

greater authority than those of any other critic who offers his opinion on a subject of which he has no special knowledge.

How then has life arisen on the earth? Geology helps us to understand this question. It reads to us from the earth itself the story of the life that has been lived in the ages that are gone. The leaves of its book are the layers of rock in which the remains of plants and animals have been preserved. But some of these leaves have been rubbed and torn and crumpled, and the story is therefore incomplete. Still its undeniable teaching is that when the oldest rocks were laid down life was of the simplest kind, and that higher forms appeared as each succeeding layer was deposited. In this way the better developed animals are unheard of till far on in the story of the earth's formation, while, if we may use the phrase, man's history dates only from the "yesterday" of geological time. Thus, with the advancing growth of the earth's crust we have a gradual rise from absolute simplicity to the most remarkable complexity of life, both plant and animal. This is the *fact* of evolution; it is established beyond a doubt.

When, however, we ask for an explanation of this fact we hear many opinions expressed. As we shall afterwards see, some scientists assert that the very lowest beings started into life by a simple combination of chemical elements, or, as it is more shortly described, by *spontaneous generation*, and that all the existing highly developed life has been evolved from the organisms that were thus spontaneously generated. Further they hold that this view not only accounts for the origin of man's bodily form, but it also explains the growth of his mental powers and moral qualities. This development, it may be added, has taken place under the influence of forces over which he has no control. These are heredity, or the transmission to the child of the qualities of the parent; environment, or the conditions of life in which his lot is cast; and the struggle for existence in competition with other and similar forms of life.

Such a theory is disastrous to the maintaining of true conceptions of God and of our relations to Him, and, in opposition to it, it will be my object in this short study, to show that in the lowliest forms of life we are brought face to face with, and demand an explanation of, the same fundamental problems as