



#### THE DESCENT OF MAN.

The publication of a fresh book by Mr. Charles Darwin, on the "Descent of Man," naturally leads one to serious reflections concerning his ancestry. One would think that the development of man from a sponge, or a spore, or a polyp, should be styled an ascent rather than a descent. But Mr. Darwin evidently prefers, as an Englishman, to consider the question as one of pedigree rather than of evolution. There are a great many families in England proud of their descent, but, except Napoleon Bonaparte and Andrew Johnson, we do not remember any prominent instances in which men have boasted of their ascent. Mr. Darwin, with a keen eye to humor, proposes to trace the blood of the nobility of England a good way back of William the Conqueror—back to a point at which they would be very glad to get off by acknowledging themselves to be of kindred stock with Ginx's baby, as a compromise to avoid having their pedigree traced to a chimpanzee, and thence by a few further removes to a mushroom. As a grim satire on pride of ancestry Mr. Darwin's book is quietly crushing. As a collection of patient and laborious investigations, it deserves to be read by everybody. As an attempt to explain the process of creation without a Creator, it is, perhaps, the most elaborate half-truth ever published. It shows that the principles of vegetable and animal life being once introduced into matter, the organizations which result are capable of almost endless minute changes and development. Here, however, it stops. What is this mystery of vegetable and animal life, without whose inspiration matter lacks all power to put itself into organized forms? Mr. Darwin seeks to show that higher types of life spring from higher forms of organization. We may infer as his doctrine that life itself, in all its forms, results from organization. But, on the contrary, all the facts of science show that organization results from life. Life, the moment it manifests itself in connection with matter, suspends and reverses all chemical laws pertaining to dead matter, and institutes a new chemistry of its own. When it departs the chemical laws resume their sway. What is life? Mr. Darwin's hunt among the varying characteristics of species leaves this agency—life—as all-potent and mysterious as it was left by Moses, when he described it as the breathing of God into a form made of the dust of the earth, thereby producing a living soul. In all the researches of savans they find no starting point of life. Unless its germ exists they cannot develop any of its manifestations. Without the seed, or the germ, or the spore, they can produce nothing having either vegetable or animal life. Even dead matter is inspired and controlled by certain laws of attraction and cohesion, of combination and repulsion, which set it in motion and give it forces and powers as mysterious as the manifestations of life among plants and animals. This reign of law is the soul of unorganized matter, as inexplicable as the reign of life over organized beings. Whence come life and law? Darwinism may trace some of their effects. But these two great causes remain as mysterious as ever, or, in the religious sense, as manifest as ever—the soul of God in nature. Whatever will explain their existence will not only clear up the process of creation, but all the problems of our spiritual being. The truly scientific position which every writer on cosmogony and physical science should assume, is that taken by Humboldt in his Kosmos. It is, in substance, that science traces the laws which govern matter, whether existing without life or in connection with life; but, when asked to explain the origin of life itself, it finds itself invited into a field of investigation which eludes all the tests and standards of science, and on which the scientific man, as such, reverently declines to enter.

#### Darwinism.

It seems as though the pulpit had determined to make an assault along the whole line against "Darwinism." We see by our exchanges from different parts of the country that numerous preachers are firing into it with a holy fury which indicates that the crisis of the struggle is approaching. Perhaps they have been stirred up to this aggressive action by the recently published volume, "What is Darwinism?" by the Princeton theological professor, Dr. HODGE. This champion of the Ptolemaic system shows that Darwinism is the most dangerous enemy of the Church, the most formidable adversary of mankind, the most audacious assailant of Divine power, the most menacing, insidious, abominable and diabolical thing that has been spewed from the mouth of the bottomless pit. It surely behooves all the adherents of PTOLEMY to wake up when such a monstrosity is raging around. If they do not crush it out, it will very soon use them up. And yet it seems a desperate undertaking to attempt to annihilate a hypothesis which has been wrought out with such consummate ingenuity, and which, within twenty years, has received the assent of nearly all the naturalists of the world competent to pronounce judgment upon it. But still it is well to try what will be the result of blowing rams' horns around it. There is no wiser method of action; there is none that promises better returns. Professor HODGE is the venerable theologian who got so deeply excited about Darwinism at one of the sessions of the "World's Evangelical Alliance," which was held in New York last September. The fact leaked out that among the delegates there present was a Darwinian, who happened to be a very learned man of science, as well as an orthodox clergyman. Such a thing was too much for the Professor, who, after denouncing Darwinism as "Atheism," showed that he did not know what Darwinism was, and ended by crying out despairingly, "What is Darwinism?" At that time, when we perused the reports which described his mingled wrath and perplexity, we took occasion to urge him to seek an answer to his grave question, and, while we warned him that it would be a terrible job, we undertook to tell him how he must set to work at it. Well, a half year's study of the subject has made him still more excited about it than he had previously been; and he is now engaged in preparing the Church for the great struggle with it which is evidently at hand. Not only the host of clergymen who have been graduated under his eye at Princeton, but many others in different branches of the Protestant Church, are giving heed to the alarm, and are offering the Darwinians a test of their theological mettle.

We do not notice that any of them feel disposed to meet DARWIN on his own ground—which is the scientific ground. There are very few men living who would like to attack him there. He is behind a system of fortifications which goes down deep and rises up high, and the guns mounted on his works are far too heavy for any force which has yet been brought against him. His theological assailants, therefore, get on to the top of their particular Olympus, which is a long distance away from his position, forge a few of the favorite kind of thunderbolts in their scriptural armory, and hurl them toward the place where they suppose him to be. They are, probably, rather disgusted when they are told that none of their missiles ever get near him, or even go in the direction of his headquarters; but as the people in their own camp believe DARWIN is all the time suffering demolition of body and soul, they, doubtless,

think it worth their while to hurl away as fast and as noisily as they can. If he, himself, ever steps out on his ramparts to parley with them for a moment, he tells them that they are wasting their force, that their thunderbolts are mere sound and fury signifying nothing, and that they must use scientific guns of as heavy caliber as his own, if they would even make it worth his while to take any notice of them. Upon hearing this, their usual course is to shake their gory locks at him, send up a shout of defiance, return to their Olympian recesses, and win the applause of the crowd by hurling a few more theological bolts, which reverberate around their own heads, and pass harmlessly into that vasty space which is the abode of silence.

The most stunning of all the pulpit assaults which we have lately seen on Darwinism, was delivered in New York on Sunday, the 3d instant, by the once celebrated preacher, Rev. Dr. CHEEVER, who has come out of his retirement to take part in this new campaign. The sermon evidently created a sensation, and seems to have been regarded as exceptionally important, for it was fully reported in the *Tribune*, and abstracts of it were published in scores of the daily and weekly papers. In olden times Dr. CHEEVER was a man of war of the sternest Puritan sort. He not only thundered away against sin and Satan in the abstract; he not only wrote half a dozen popular books, including the one about the "Pilgrim's Progress;" he not only carried the Calvinistic banner "prondly aloft," but he leveled his shafts right at the head of several enemies, without regard to the consequences. He plunged into the old teetotal war, and soon got into prison for his pamphlet on "Deacon Giles's Distillery." He plunged into the abolition war, in its moral aspect, on the right side, and soon got into loggerheads about it with his church, after a fashion which resulted fatally to his clerical salary and position. He cared for nothing but "God's truth," for which he cared everything. For many long years, CHEEVER has not been heard of. He has been taking a rest, after the old-time conflicts which wearied him out. But he has at last been again called out by the aggressions of Darwinism, and the bolt which he has hurled is the signal for the opening of his new campaign. We have examined it to the best of our ability, and we must say, after doing so, that his teetotal, anti-slavery, predestinarian and other struggles were but slight affairs, in comparison with that which he has now undertaken. In those struggles he could properly meet the enemy with weapons which are useless in this one, and it is too evident that in this one he neither knows the enemy's position nor the character of the ground on which he is entrenched. In other words, if DARWIN can be dislodged at all, he can only be dislodged by scientific appliances, and not by the theological bolts which CHEEVER forges against him. He might as well hurl Scripture texts against the methods of mathematics, chemistry, or logic, as against the methods of Darwinism. It is not underrating the proper value of these texts to say that they are not available in such quarters; and it is not depreciating the true worth of the theological method to say that there it is wholly out of place. Dr. CHEEVER does not seem to have the slightest idea of even as potent a fact as this. He whacks away at Darwinism, which he has not taken the trouble to investigate, just as he formerly whacked away at drunkenness, or slavery, or Universalism, or adultery, and thinks it is merely a new kind of "madness," "wickedness," or diabolism, invented by atheists and unprincipled rascals, who deserve damnation without benefit of clergy. It is perhaps not strange that a man of ability in another

sphere should show himself so imbecile in this sphere; for the two are radically different in their range, and the results sought by the two are destitute of any relation to each other. It would be utterly impossible for a scientific man to review Doctor CHEEVER's grounds of opposition to Darwinism. Think of DARWIN, for instance, attempting to deal with the following sentences, which are fair specimens of the material of the sermon:

"If man was not created, but grew, as a tree grows, or an ape, with no more in-breathing from the Spirit of God than the primordial cell of the first mud-nomad, then both MOSES and CHRIST are the contrivers and utterers of falsehoods, and the Old Testament Scriptures are a railroad of lies, in which the Jews held all the stock for their own benefit, until CHRIST seized it for his own and watered the stock with the Gospels and the New Testament—a greater falsehood still piled upon the Old. Make a man so insane as to believe that he sprang from a monkey and, as the first natural result of his advanced condition in the scale of being proceeded to eat up his brothers and sisters, and the first sane demonstration of his insane reason must be absolute atheism. If a man believes that he was made a brute, there is nothing wrong in his acting like a brute."

Of course, in presence of such rot as this, science is dumb. And we will merely say that if the pulpit means to overthrow the terrible hypothesis of Darwinism, it must find weapons of a different kind from those used by Rev. Dr. HODGE and Rev. Dr. CHEEVER. These can only call forth groans and laughter.



**RECORD:** Anon. 1871. [Review of] The descent of man. *The Chicago Tribune* (9 April), p.1.

**REVISION HISTORY:** Transcribed by Christine Chua and edited by John van Wyhe 1.2020. RN1.

**NOTE:** The descent of man, and selection in relation to sex. New York: Appleton, vol. 1. (F941.1), vol. 2. (F941.2)

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