

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

[PayPal](#)

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

A table of contents for *The Churchman* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_churchman_os.php

the bulk of the national history, its graphic and life-like character points very clearly to the contemporaneous sources for the narrative. More than this we cannot certainly discover, but must rely only on hypothesis and conjecture, which, however fascinating and seductive, we are forbidden to mistake for science or the foundations thereof.

As to this, at least, we may be certain and sure, that the Old Testament existed before the New, and that whatever the unknown secret of its growth, it possessed sufficient vitality to prove the germ out of which sprang the New Testament, with its yet more glorious, luxuriant, and beneficent growth of foliage, flower, and fruit.

STANLEY LEATHES, D.D.



ART. V.—EVOLUTION AND THE DIVINE FATHERHOOD.

PART II.

IT will be in the mind of those who may have perused the preceding pages that we considered such hypotheses, with respect to the introduction of the Divine Fatherhood into the normal course of evolutionary development, as seemed to exhaust the possibilities of the case. The conclusion at which we seemed to arrive by a process of logical reasoning was that none of these hypotheses would bear examination; that they carried on their surface their own confutation. One last desperate resource remained, in the assumption that the Divine Parentage belongs not so much to the race as to the individual; that in each human birth a fresh miracle occurs, and a distinct Divine intervention constitutes the new-born infant directly a child of God. I endeavoured to show that such a hypothesis is wholly out of harmony with the first principles of evolutionary science, and that our Author, if he accepted it, would be involved in this curious inconsistency, that while inveighing against a theological habit of rejoicing in "gaps," he himself would be under the necessity of postulating a "gap" in the history of each individual man as the very condition of his being a *real man*. It is needless to point out that such a postulation would be equivalent to an abandonment of the theory of evolution, and a reversion to the discarded theory of a direct creative act as originating the human species. Nay, more wonderful still, it would involve such a creative act as necessary, not for the production of the species, but of each individual contained within it. This is surely to be

prodigal of the supernatural, and prolific in the gratuitous multiplication of "gaps"! Even a credulous Orthodoxy might well stand aghast at such an unlimited supply of miracles.

But can the theologian accept such a theory, even if the evolutionist has his predilections sufficiently under control to enable him to do so? Does every human spirit come forth fresh from the very Being of God, untainted with impurity, and unbiased by hereditary tendencies in the wrong direction? We of the Church of England do not profess to think so. Does anyone think so? This daily, hourly miracle always occurring, involves too much. The phenomena of the case do not permit our credulity to accept it. That a child of God, *by remote descent*, may become so degraded, as the result of the folly and sin both of himself and his progenitors, that the Divine in him should scarcely be discernible, mastered and obscured as it is by the grossest animalism, is a thing that we can understand. But to expect us to believe that a pure spirit, fresh from the very heart of God, should promptly accommodate itself to the moral condition of a root-eating savage in Southern Africa or of one of Stanley's forest dwarfs—this is asking more of us than common-sense will warrant us in conceding. It cannot be!

I make no apology for having thus condescended to details and attempted to criticise the only hypotheses which seem to me capable of presenting themselves to our minds as a solution of this problem. I can indeed believe that some will be disposed to reply: "I have no hypothesis. I don't profess even to guess how it may have come about; I am content to know that Nature teaches me Evolution, while Revelation teaches me the Divine Fatherhood." But surely this is neither faith nor science. If I am a man of science, I am bound to ask, How can these things be? If I am a man of faith I am bound to have some idea how my faith can be harmonized with fact, otherwise my faith becomes superstition. To believe two apparently inconsistent propositions, without making any attempt to reconcile them, is to be guilty either of indolence or cowardice.

It seems difficult to believe that we can be asked to accept any of the hypotheses that we have discussed in the name of science. And, indeed, we are not. Science, and particularly evolutionary science, as such, knows nothing of the Divine Fatherhood, nor seeks to know. Those whose lead we follow in these speculations as to the origin of our race are not even sure that God is, much less can they affirm or even admit the existence of a paternal relation on His side towards the human race. And it is evident that Professor Drummond recognises no such factor in the production of man as he is. If such a

stupendous spiritual change as we have been attempting to contemplate had at any time happened in the course of human history, its moral consequences must have been of the most definite character. Instead of a doctrine of the "fall" of man, we should have to believe in a doctrine of the "rise," or shall we say, using the Professor's chosen word in a somewhat different sense from that in which he employs it, an "Ascent of Man"? We might, perhaps, be reminded of a familiar proverb about certain objects that "go up like a rocket and come down like a stick!" for this splendid and supernatural uprising of a favoured tribe of simians has been followed by a very disappointing sequel; but, at any rate, there would be no need to seek about for explanations of the dawn of moral ideas in the evolutionary experiences of the race. The Divine seed would at least carry so much of the Divine character with it as to create a conscience and impose a sense of moral obligation.

But here again we find no trace of any such theory in these charming pages. Instead of anything of the kind, we have a most eloquent tribute to "motherhood" as the parent, not only of our race, but of that "altruism" which, more than anything else, tends to lift our brutality towards the Divine. A mother's instinctive love towards her progeny, faithful even unto death, is the most impressive illustration of those forces provided by Nature for inducing that "struggle for the life of others" which, along with "the struggle for existence," is joint factor in that evolutionary process which has made the human race what it is. That "love" which "is the fulfilling of the law," and, therefore, which carries all morality in its own pure breast, finds its genesis, according to our author's teaching, not in any sudden introduction of a Divine element into our nature, but in the evolution of the mammalian form of animal life, and the consequent development of a mighty instinct of affection, upon which the preservation of the helpless young, and thus the maintenance of the particular species, may be said to depend. There is no "gap" to be bridged by a Divine intervention in the Professor's system between the primeval simian, totally innocent of a single moral idea, and the most consummate of moral philosophers. The distance between an Aristotle and an ape is not greater, probably, than the distance between the ape and protoplasm; evolution has carried us over the one interval, why should she not also have spanned the other? If our intellectual capacity and our moral consciousness can be thus explained, surely it is not necessary to introduce a miracle so vast in order to account for our religious convictions. These, too, may easily enough be accounted for by the operation of the same great force that

has called into existence both intelligence and morality. That man should be a religious, as well as a moral and intelligent animal, is not the least surprising, nor is it necessary to found on that very explicable fact the conclusion that, in some way, in which other animals are not, he is of Divine descent.

Professor Drummond does not enter into the great subject of the evolution of religion, yet he is so consistent an evolutionist that it can scarcely be questionable whether or not he is prepared to follow his principles on this higher plane. But in a very remarkable passage at the close of his volume he gives no uncertain sound as to his conviction with respect to the actual relation of Evolution to Christianity. "Up to this time," he says, "no word has been spoken to reconcile Evolution with Christianity or Christianity with Evolution. And why? Because the two are one. What is Evolution? A method of creation. What is its object? To make more perfect living beings. What is Christianity? A method of creation. What is its object? To make more perfect human beings." This has an uncomfortable air of "undistributed middle" about it, which is scarcely relieved by the reference to love as the great operative force in both Christianity and Evolution which immediately follows. To many of us the connection between Evolution and Christianity lies in the suggestion of a sharp contrast rather than of a hidden identity.

To many of us it seems that the Great Incarnate, bridging the "gap"—or, shall we prefer to say, spanning the *chasm*?—between the spiritual and the material, between heaven in its purity and earth in its sin, between the Divine and the human, came to assure us that we are not orphans, even if we are prodigals. We have a Father and a home, however far we may have wandered. He came, as it seems to many of us, to restore a life that had been forfeited, but to restore it to those who were capable of receiving it, only because of a certain native and essential congruity between themselves and the Life-giver. "Whose is this image and superscription? . . . Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and unto God the things that are God's!"

Christianity seems to us to reply: It bears the primal stamp of the Divine! It has been rudely handled, and the wear and tear of life's friction have done much to obliterate what God hath stamped upon it, and the pitiless powers of hell have exhausted all their malignant skill in the endeavour to obliterate that which the finger of God has traced. But it is with such coins, none the less, that the heavenly treasury is to be filled; and the great Champion of humanity has undertaken to stamp afresh upon the marred face the glory of that image of the Divine which He has in Himself exhibited. It

is of God ; “ we are all His offspring.” “ Render unto God the things that are God’s.”

Not such, as it seems to some of us, is the answer of Evolution. Whose is this image ? we ask ; and the reply comes : If we are to be guided by genealogical considerations, it is the image of an anthropoid ape. In the long course of his historical development all has gone on with regularity and smoothness. There have been no “gaps,” and no need for the postulating a Divine generation in order to fill them up. He is of the earth earthy ; he belongs to the Cæsar of universal law. Render to the inexorable order of Nature that which belongs to Nature ; let Cæsar have his due !

“Thou makest thine appeal to me :
 I bring to life, I bring to death :
 The spirit does but mean the breath :
 I know no more.” And he, shall he,—

Man, her last work, who seem'd so fair,
 Such splendid purpose in his eyes,
 Who roll'd the psalm to wintry skies,
 And built him fanes of fruitless prayer,

Who trusted God was love indeed,
 And love creation's final law,—
 Though Nature, red in tooth and claw
 With ravine, shriek'd against his creed,—

Who loved, who suffered countless ills,
 Who battled for the true, the just,—
 Be blown about the desert dust,
 Or seal'd within the iron hills ?

Our author would demur to this, and stoutly deny that this is the answer that Evolution gives to the question. He would probably retort : “ *Are God and Nature then at strife ?* ” Is Nature anything else than a name that we give to the Divine method of procedure ? To this we entirely consent, provided that the definite give place to the indefinite article. The ordinary course of Nature is a Divine method of procedure, but, we submit, *not for the production of the Divine*. To affirm this would surely be to deny that there is a difference in kind between the animal and the Divine. It is to affirm that as the human has been evolved out of the animal, so the Divine may ultimately be evolved out of the human, and God be created by the mechanism that He has set in motion.

And if Evolution cannot produce the Divine, and develop a mere animal into a son of God, neither can it, as a system, take any cognisance of the Divine when it has, by a direct intervention, produced itself. It can breathe no whisper of hope, based upon a primal relationship between man and God ; for it knows of no such relationship. And therefore it has in

itself no presage of the eternal. You cannot evolve eternity out of time, any more than you can evolve the Divine out of the human; and therefore I must confess my inability to follow our author in one of his most eloquent and characteristic passages: "Evolution has ushered a new hope into the world. The supreme message of science to this age is, that all Nature is on the side of the man who tries to rise. Evolution, development, progress, are not only on her programme—these *are* her programme. For all things are rising, all worlds, all planets, all stars, all suns. An ascending energy is in the universe, and the whole moves on with one mighty idea and anticipation. The aspiration in the human mind and heart is but the evolutionary tendency of the universe becoming conscious."

Are these things so? Are all planets rising? What about our own fair satellite? She floats in the air a poor burnt-out cinder; does she suggest to the scientific mind no mournful presage of what this world of ours is one day to be?

Suns are probably cooling down, and new suns are being kindled out of the collision of wandering stars, that once may have been as full of promise as is this world of ours. Upon our own planet "a thousand types are gone," grander, some of them, in form, and huger in size, and mightier in strength than any of its present puny inhabitants. The mastodon and the megatherium have vanished; the bison has almost followed suit; and the stately giraffe, the exquisite zebra, and the gigantic elephant are doomed. Probably they are entering on the last century of their lease of life. "Change and decay in all around I see," and, if Evolution is my only teacher, I may well ask: "To what purpose is this waste?"

Of course, Professor Drummond, whose Christian faith and character must command the most sincere respect of all that know him, feels the difficulty that we have propounded all the less, because his belief in the regenerating power of Divine grace is so strong. I have no wish to challenge his consistency here, or to ask whether he does not recognise, at this point at any rate, a "gap" which calls for a special Divine interposition. A Christian, like a poet, is born rather than made, though, also, like a poet, he may become a very much better and completer Christian by a process of self-culture. But, because we are wholly at one with our author here, we cannot shut our eyes to the gravity of the issue, if the inexorable demands of scientific truth constrain us to abandon all belief in the universal Fatherhood of God. Let me state the case as it presents itself to me.

I find myself in the world, the product of forces regulated by law. These forces and laws are ordained of God, and yet

they are distinct from God, as a machine is distinct from the mechanician who contrived it, though it may reflect his idea.

God is not my Father, though indirectly He may have made me, by setting to work the machinery by which I have been manufactured. God is not my Father, for I am lineally descended from one of the lower animals; and of that animal God was not the Father. Nor has there been any break in the long history of my evolution, at which a Divine intervention could have taken place, that should have constituted me a son of God. I am worse than an orphan, for I disown my brute parent, and I cannot claim a Divine. I am altogether accounted for; my intellectual and moral nature, as well as my physical constitution; magnificent possibilities are no longer concealed under the mystery of my being; there is no longer any greater mystery hanging around me than hangs around my dog; the wish of "the Preacher" has at any rate been fulfilled in me—his humiliating wish—that the sons of men "might see themselves that they are beasts." God is not my Father, and I am not His child; therefore sin loses what, in my more ignorant days, I thought gave it its exceeding sinfulness. I am not much concerned about the machinery by which I was produced, nor do I feel any personal relation with the "Architect of the Universe," who devised and set it in motion. God is not my Father, and therefore I owe Him no love, nor can I blame myself for being unlike Him. What can He expect from the descendant of an ape? And this shows me that all the tall talk about the brotherhood of man is sentimental rubbish. Was there any brotherhood between our simian ancestors? The brotherhood of man is a corollary from the Fatherhood of God, and both must be swept away together as the baseless fabric of a poetical fancy. God is not my Father, and, therefore, for me, at any rate, the fantastic dream of immortality is a mere delusion. At what point, I pray you, in my evolution did I become possessed, in the person of my nondescript ancestor, of an "immortal spirit"? Was this, too, evolved? What! the infinite evolved from the finite? And, if my favoured ancestor, of about a million generations ago, was singled out by Heaven to be thus endowed, what happened when he and his sons insisted on forming matrimonial alliances for a dozen generations with those who, while their peers in other respects, had no pretension to the possessing of this gift? What can I hope of such a diluted and attenuated immortality? You blame me for my earthliness, you quote John Bunyan's parable of the muck-rake, but I have no connection nor affinity with anything but earth. If God were my Father, your reproach might be called for; surely I now have a stronger claim on your compassion.

You bid me use my will. I really am not sure that I have one! What seems will in animals is only automatic action under the inflexible compulsion of necessity—could moral freedom be evolved from this? You warn me of terrors in the future, but I cannot see that I have anything to do with the future. I know nothing of that River Ocean that girds this world around. If indeed such there be, and I have to launch forth upon its dark waters, my chances of shipwreck will be no better, no worse, than those of my fellow-voyagers.

“Nunc vino pellite curas
Cras ingens iterabimus æquor!”

The picture is a ghastly one, but that does not prove that the scientific theory is wrong. If Evolution be the true story of the world, I fail to see in what particulars this is other than the true story of the human heart. If, on the other hand, both Reason and Revelation constrain us to assign a Divine fatherhood to the human race, I equally fail to see how, while we affirm it, we can entertain anything beyond a very modified and restricted theory of evolution—such a theory, indeed, as I have not yet seen presented.

W. HAY M. H. AITKEN.



ART. VI.—A LITERARY SERVANT OF THE CHURCH.

THE SOCIETY OF BARUCH.—AN EXPLANATION.

WHEN, in the August number of the *CHURCHMAN*, 1893, a short article appeared advocating the formation of a society of laymen who would develop the journalistic and literary work of the Church, a certain amount of criticism arose. This criticism I do not propose to answer, but desire to elaborate the argument for the existence of some such society as that of Baruch. To take the scheme clause by clause as sketched in that number would prove tedious, so the following explanation is confined to those sections quoted below:

“(b) To consider it a mission to correct by letter to the editor or otherwise any mistakes as to the history, resources, and aims of the Church of England that may appear in any printed publication.

“(c) To make a duty of supplying the local press with reports of meetings and news notes referring to Church work.

“(g) If there be any ancient or specially beautiful church within easy reach of the layman’s abode, he is to interest himself in it, to learn its history, and to bring its monuments and