

caught most of the prophetic breath of the coming morning, such as Bacon, Kepler, Newton, Faraday, and others, were earnest students of the Book, in which they devoutly believed the heavens were truly reflected, and the earth's mysteries an 'open secret.'

It is interesting to observe how inevitably candid inquiry brings men back by however circuitous a road to the cardinal doctrines of the New Testament, as the true goal of human perfectness. Mr. Herbert Spencer, building his colossal system of synthetic philosophy, after so wide and careful exploration, finds the tremendous pyramid converging to a point whose top-stone at last must be the truth which a 'little child' might at the beginning get from Scripture. For in his 'Data of Ethics' he sums up all in the humble hope and faith that some reasoned form of the ethics of the New Testament may yet become the life-core of society. He thus declares that this wonderful book which has preceded the modern era is still in advance of it, and reaching towards the sublime ideal as yet unreachd. Considering how slowly moral ideas are evolved, and the specially depressed condition of human society when the New Testament was written, the problem still remains unsolved, how out of the least cultivated nation of that inferior age there issued an ideal to which the nineteenth century looks up as still transcending its best attainments.

The conclusion seems fair that some element unexplained and as yet inexplicable enters into the origin of these phenomena. The book did not 'fall down from Jupiter,' like the Ephesian image; it grew on earth; it was not written upon the sky in fire, but in human language in the earthly page; but, though written by 'hand of man,' that hand seems to have been 'under the wing of the cherubim.' Its fruits and its unaccountable origin place it beyond the range of mere human phenomena.

How diversified in authorship, in era, in locality, and in form. Compendious statements of scientific truth, genealogies, state documents like the Chronicles, idyls like Ruth, statutes like Leviticus, epics like Job, lyric and didactic verse in Psalms, concrete earthly wisdom in Proverbs, pessimistic sighs in Ecclesiastes, commingled history, poetry, and oratory as in the Prophets, unstudied memoirs in the Gospels, equally artless records of travel and experience in the Acts—epistles which uncover the social and individual heart-history of the time, and the gorgeous vision of the evening passing through night to morning at the end.

But the record is as comprehensive as it is diverse, and being so comprehensive, how compact and clear in outline. Remember the grim criticism of Carlyle upon the disproportionate verbiage of our time, compared with the severe sententiousness of the Pentateuch. In the hands of our modern chroniclers, he says, 'the account of the burning of a Brunswick theatre takes more space than the creation of a world.'

Yet, again, though so all-embracing, how symmetrically complete. It does not, like the voluble Herodotus, pour an unassorted flood of gossip through its pages. It finds all history vertebrate—and along that line it moves, revealing the whole structure of the typical past. The Cainite races, the massive Egyptian, Chaldean, and Ninevite civilizations, the various changing fortunes of the world at large are not over-looked, but put in their incidental and subordinate place—and so the perspective of history—unknown to the classic writers of a far later day—is recognised and preserved.

I need scarcely here dwell for a moment upon the further thought so well emphasized in our time—the corner-stone of the system which Mr. Buckle, Sir John Lubbock, and others have wrought to such top-heavy proportion—that our civilization is normally the product of antecedent material and intellectual conditions. It is plain that without telescope and microscope—opening our vision into the two worlds hidden, one by its greatness and the other by its smallness, from our natural vision—the sweepingly inductive conviction of the all-pervading unity would not have naturally arisen. While the boundaries of the earth were unknown, its symmetrical structure could