

DARWINISM AND THEOLOGY,

BY

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DARWINISM AND THEOLOGY.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE 'SPECTATOR.'

Sir,

Now that Parliament is closed, the Treaty saved, and Livingstone discovered, you may perhaps find space for some observations on a subject of a less exciting character, the relations between those views of the production of plants and animals which are popularly understood by the word Darwinism, and Theology, the doctrine of the existence and activity of a Divine Author of the world.

There can be no doubt that in many irreligious minds the writings of Mr. Darwin have created a fervour of delight; that in many religious minds they have created anxiety and distress. On the one side are to be found men such as those who have written of man as made in the image of an ape, and have sought to elevate into a science the supposed failures of nature; on the other, are to be found good men and women who wince under the notion that plants and animals were not created by the Almighty fiat just as we see them now, and shrink with dread from every theory which in anywise shows us to be of kin with the lower animals.

The time of twilight is always a time of vague alarms; then the gnarled trunk or the bare bough of the well-known tree becomes a goblin to the fancy; then beyond all other times the saying of Epictetus is true, that the mind of man is harassed not by things, but by notions about

things. And Darwinism is essentially a region of twilight; here and there splendid gleams of light, elsewhere darkness and half-light; and so men's fancies and men's fears are very busy there. My object in the present paper is to get a little nearer to these hobgoblins, and to try to make out whether they are so dangerous; and I think that there will be no inconsiderable gain in the mere effort to express these objections which are more often felt than uttered with anything of precision; for this will, I think, be found to show, first, that many of these objections are rather of feeling than of reason; and secondly, that many (if not all) of them are nothing new in substance, but only novel and so more striking expressions of old and well-worn difficulties. I have no intention in this letter of entering upon a critical examination of Mr. Darwin's writings, but I shall try and lay hold of the objections to them as they float about in the minds of good people, many of whom have never opened a volume of our great naturalist. I have equally no intention of discussing the truth or the falsehood of Mr. Darwin's views. I shall assume their truth, and shall inquire whether, supposing them to be true, they do in fact introduce any new difficulty in the way of the theocratic conception of the universe.

Before entering on this special inquiry, let me observe that any appreciated change in physical science produces pain in many religious minds. This results from the association of ideas. A devout man believes, let us say, that the sun goes round the earth, and this notion he associates with the idea of the creative power and the beneficent designs of God, and he praises God for the sun that so goes round the earth. The two notions get by habit and want of discriminating self-reflection welded

into a composite whole ; and to shake one part of this entire structure seems to such a mind to be shaking every part. “ If the sun do not go round the earth, how can I bless God for it, as I have done all my life ? Where is that Divine care for man which has hitherto consoled me ? ”

Just in the same way, a large body of devout thoughts and feelings has clustered in many religious minds round the popular notions of creation, and above all, of the creation of man ; and these notions cannot be shaken, as they have roughly been of late, without shaking too those feelings which hang around them ; and hence inevitably, sorrow and pain have resulted to such minds from Darwinism.

But they may find consolation and encouragement from the past ; for surely it is true that each certain step in physical science has only raised and enlarged our conceptions of the Divine majesty and power. Who, from a merely devotional interest, would go back to that old astronomy, which prevailed before the spirit of modern science arose ? Whether of these two views is more calculated to excite our devotion and praise,—the notion that the heavens are a solid sphere, moving round the earth, with little holes to let through the light ; or the conception of boundless regions of space, with stars infinite in number, more and more revealed as our powers of sight are enlarged, and each star a system of perfect order and marvellous complexity ? Science begins with human guesses, and approaches towards Divine thoughts : and the contrast between earlier and later conceptions is therefore only a proof that God’s thoughts are not as ours but His ways are higher than our ways.

I think it may be truly asserted that hitherto the result

of each new step in science has been not only a shock to preconceived notions, but a re-readjustment of the devotional feelings, and that around a new physical conception more adapted to develop those feelings than the old support from which they were painfully detached. If Darwinism be true, experience will lead us to expect a like result from it.

But not change only, mere progress in physical science produces pain in the minds of some good people; and that for a reason independent of the one to which I have above adverted. The sense of awe and reverence is closely connected with the consciousness of ignorance; and when ignorance is supplanted by light, that sense often receives a temporary shock. It seems to some states of mind more easy to believe a thing to be divine, when we know not its mode of production, than when we can describe some of its antecedents. But these experiences are due to imperfections of the mind, not to reason or sound sense. The sense of awe is as rightfully awakened by a seen superiority in wisdom as it is by a superiority which is inferred only from darkness; and even as to mystery and ignorance, this increases in proportion to our knowledge, for the more we extend the circle of our light, the longer is that circumference line which divides light from darkness. Thus they who know most see also most of the unknown; and thus every step forward in physical science has been found ultimately to increase the sense of awe, both from what it reveals and from what it leaves unrevealed.

It has often been said that theologians are always opposing the progress of science and always retreating before that progress. The statement is not far from the truth, but it is, I am sure, to be accounted for by the

*See Mr. May's
Lecture on
"Nature"*

feelings to which I have adverted, as resulting from the change in scientific conceptions, and not by anything in the essence of theology itself.

But to come to the special object of this letter. The lengthened period of time which Mr. Darwin requires for the operations he suggests is one source of pain to many religious minds. It is curious and yet, I think, true, that, as a rule, the uneducated religious mind resents the introduction of long periods of time. It did so when Scrope and Lyell and their school of geologists began to make incalculable demands for time in the history of the globe's crust; it did so when the antiquity of man was promulgated; it has done so with Darwinism.

This feeling has, I think, several roots. One is to be found in the Mosaic account of the creation, which was long supposed to speak of creation as a definite and concluded act at an ascertained and not very remote date. Another is to be found in a weakness of imagination, a mere incapacity of the mind intelligibly to pass across great gulfs of time, so that a divine act performed on yonder side of such a gulf seems an unintelligible divine act, and therefore not an acceptable one to the religious consciousness. It is this feebleness of our nature that makes contemporary events, in which nevertheless we have no personal concern, so much more affecting and interesting to us than like events in long-past time. A lady of my acquaintance, explaining to some rustic neighbours some of the sufferings which marked the early history of our faith, was met by the remark from a farmer, who was not unmoved by her recital, "Well, ma'am, 'tis so long ago, perhaps it never happened." This feeling haunts many minds when they find the initial act of creation referred to a distance of

time exceeding their usual habits of computation or thought ; and that notwithstanding that the products of creation are present around them.

A third source of this objection to the lengthened periods involved in the theory of evolution is found in the feeling that the more distant in point of time the Divine act is, the more the Divine Being is removed from the present and the actual. This is a feeling due, evidently, to the mechanical conception of the cosmical laws, as though God had wound up the world and left it to go ; but it is entirely dispelled by that truer conception in which we come to know that, however remote the initial step may have been, it is only by an ever present and sustaining spiritual power that outward things are maintained. The religious instinct which attributes to the Divine Being the origin of the world, cannot with any propriety, and does not (when enlightened), decline to attribute to Him its daily support ; and when this latter thought is equally impressed on the mind, then the long periods which scientific men demand cease to shock the devout mind, then even nature almost witnesses to the timelessness of the Divine Being, and each ancient rock and each protracted process of nature proclaim that with God a thousand years are but as one day.

I am often struck with wonder at the contrast between the real workings of God as we learn them by a patient, honest study of what He has done, and the feverish hasty notions of men as to what He will do or ought to do. How majestically slow and calm and persevering is oftentimes the Divine mode of action ! The sea eating through a rock for thousands and thousands of years, or Christianity assailing moral evil during nearly twenty centuries with a result which we often fretfully think so

little,—how different is this from what we should have expected, and from what men did expect! The early notions of geology were all cataclysmical; the expectations of the Apostles were of a very speedy winding-up of all things. But still God is true to His own nature,—“*patiens quia æternus.*”

Let me carry a little further this analogy between the difficulties of Darwinism and religion, and let me invert the celebrated saying of Origen, and assert that if we believe God to be the author both of religion and of nature, we must expect to find in nature the same difficulties as in religion. Surely a man who believes in the Divine revelation of God to man cannot doubt that God has proceeded in that revelation by a system of development, and that through long periods of time. Is not the whole history of the Jews a history of the development and evolution of more and more truth out of certain small seeds? Do we not see how far David was, in the spirituality of his conceptions, above Samuel, and even above Moses; how far Isaiah transcended even David; and how far even the degenerate Jews of the period immediately preceding our Lord had in some branches of truth (especially that of immortality) got beyond their nobler ancestors? So, too, Christianity was not unfolded all at once. The Holy Spirit was promised to unfold the truth to the Apostles, and the whole story of the Acts and of St. Paul's life is one history of the evolution of Divine truth. So much will I say as to the race, when much more might be said; and is not the same true of the individual? What good man doubts the difference between the religion of the holy old man and of the most holy child? who doubts that the path of the Christian is one of increasing light,—from grace

to grace, from one step in holiness to another? In short, if we believe that God regulates the religious life of the race and of the individual, we cannot doubt but that, in concerns of the highest moment, He does proceed on a plan of development through long periods of time. "The kingdom of heaven is like unto a grain of mustard-seed."

I have observed that Mr. Darwin is felt to make too large demands on the past. It is felt also that he makes too much of the present. For one objection to his views may perhaps be fairly stated something in this way:—"The idea of creation is a very lofty and grand one; it is immeasurably lowered and vulgarized by the Darwinian scheme; to suppose that we almost see in the various forms of our brambles or our willows the process of the creation of new species is a far lower conception of creation than that which theology and the devout consciousness demand. The present order of Nature is one of continued existence, not of creation, which belonged to a more august past."

There lurks in this objection a confusion between two notions essentially distinct,—the creation of things, *i.e.*, of something out of nothing, and the production or creation of those peculiar forms which characterize and separate organisms from one another. With creation, in the true sense of that word, neither Darwinism nor any other science of which I have any inkling has anything to do. To it, it has nothing to say. Darwinism assumes something as existing, nay, it demands life as existing, and a complex order of things around that life, so that variations of the form in which that life appears are capable of being divided into those which are more and those which are less adapted to such surrounding conditions. It is true that it demands very little for its

starting-point, but then it makes great demands throughout the course of its history. There is no difference between the sum of the creative force and wisdom required by the theory of development, and that required by the popular notion of what I may call an out-of-hand creation, but the force and wisdom are differently distributed; in the popular notion they are all expended at the first step; in Darwinism the first step demands little, the subsequent steps demand the large balance.

And why should not the development of new forms be a part of the present history of the globe? No man with his eyes about him can doubt that the earth is undergoing perpetual changes in its crust. Mountains are cast up, and rocks wear away, and beds are deposited in seas and lakes; the work of creation, so far as regards the form of the earth, is still in progress. Why should not a like change and a like work of creation be going forward with those animal and vegetable forms which live on those changing rocks, and islands, and continents?

It is a common error of men to think little of the present as regards its dignity, much of the past and of the future; and this error clings to religious as well as to other minds. The present is so common-place, so monotonous, so dull; the past, foreshortened through its long vistas, seems so august,—the future, so full of possibility, that it is hard to believe that

“This time is equal to all time that’s past
Of like extent, nor needs to hide its face
Before the future.”

Hence we regard the Apostolic times with such a fond affection, hence many look forward to the millennium

with so much hope, forgetting that the kingdom of God is within us and around us in this vulgar present ; and hence also, I suspect, that many a religious mind views with dislike the notion that the work of creation is now in any sense in progress. But the dislike is merely notional, and has no basis in sound sense or religion.

But to return to the idea of creation. In what sense does the most rigid believer in creation think that the world was created by God without the intervention of natural agencies ? Certainly he does not believe that the world as it is now was thus created ; he believes that the rivers and seas have changed their courses and their boundaries ; he believes that the actual creatures and plants which are now living upon the earth were not thus created, but have been evolved in a certain order and by certain laws which we call the laws of generation or descent ; he does not believe that the dog or the pigeon, the cabbage or the grape, were thus created in all the varieties in which they now exist, but that these varieties have been evolved according to certain laws, which we may call the laws of variation. It must be admitted, then, that the original act of creation was the creation of beings with a capacity for carrying on in their turn the work of creation, including the production of new forms. It follows that the difference between the Darwinian and the anti-Darwinian is far less in this respect than the latter supposes.

Furthermore, it is noteworthy that the first chapter of Genesis in nowise asserts a creation of the sort which many good people seem to think of, viz., that the Almighty created the plants and animals as they are, acting directly and without instrument in the awful solitude of His own Being, unobscured by the presence

of any created objects or of any laws which regulate the existence of such objects. On the contrary, the biblical account is twofold,—(1) of an absolute creation of something out of nothing, and (2) of the gradual creation of order and form, and then of the subsequent creation of the plants and animals. Their origin is distinctly attributed to pre-existing created matter acting as the medium of creation under the divine permission,—“And God said, Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed and the fruit-tree yielding fruit after his kind, whose seed is in itself upon the earth” [*i.e.*, capable after the creation of reproducing themselves in the method which thenceforth was to become the ordinary method of continuing the work of creation], “and it was so. And the *earth brought forth* grass, and herb yielding seed after his kind, and the tree yielding fruit whose seed was in itself after his kind; and God saw that it was good” (*i.e.*, the Almighty is represented like a master-artificer, as reviewing the work which he has caused to be done by others’ hands, and though evil was possible in such delegated work, finding that in the result the work is good). In like manner, it will be found that the creation of animal life is attributed in part to the agency of the waters, in part to the agency of the land; so that nothing can be clearer than that the Mosaic account does distinctly assert a creation of organic life by and through certain natural agencies.

Not the least offensive part of Mr. Darwin’s doctrines is that which suggests a close connection, a connection, in fact, by way of descent, between ourselves and the brutes. It is not difficult to understand this feeling, but it is difficult to defend it. Men for the most part regard themselves as the special objects—nay, often as the ex-

clusive objects, of divine favour—they hold themselves to be the elect amongst animals, very much as Calvinists regard themselves as the elect amongst mankind. This notion runs through a great body of thought on such subjects; the utility of the lower animals to man (a very certain fact) is complacently dwelt on; the utility of man to the lower animals is for the most part forgotten. It cannot be doubted but that of all animals in this world, man is far the most noble; but to look at the whole scheme of the world from the human point of view is none the less an error, for we may be sure it is a point of view very different from that which He occupies without whom not a sparrow falls to the ground. But leaving the consideration of the self-conceit with which we regard our fellow-creatures, let me ask what person who ever seriously considered the animal world doubted the close relationship of man and the lower animals. Are not their senses like our senses, their flesh like our flesh, their frames like our frames, their appetites like our appetites? Are we not born into the world as the result of similar physical antecedents? Nay, who ever doubted the specially close relationship of man and the monkeys, that fact which has embodied itself in the very word “monkey”? And the only difference now introduced is this: that whereas it was supposed we were made of kin by the original fiat of the Divine Will, now it is suggested that we were born cousins by the subsequent Divine permission. Is this a difference that imperils our moral nature or our religious hopes, that produces doubt and dismay where before there were faith and hope?

Before we cavil at the poor relatives whom Mr. Darwin would put on us, let us consider for a moment what relatives we are bound to acknowledge. We cannot

deny our descent from savages, from barbarians of brutal lives, abandoned to selfishness, lust, and cruelty, and with consciences in the most embryonic state ; we cannot deny our close connection with cannibals ; we admit our relationship to a yet more revolting class—men who have used all the appliances of civilization for the purposes of lust and cruelty—men of the type of Caligula or Borgia. With such relatives admitted, any great fastidiousness as to our genealogy seems out of place.

But furthermore, it must, I think, be observed that this dislike to acknowledge a relationship with the lower animals is not an expression of the truest Christian feeling, but is opposed to it. For Christianity has brought about a more tender regard for them than is natural to man, and the deepest Christian feeling and the highest Christian philosophy both embrace them within their range. "I was early convinced in my mind," writes John Woolman, the pioneer of the Abolition movement in America, "that true religion consisted in an inward life, wherein the heart doth love and reverence God the Creator, and learns to exercise true justice and goodness, not only toward all men, but also toward the brute creatures ; that as the mind was moved by an inward principle to love God as an invisible, incomprehensible Being, by the same principle it was moved to love Him in all His manifestations in the visible world ; that as by His breath the flame of life was kindled in all animal, sensible creatures, to say we love God, as unseen, and at the same time exercise cruelty towards the least creature, is a contradiction in itself." And I shall presently cite a passage from Bishop Butler, which will show in what light his philosophy viewed the brute creation.

But over and above the general objection of our supposed connection with the lower animals, this connection involves two points which naturally shock the feelings of many devout men, and require a little more notice. The first of these relates to the glorious doctrine of our immortality. "If we are but the descendants of brutes, how can our souls be immortal?"

For my own part, I do not hesitate to avow that since I first began to think on such things, I have believed in the immortality of the souls of the brutes; and I believe it still. But I cannot now venture to enter upon this interesting question further than is necessary to my present subject.

There are two views of the immortality of the human soul which find favour with different schools of theology; the one is the doctrine that this immortality is a special gift of God,—a boon not involved in the mere gift of human life, but something over and above this, of God's special grace. If this be the true view, it is evident that the relationship of man to the lower animals has nothing to do with the question of this gift. The origin of the recipient cannot affect the fact of a free gift being made to him, cannot imply any right to receive that which it is assumed that the Almighty bestows or withholds at His absolute pleasure.

The other view of immortality is that it is natural to the human soul, or, in other words, that in the gift to man of his life is wrapped up the gift of immortality. If this be the true view, then the likeness between the life of man and the life of the animals does truly argue for a like result as to the continuance of this latter life; and why not? To the arguments for the natural immortality of the human soul which Bishop Butler has

adopted, this same objection was urged, and it is met by him in a passage which deserves the most attentive consideration:—

“But it is said,” he writes, “these observations are equally applicable to brutes; and it is thought an insuperable difficulty that they should be immortal, and by consequence capable of everlasting happiness. Now, this manner of expression is both invidious and weak; but the thing intended by it is really no difficulty at all, either in the way of natural or moral consideration. For first, suppose the invidious thing designed in such a manner of expression were really implied, as it is not in the least, in the natural immortality of brutes, namely, that they must arrive at great attainments, and become rational and moral agents; even this would be no difficulty, since we know not what latent powers and capacities they may be endued with. There was once, prior to experience, as great presumption against human creatures as there is against the brute creatures arriving at that degree of understanding which we have in mature age; for we can trace up our own existence to the same original with theirs. And we find it to be a general law of nature that creatures endued with capacities of virtue and religion should be placed in a condition of being in which they are altogether without the use of them for a considerable length of their duration, as in infancy and childhood; and great part of the human species go out of the present world before they come to the exercise of these capacities in any degree at all.” (*‘Analogy,’* part i. chap. i.)

The second point to which I above alluded is of this kind. Mr. Darwin has endeavoured to show the rudiments of the moral nature of man in the brute creation,

and suggests that our moral natures are but a development of elements to be found in theirs,—that conscience is found in embryo in brutes, is found further developed in us. “Is morality, then” — this is the sort of thing that passes through some devout minds,—“is all morality but a matter of the development of brain, but a matter of growth? If so, where are its eternal origin and obligation? what is to become of religion and of its objects, God and the soul, if our moral natures are but developments?”

The answer to this feeling is not far to seek, and indeed is already more than suggested in the remarkable passage which I have cited from Butler. It is this, that there is a difference between a thing in itself and the reception or reflection of the image of the thing. Suppose an astronomer to take a rough plate of metal; at first it reflects, but very rudely, the light of heaven; he then polishes one spot in it, and that reflects one star; he proceeds with his work till his mirror by degrees takes in and gives back more and more of the starry vault, or to his mirror he may superadd the various optical appliances which science can suggest, and he has an instrument of power; but meanwhile the heavens have not changed, and the development of his mirror or the production of his telescope has not affected their objective reality or stability. Just so is it with man; the mind of the savage is a very rude mirror, the mind of Sir Isaac Newton a highly polished one; the mind of the child is a very small one, the mind of the adult man a much larger one. We admit, without hesitation, the development of the receptive faculty, first, in the individual, and secondly, in the race; and that without causing any difficulty in our

minds, for no one doubts the truths of morality or of religion because there were and are savages to whom they are almost unknown. Mr. Darwin asks us to carry the process some steps further back (that is to say from savages and infants to the lower animals), and we are shocked, and think morality and religion in peril. But no new difficulty whatever is introduced by Mr. Darwin's demands, and there are those who think they can see something to rejoice at in the extension to the lower animals of the realms of morality and religion.

Another head of offence in Mr. Darwin's theory, beyond those already referred to is this,—that it seems to displace from its eminence the notion of design in the Divine government of the world, and in the doctrine of the struggle for existence to introduce a hard-and-fast and somewhat cruel general law.

· But this, if a difficulty at all, is not a new one. The existence of what we call general laws,—that is, series of facts, some of which press hardly and, as it seems, harshly on individuals, is a long-ago ascertained fact,—and though it may be a very different result from what we should have expected *à priori*, it is thought by no devout mind to be an insuperable difficulty, and the point to which our attention is rightly drawn is the beneficence of the general law in its general results. Now, tested in this way, Mr. Darwin's law of natural selection is a very striking illustration of this character of the general laws of the Divine government, because what he has described to us is a continuously acting and self-acting machinery, by which nature is always tending to produce forms more and more exactly fitted to the circumstances for which they are intended; so that no more remarkable instance of design in a law or of an abiding tendency towards perfection can possibly be conceived.

The terrible facts of nature are not new, and for them, Mr. Darwin is not responsible. The beasts and birds of prey, with all their awfully beautiful contrivances to produce suffering and death; the selfish eagerness with which each creature struggles for its own existence, though to the destruction of others; the odious instincts and habits which exist in some animals, such as the young cuckoo, which ejects its foster-brothers, the ants, which make slaves, the larvæ of ichneumonidæ, which feed on the live bodies of caterpillars,—these and many other facts in nature are difficult to explain, and often raise in one's mind questions like that which Blake expressed in his wonderful little poem to the Tiger,—

“ Did He who made the lamb make thee? ”

These facts, I repeat, have no more place in Mr. Darwin's than in any other theory of creation; but to his imagination (he observes, ‘Origin of Species,’ p. 291, 4th ed.) it is far more satisfactory to look on instincts of the class to which I have referred, “not as specially endowed or created instincts, but as small consequences of one general law, leading to the advancement of all organic being.”

Like observations apply to another class of facts to which Mr. Darwin's theory has called attention,—I mean the facts which seem to show an imperfection in the adaptation of a given plant or animal to the circumstances in which it is placed. Mr. Darwin thinks that such facts are due to the transition which the organism is undergoing. Certainly such an explanation, whether true or false, is in nowise derogatory to the Divine Author. Certainly it does not tend to increase, but seeks to diminish the difficulty which such facts naturally create in our minds. Certainly it is just that sort of

explanation, by a reference to general laws, with which most good men (who think) are accustomed to reconcile to their minds the imperfections of the moral order of things.

Another doubt yet remains to be encountered. The evolutionist seems to many to say, "Give me but the smallest organism, and I will show you how from thence you have arrived at all the complicated system of created beings and at man himself. Give me but the smallest spark of consciousness, and I will show how man's moral and religious nature has been developed." And there-upon a doubt arises of this sort:—"If that is all that a Creator is wanted for, do we not almost get rid of Him? If these are all the demands we make from God, shall we not soon come to do without Him at all?" The doubt is a vain one: since it is absolutely immaterial, for the logical necessity of a Divine Creator, whether the postulate with which you start be much or little; if you demand anything from Him, He must be there to give it you, or your whole fabric of evolution fails. Now every theory of evolution proceeds upon this, that there is something given from which something else can be unfolded; and who gives the first thing, if there be no God? so that the logical necessity for a first cause stands precisely as and where it did. There are two possible theories of creation, and two only: the one that the world had an author; the other that the world made itself. Both these alternatives have their difficulties; and yet every man must choose the one or the other. But in so choosing he will not be helped by the adoption or rejection of evolution. For if God made the world, He may have done so either out of hand or gradually: if the world made itself, it may, for aught I know, have pursued

either method,—so that Darwinism has not altered the problem. Those who believed that there is no necessity for a God, and prefer to believe that the world made itself, will believe so still; those who believed that the world did not make itself, but had a Divine Author, may still rest in their belief untroubled by any new difficulty or any new fear.

The dread lest evolution should remove the necessity or lessen our sense of the presence of a God is felt in the regions to which that doctrine is newly applied; it is not felt in the regions where the doctrine has long reigned undisputed. The imagination is affected by it in the one set of instances, it is undisturbed by it in the other. To suppose that God did not make the living organisms of this present world, because they were evolved from small beginnings, is to suppose that God did not make the tree because it first appears as a little seed, that He did not make the butterfly because it first appears as a grub, that He did not make man because he is born a baby.

But consider a little more carefully what are the postulates in such a theory of evolution as that of Mr. Darwin. They are (1) something, for evolutionism has not yet reached the step of evolving something out of nothing, and it will be time enough to consider that theory when it is propounded; (2) something vital, for Darwinism does not propose to explain the unfolding of life out of dead matter; (3) the power of reproduction, for evolutionism offers no explanation of that delegated power of creation; (4) the power of variation in reproduction, of the laws of which Mr. Darwin confesses profound ignorance; and (5) the power of such variations to reproduce themselves and to become strengthened by accumulation. So that this doctrine requires us to

assume the great mysteries of creation, of life, of generation, and of variation. A man may believe all these things to exist without a Divine Author, but such a man will as readily do so on any one theory of creation as another; whilst a man who thinks that the existence of this world, on the old theories of creation, could only be explained by the existence of a God, will have no need to fear or to hope that he can do without His existence by virtue of the theory of evolution. The little that that theory seemed to demand of God is found to be all that goes to make up the existence of the world.

To me, I confess, no theory of the universe seems so intellectual as that of evolution; no other requires in such vast proportions the elements of forethought, forecast, design, the seeing of the end from the beginning. Who can believe that anything is unfolded in fact which has not been infolded in thought? Who can take into his hand a seed, and consider the marvellous forces and powers wrapped up in that little thing,—consider the predestination of which it is the subject, the definite ends and aims to which it is directed, separate from those of all other seeds,—and not feel something like awe, something like conviction that nothing but prescience could have created such a thing? And the seed is the type and incarnation of the doctrine of evolution.

And now, Sir, I will conclude. I have endeavoured to state fairly and honestly the various objections which I believe to be afloat in the minds of many religious people to Mr. Darwin's theory. I have tried to consider each one candidly, and what I ask my readers to inquire is, not whether every difficulty in the way of religion is removed, but whether the difficulties which exist in Darwinism are not the difficulties which exist in nature itself, and

which existed in all reasonable theories of creation and of nature before Mr. Darwin was thought of. Have we not walked up to the spectres, and found them old trees with which we are familiar,—ugly enough, if you will, but nothing but the old trees?

For myself, I may say that there are large parts of Mr. Darwin's theory which I accept as, at least, probably true; there are other parts which I reject as unproved or as against the weight of evidence. But it is no part of my present object either to express or to justify this opinion on Darwinism. I have not here inquired whether it be true or false, but I have asked whether, if it be true, it is terrible to religion. For my own part, I have no notion that there can be such a thing. My belief in the existence and empire of God is too strong to allow me to credit for a moment the existence of anything at once true and atheistic. I have no fear whatever of further investigations into nature; I have no fear of true science, though I have much of false science and of false theology too. I have no fear even of the tendencies of modern science. I may read it wrongly (as I know that I read it little and ignorantly), but to me its tendencies seem towards a sublime spirituality,—towards the belief that all matter is but force, and all force is but mind.

I am, Sir, etc.,

EDW. FRY.