

# THE HOMILETIC REVIEW.

VOL. XXIII.—JANUARY, 1892.—NO. 1.

## REVIEW SECTION.

### I.—PRESENT ASPECTS OF NATURE AND REVELATION AS RELATED TO EACH OTHER.

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MUCH is said and written at present of the origin of religion and of the distinction between that which is natural and that which is revealed ; though it would seem that the latter has few charms for most of those who discuss these questions. They at least attach no great importance to it. As to natural religion, we are told that it may be of three kinds : First, that which attributes the phenomena of the outward world—its winds, its sunshine, the movements of its heavenly bodies—to the action of intelligent agents or an intelligent agent ; second, that which deifies the spirits of the dead and supposes them to exercise superhuman power ; third, that which recognizes man as an embodiment and image of God, either in the person of the worshipper himself and his works, or in those of the rulers and magnates of the world. Each of these has its advocates, hostile to each other, while some have the good sense to combine them all. The publication, by Professor Max Müller, of his Gifford Lectures last year, added new interest to the first,\* which he advocates ; though we cannot read his book without perceiving that in the ancient idolatries, at least as presented to the common people, all were inextricably interwoven.

It is the object of the present paper to show that all these forms of natural religion are not only reconcilable with, but cognate to and in some degree contained in the religion of Jesus Christ ; and that nature is not only in harmony with revelation, but cannot be fully understood without its aid. It will also appear that the various forms of nature-worship found where revelation is unknown or has been lost, are all more or less rational, and are based on a felt want of humanity, which makes religion of some kind as necessary to man as his daily food, and renders questions as to a supposed origin of religion among peoples destitute of the religious

\* "Physical Religion," Longmans, London, 1891.