

instinct as useless and frivolous as it would be to search for a tribe of men who had not learned to eat and drink.

The Old Testament knows nothing of a spontaneous development of man from lower animals, nor of a gradual development of religious ideas through various stages of fetichism and polytheism. On the contrary, it assumes man from the first as a being capable of religion and of intercourse with his Maker.

This appears in the first sentence of the Book of Genesis, whose words are absolutely unique in their grandeur and far-reaching significance—"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." No evidence of the truth of this initial statement is given. The writer was aware that it required none, because the fact is one which admits of no alternative. The universe must have had a beginning somewhere in past time. We cannot conceive of it as eternal. It cannot have been causeless or self-produced. There must have been a first cause, and in that First Cause must have been potentially all that has been produced. The reason of the most primitive or of the most modern men cannot, without contradicting itself, reach any other conclusion than that Power and Divinity lie behind nature. What name shall we give to this omnipotent, eternal First Cause? He is Elohim—a name implying might and awe, power and divinity; and its plural form indicates a plurality of persons in the unity of the Godhead, so that all that are called gods might be included under this one great name.

In harmony with this are the succeeding statements that God revealed Himself to primitive man, gave him a law to observe, was known to him in the evening breeze that murmured through the leaves.* Let it be observed here that, according to Genesis, natural religion and revealed religion coexist from the first. Man—untutored, primitive man—can perceive behind the machinery of nature the power and divinity of its Author, and this intuitive and natural religion is supplemented by a direct revelation, placing the mind of the Creator in relation to that of His creature. Theism is thus "a fundamental truth, . . . because it is founded on the very nature of our mind, our reason, and our language, in a simple and ineradicable conviction that where there are acts there must be agents, and in the end one prime agent, whom man may know, not, indeed, in his own inscrutable essence, but in his acts as revealed in nature."† This is natural religion as indicated in the first verse of Genesis, and in many succeeding passages of the Bible; but to this it adds that revealed religion which presents to us the Creator as a personal being, in whose likeness our own rational and moral nature is made, with whom we may hold intercourse, and who cares for and loves us.

Let us now consider the relation of the earlier chapters of the Bible to the three kinds of natural religion above referred to, and to their distorted and diseased development into polytheism and idolatry. All three of the forms

* Gen. ii. 16; iii. 8.

† Max Müller, "Physical Religion."