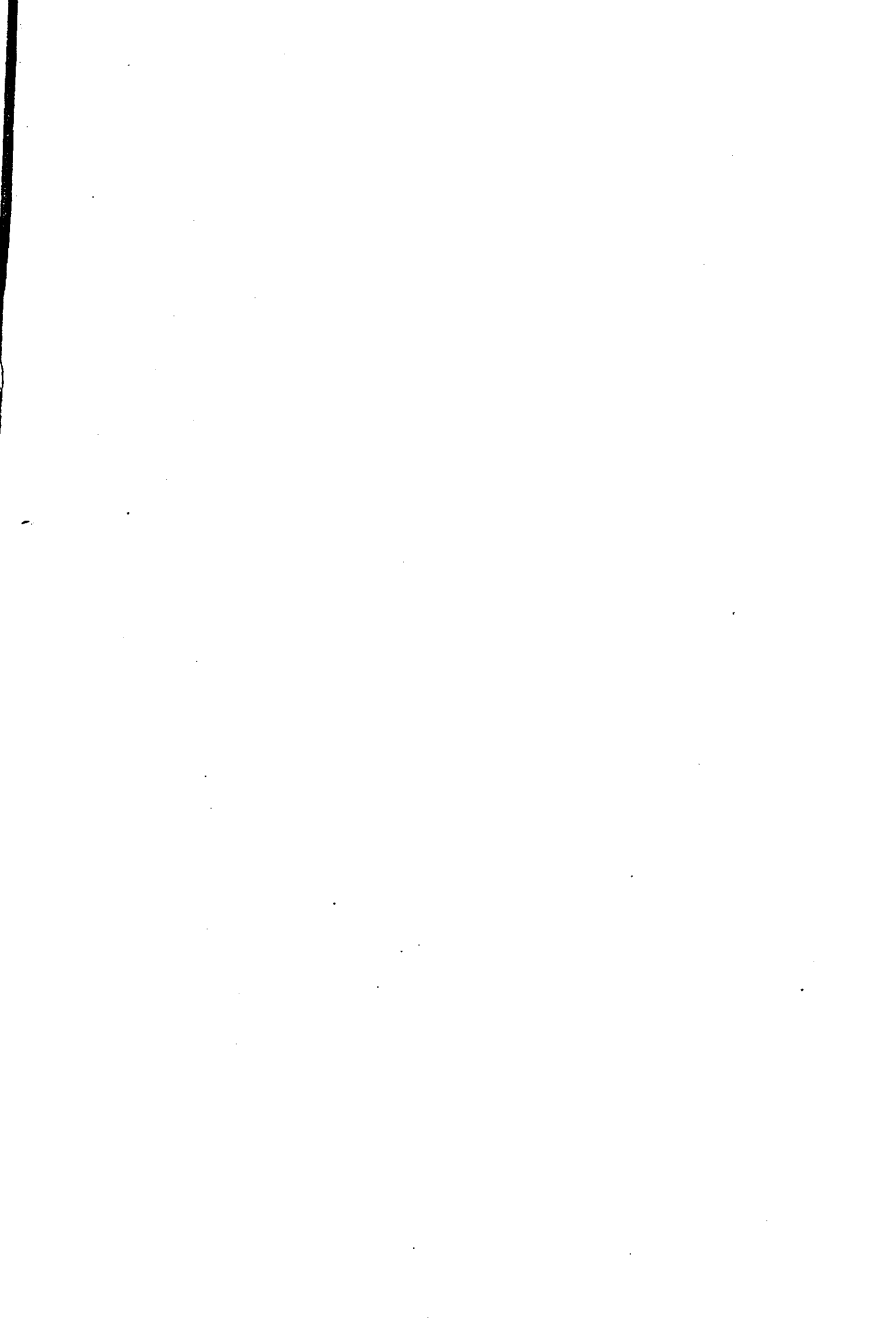
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