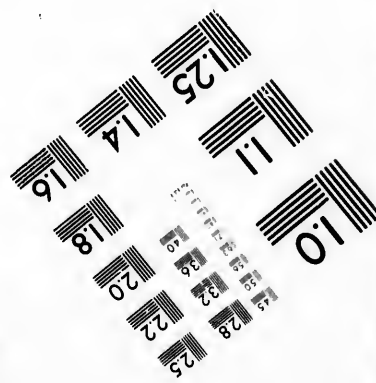
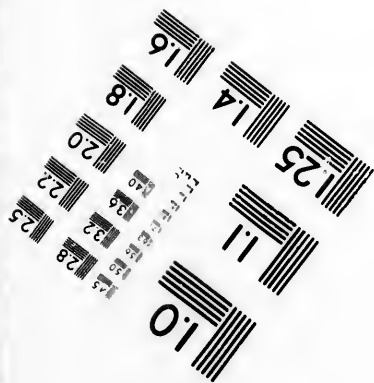
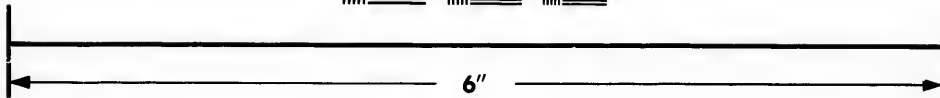
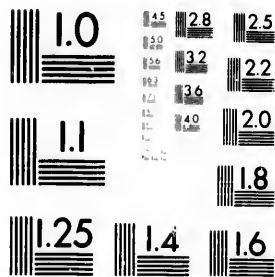


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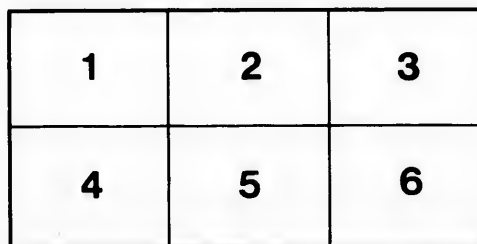
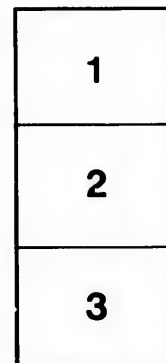
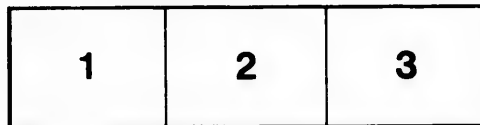
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"DESIGN" IN NATURE.

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REPLIES TO THE

**Christian Guardian**

AND

**CHRISTIAN ADVOCATE.**

BY

⊖ ALLEN PRINGLE. ⊖



TORONTO:

1881.

## PREFATORY NOTE.

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As the following reply to the *Christian Guardian* was refused insertion in that paper, it has been thought right in the interests of truth and free discussion, to publish it in this form. In order to maintain the entire fairness towards our Christian opponents, which we have always exercised, (but which has not always been accorded to us by them,) we here give the full text of the *Guardian's* criticism. A brief reply to the *Canada Christian Advocate* (which also refused any reply), is also appended. That the *Guardian* and *Advocate* should have simultaneously, (March 16th,) opened their batteries—noisy but not destructive—against my pamphlet, which has been in their hands some months, and both attack but one and the same position, viz: the argument against "Design in Nature," is, to say the least, a little curious. Whether this was the result of *design* or *chance*, of course no Materialist can tell! As both criticisms are directed against the same argument, the reply to the *Guardian* is, partially, also a reply to the *Advocate*. In a private reply also which I have received from a prominent theologian of this Province, the same point is selected as the centre of attack. It would, therefore, appear from this consensus of the enemy in their attack, that this one position—the argument against "Design in Nature"—is the only vulnerable one our opponents have been able to find in my pamphlet. Hence the necessity of fairly and squarely meeting this fundamental issue between us.

SELBY, APRIL, 1881.

A. P.

## EXTRACT FROM REPLY TO WENDLING IN "INGERSOLL IN CANADA."

Mr. Wendling's next argument to prove the existence of a personal God is the once celebrated but now obsolete "design" argument of Catwell and Paley; but he seems either not to know or he ignores the fact that this "design argument" has been so thoroughly refuted by the sternest logic and most indisputable natural facts that the more advanced theologians of the present day have wholly abandoned it. To reproduce these, or to give any elaborate refutation, it is unnecessary here. The whole matter may be disposed of briefly by one or two syllogisms which everybody can comprehend. The famous "design argument," then, may be formulated into simple syllogistic propositions thus :—

Whatever manifests design must have had a designer :  
The world manifests design :  
Therefore, the world must have had a designer.

This is the whole Christian reasoning on the subject in a nutshell, and it has been considered by them perfectly conclusive and unanswerable. The logic is certainly unexceptionable, that is, the conclusion is quite legitimate from the premises; but it so happens that the premises are unsound, and in such a case the most unexceptionable logic goes for naught. If premises be erroneous, though the reasoning be ever so good, the conclusion must be erroneous. The major premise of the foregoing syllogism, that "whatever manifests design must have had a designer," is a pure assumption, if by design is meant adaptation in Nature. So, likewise, is the minor premise an assumption if by design is meant anything more than the adaptation prevailing the universe, or at least that part cognizable to us. That the *fitness* and *adaptation* observable in Nature do not establish intelligent design, is amply shown by the highest authorities—by the most eminent naturalists (Hæckel, Darwin, &c.) of the present day, to whom the reader is referred, and I need not here amplify in that direction. Nor is it at all necessary for my present purpose and work. It is only necessary to apply the *reductio ad absurdum* to the above argument from design to show its utter fallacy. We will admit the premises and carry the reasoning of our Christian friends out a little further. By granting the truth of their major proposition and reasoning logically from it we can prove more than is wholesome for the theologian, as thus :

Whatever manifests design must have had a designer :  
God, in his alleged personality and attributes, manifests design ;  
Therefore, God must have had a designer.

It will thus be seen that Mr. Wendling's design argument from Catwell and Paley proves entirely too much for his own good, and hence it is that the astute theologians of the day have abandoned Paley and his design argument to their fate where they have been duly relegated by the incisive logic of the modern materialist.

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## A DEFENDER OF INGERSOLL.

*From the Christian Guardian, March 16th, 1881.*

Hitherto our country has been comparatively free from avowed infidelity. While organized societies for the propagation of sceptical principle and literature have been well known in Europe and in the United States, we have felt but the indirect influence of the movement. But now the battle has come to our own gates; and we are almost startled by the fact that Canadian publishers are found who make it a business to reproduce the ablest infidel literature, and that there are Canadian booksellers who publicly advertise such literature, and find it profitable to court the patronage of an infidel public. Nor is this all. Free thought clubs are organized, public halls opened, weekly meetings for discussion held on Sabbath, and the most eminent lecturers occasionally engaged to call public attention to the new views. The last of these, Mr. Ingersoll, did not receive the favorable attention of the public and the press which was expected. But his visit served at least this useful purpose, it awakened the Christian public to recognize the existence of a growing danger, and has led to some effort to fortify the masses of the people, and especially the young, in their Christian faith. In answer to these efforts of the press and platform, there has appeared the latest Canadian exposition of unbelief, entitled "A Defence of Ingersoll," by Mr. Allen Pringle. Of this two thousand copies have already been sold, and a second edition of four thousand copies is being distributed gratuitously to the clergy and college students of Ontario, a number of copies of which have been sent to the students of our own University at Cobourg. This pamphlet is not so much an investigation of any point of discussion between believers and freethinkers, as a clever reiteration of the most extreme conclusions of modern unbelief, backed up by the authority of great names and assertions about "stern logic" and "indisputable facts." The chief danger of such a work lies in the impression which it makes on the public mind, if its repeated assertions are allowed to pass without rational contradiction. The writer has very ingeniously woven into his work all the current objections to the authority of the Bible, and to Christianity as a system of doctrine, which are advanced in "Gregg's Creed of Christendom" and similar works, and which have been so fully answered by Dr. Peabody and others. But these are but outworks to the defence of Ingersoll's fundamental position, "There is no God," or, if there is we know nothing of him.

Our space will not permit us to follow the writer through his attempted



refutation of the five great lines of argument employed by the Christian Church to establish the fundamental truth of religion; nor can we consider his misrepresentations of the teachings of the Bible, or his attacks upon its historical unity. We shall confine ourselves to a single point, especially as that point lies at the very heart of the controversy. How does he deal with the *argument from design*?

This argument is not as he seems to suppose the invention of Catwell and Paley. It was stated by Socrates 2,200 years before their day, as recorded in the first book of the *Memorabilia*, with a clearness and force seldom since equalled and its fundamental principles are as old as the days of David and Job.

The argument in syllogistic form is this:—"Whatever manifests design must have had a designer. The world manifests design; therefore, the world must have had a designer."

We may accept his definition of design as an adaptation, or the fitness of one thing to another, with the single limitation that it is the fitness of means to an end, and that both means and end must be *produced* or *have had a beginning*. The theist in contending with the materialist could not fairly adduce the matter of the universe as designed for the production of the universe: unless he could first prove that that matter had a *beginning*. But where one or more facts *come to be*, containing in themselves the elements of fitness to produce another fact which lies beyond them, this peculiar kind of fitness we call design. That this peculiar kind of adaptation exists in vast numbers of phenomena of nature, few intelligent persons will deny; and the fact has been admitted, directly or indirectly, by the most eminent modern materialists. The whole theory of Darwin is based upon it in his doctrine of "the survival of the *fittest*." The fact of this adaptation must be accounted for. The theist calls it the design, *i.e.*, the intelligent purpose, of the Supreme Power. This is a simple account of the matter, and one that perfectly satisfies the demands of the problem: but it implies what the materialist is above all other things unwilling to admit, *i.e.*, free, conscious intelligence—or in other words a personal God. Hence we are told that by the incisive logic of the modern materialist, this old notion of a designer has been driven from the field, and has been "abandoned by the most astute theologians," and we are referred to Hæckel and Darwin for a more rational account of the matter. The men of this school a century ago disposed of these wonderful phenomena as *chance*. It is at least satisfactory to find that they have abandoned this position, and that they now acknowledge that the adaptation of nature must be accounted for. The first method which they propose is the substitution of efficient for final cause; in other words, that the end provides its own means. We select an example from Tyndall. The eye is a wonderful optical instrument, adapted to the light. The theory of the materialist is, not that the laws of light furnish the plan on which an intelligent Creator

formed the eye, but that light itself directly formed the eye, and thus adapted it to itself.—Given a sensitive animal tissue, epidermis, and, first, some point on which the light falls is scorched and blackened, and thus made more sensitive. Black pigment spots are the most rudimentary forms in which the eyes appear. This stage having become permanent, by the same rays of the sun the cuticle is raised in a blister and serum effused, and thus the elements of a lens are produced. This is as far as even the scientific imagination of Tyndall ventures to carry us; but he infers that the rays of the sun having done so much, could go on to complete the whole mechanism of the eye. The sum and substance of all this is that the blind interactions and frictions of the various objects of nature against each other have made them fit each other as they do.

We may fairly ask any candid mind to decide whether this is a sufficient account even of such adaptations as that of the eye to light. But a careful examination of the facts will very soon show us that there are numberless instances in which it is absolutely impossible thus to convert the final cause into the physical cause, and thus say that it wrought an adaptation to itself. For instance, here is a species of butterfly (*Pieris*). Its own food is the sweet juices of the flowers. But as soon as it has arrived at the climax of its short life, it seeks out, not the petals of flowers, but the thick succulent leaves of the cabbage, or some other plant of that order, and there deposits its eggs. As far as we know, it never sees or knows its young; and it can scarcely be pretended that the wants of the young caterpillar that is to be, have been the efficient cause of the instinct of the mother which so perfectly provides for those wants. Hence the partial return in Darwin's theory to *the old doctrine of chance*. His laws of development by which he accounts for all these phenomena, are, then, *accidental* variation, heredity, and the survival of the *fittest*. One butterfly *chanced* to drop her eggs on a cabbage leaf; these lived, all others died. This was repeated over and over again, until the repetition created an instinct by the law of hereditary transmission. A lucky chance, happening over and over again, has thus laid the foundation of this and every other such beautiful provision in nature. This is the utmost that these boasted authorities can do in the way of accounting for the universal fact of adaptation, which confronts us at every turn, and in every part of the universe. Not even John Stuart Mill was satisfied with it. He says the induction of design is too broad to be accounted for in any such way as that, and he advises the Theist to hold on to the argument from design. We think the general verdict of common sense will agree with him in this. If the fitnesses of nature are but *chance variations*, preserved because of their accidental fitness, then the course of "creative history" should be strewn with the myriad wrecks of perishing and perished unfit variations.

It would appear that our author himself is scarcely satisfied that the argument from design is completely overthrown, for he adds a final demonstration of his own as follows: "Whatever manifests design must have had

a designer. God, in his alleged personality and attributes, manifests design: therefore God must have had a designer."

We are not favored with an explanation of the minor promise of this syllogism. But we can see in it only one of two meanings—either it affirms the fitness of the Divine attributes as towards each other, or as towards the work of creation. Such fitness certainly exists; but it lacks one *essential* characteristic of the fitness of nature. It has no *beginning*; it always was. It is not the mere fact of fitness that implies design, but the *origination of a fitness*. An eternal fitness is a *harmony* as between the Divine attributes, a *power* as toward the universe; but in neither case is it *design*, unless it is first shown that it had a *beginning*.

In taking our leave of this pamphlet, we can only express the hope that it will stir up the Christian Church generally to instruct the young more perfectly in the reasons for our faith; certainly we have as yet no cause to be ashamed of them.

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## DESIGN IN NATURE.

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*To the Editor of the Christian Guardian.*

DEAR SIR,—In a late issue of the *Guardian* appeared a lengthy editorial in reference to my pamphlet "Ingersoll in Canada" (not "A Defence of Ingersoll" as stated) in which you deal with one issue, viz, the argument from design to prove the existence of a personal God, as this you say "lies at the very heart of the controversy." Now, as I am quite willing to accept this as a vital issue between the Christian and Materialist and to rest the whole case on the result, you will, perhaps, give me space in the *Guardian* to re-join to your reply. In the first place allow me to thank you for the fair and courteous manner in which you have addressed yourself to the subject. Were our Christian opponents all as fair and courteous there would be less of the untoward feeling between us which, unfortunately, now exists. Since my pamphlet was sent out to the Ontario Clergy a few weeks ago I have received numerous replies (by courtesy I will call them all replies,) from them through the post. You would, no doubt, be amused as well as surprised to see some of these documents. Some are perfectly fair and courteous, as well as argumentative—being able replies from the Christian standpoint—while others are quite destitute of either courtesy or argument; and some, in addition to being so destitute, are personal, insolent, and abusive. It does appear to me that the Christian ought to know—if he knows anything about Free-thinkers—that discourtesy and abuse will not go far towards converting them to Christianity. I would also beg to say further by way of preliminary that if I have in any way "misrepresented the teachings of the Bible" in my pamphlet, as you appear to think, it has certainly been unintentional

on my part, as I have no design to be in the least degree unfair in dealing with the doctrines of the Bible, or the positions of opponents. I will now proceed, with your kind permission, to consider your reply.

In the pamphlet in question I stated the Christian argument from design to prove the existence of a personal God, in syllogistic form, which you quote and accept as fairly stated, as follows:—

Whatever manifests design must have had a designer ;  
The world manifests design ;  
Therefore, the world must have had a designer.

This is the gist of the Christian argument from design to prove a God. In my reply to Wendling I did not enter into an elaborate argument to confute the above reasoning, thinking it unnecessary, as the design argument is not much relied upon of late by Theists ; but to show its absurdity I gave what you are pleased to call, ironically, “ a final demonstration,” by simply carrying out the Theist's logic a little further, as follows:—

Whatever manifests design must have had a designer: God, in his alleged personality and attributes, manifests design: Therefore, God must have had a designer.

Now, if the integrity of this syllogism ~~it~~ is unimpeachable, the conclusion is certainly fatal to the monotheist, as it proves a thousand Gods as well as one. You, of course, perceive this, and at once attempt to impeach the minor premise. The major premise, being the Theist's own proposition, you, of course, accept ; and I contend that the obnoxious minor premise is equally as sound as the other, on the Theist's own showing ; for if anything in the Universe manifests design, the God of the bible, in his person and attributes, manifests it. You say “we are not favored with an explanation of the minor premise of this syllogism. But we can see in it only one of two meanings—either it affirms the fitness of the Divine attributes as towards each other, or as towards the work of creation. Such fitness certainly exists; but it lacks one *essential* characteristic of the fitness of nature. It has no *beginning*—it always was.” To which I reply the fitness of the universe always was : *it* had no beginning ; for the Universe is eternal. If fitness, having no beginning, can exist in a God, fitness, having no beginning, can exist in the Universe. Hence, if fitness is no evidence of design “ unless it can be shown that it had a beginning,” as you admit, the fitness of the universe which is eternal is no evidence of design. Or formulate the argument thus :—

Fitness is no evidence of design, “ unless it is first shown that it had a beginning :”

The fitness of the Universe cannot be shown to have had a beginning ;  
Therefore, the fitness in the Universe is no evidence of design.

But, you will probably say that many of the adaptations we see around us in nature had a beginning. True, but I reply that the fitness of matter and force to produce all of these adaptations, is eternal—had no beginning,—for if matter and force is eternal, its properties are eternal. It rests with you to prove that the fitness, or plan, of the Universe had a beginning; to do which you will have to prove that the Universe itself had a beginning. Modern Science has established that not only is matter indestructible, but force also is indestructible. If, then, the smallest particle of matter or force cannot be annihilated, matter and force will of necessity continue to be; and whatever *must* always continue to be must always have been. Whatever *begins* to be *ceases* to be—all organisms, all worlds even. They cease to be as organisms, but persist as matter and force in other forms. Is not the conception of an eternal, uncaused Universe, containing within itself the inherent elements of fitness and adaptation, more reasonable than the conception of an eternal, infinite and uncaused personal God possessing the elements of fitness and adaptation? The one is, at all events, comprehensible and intelligible, while the other involves the most palpable absurdity and contradiction, for personality implies limitation, and whatever is *limited* cannot be *infinite*. If God is a Being at all, with attributes, he is something *per se*, whether material or spiritual; and something *per se* cannot be infinite, and therefore cannot be God. If he is not something *per se*, but infinite, then the whole Universe is God and even the Atheist might accept that definition of the Unknowable. Is it not more reasonable then to suppose that matter and force are eternal, containing within themselves the promise and potency of all life, all phenomena, fitness and adaptation in nature included, than to suppose the existence of an eternal, anthropomorphic God, with the absurdity that he finally, after an indefinite period of "masterly inactivity," created the whole Universe out of nothing? As to *why* the Universe exists we, of course, humbly acknowledge our entire ignorance; so may the Christian. We cannot fathom the absolute, or even conceive it. The Materialist freely admits that of the *essence* of things he knows nothing, and that the Universe is, indeed, a great mystery; but he declines to assume a greater mystery to explain a less. When the Theist says God created and controls the Universe, his solution—God—is a greater mystery than the Universe itself; and the explanation is more incomprehensible than the thing to be explained. When he says that fitness and adaptation in Nature are evidence of design, and design of a designer, and stops his reasoning there, he is inconsistent and illogical; for the plan of a thing is as much evidence of design as the thing itself, and therefore, if a God planned and designed the Universe his plans are evidence of design as much as the work itself, and he himself must have had a designer. This conclusion you cannot escape, for the premise you attempt to impeach is thus shown to be as sound as the one you aver true; and in assuming that fitness in the divine mind does not imply design you stultify yourself. Paley grants that a designer implies a person. Now a person implies an organism; an organism implies organs and faculties; organs and faculties (you say) imply design

contrivance; and contrivance implies a contriver. Hence, if the proposition that whatever manifests design must have had a designer is true; as you say it is, the proposition that God manifests design must also be true and the conclusion is, therefore, inevitable that if the fitness in Nature must have had a designer the fitness in this alleged God must have had a designer. You may assume, however, that a *person* need not necessarily be an organization. Well, then, if nature had a designer, as you say, and that designer is not a person, it must be an element, essence or principle, or in other words, Nature: and in this view we will pretty much agree, for I only claim that the fitness and adaptation observable in Nature are the results of the inherent forces of Nature. Should you further assume that this impersonal essence or force is intelligent, I reply that we cannot conceive of intelligence apart from organization.

The Theist, when he comes to a first cause which he calls God, stops reasoning; but why should he? Why should he be afraid of his own logic? He says everything must have a maker, everything from a Moneron up to the Universe itself. These are his premises, but where do they lead him to logically? For instance:—

Every organization must have had a maker:  
 Paley's God is an organization, being a Person;  
 Therefore Paley's God must have had a maker.

This reasoning is perfectly fair from the Theist's own premises, but he manages somehow to dodge it. He will say: God is not a person; but the Bible, and Paul, and Paley, say he is. Then again, the Theist tells us that non-intelligent matter and force cannot produce intelligent man—that intelligence presupposes a greater intelligence. But as soon as we apply the rules of logic and common sense to his propositions, and turn them into syllogisms, he at once demurs. For instance, again:—

Whatever manifests intelligence presupposes a greater intelligence:  
 The God, who *designs*, manifests intelligence;  
 Therefore there must be an intelligence greater than God.

Stop! he says, your minor premise is not true. (These minor premises, though the legitimate offspring of the major, are all it seems bastards). If not true, why not? For the Theist to say that God does not manifest intelligence after claiming that he *designed* and *planned* the Universe, and that he keeps it in order and motion, is sheer evasion in order to escape the logical effects of his own propositions. Further, he says the Universe was made, but that God is self-made, self-existent. But why may not the Universe be self-existent? When *we* say the Universe was not made he accuses us of attributing it to *chance*; but why, then, may not God with as much reason, be attributed to chance, since you say He was not made?

But so far as the argument from design is concerned, I have only admitted the truth of the Theist's premises, to show their absurdity. We deny that the *fitness* and *adaptation* in Nature prove intelligent design at all, much less an omniscient designer. Design, if it exists in Nature at all, must be universal—not a portion of the phenomena designed, and the rest "at loose ends," undersigned. But does nature, as a whole, show intelligent design, or benevolent design? Is Nature perfect? Is she not rather filled with abortions, monstrosities, waste, "struggle for life," and "survival of the fittest?" When Paley showed the savage his watch, to make him understand that as the watch had a maker, the world must have had a maker, the savage, after noting the regularity of the ticking, etc., said, "Pale face wrong; pale face make watch, but Great Chief no make Earth, for Earth no compare with watch. Watch, he go right—but Earth, he no go right. Pale face rob red man—kill red man; red man starve when game is scarce; bear kill red man; storm come, blow down red man's tent; cold come, freeze red man's squaw—kill red man's papoose! Watch, he go right—Earth, no go right! Earth, no compare with watch!" This homely reasoning of the unlettered savage was too much for the theological metaphysics of Mr. Paley. If there is intelligent, benevolent design at the helm of this wonderful Universe, why should these things be? If all species of animals and men were designed and created by a good God, why should they not all be fitted to live and survive without eating and exterminating each other? Why the fierce struggle for life—not only between beast and beast, but between man and man? Was it designed that beast should devour beast, and man eat man? Has a benevolent God fitted and adapted them so to act, or has Nature done it? The jaws of the lion and tiger are nicely fitted and adapted to tear an innocent child to pieces, and eat it; but does this fitness prove a good designer? The potato bugs are nicely fitted and adapted to feed and live upon our potato vines; the weevil, to consume our wheat and peas; but it is, of course, all designed! The numerous human parasites, external and internal, are nicely adapted to feed and thrive upon living *human* bodies, and I suppose we ought not to object to the arrangement, or attempt to dislodge them—for have they not all been intelligently and tenderly designed to feed upon us? And when hundreds of human beings are consumed alive, in one grand holocaust, in a church or theatre; or a tornado sweeps a whole district; or an earthquake swallows up a whole city; or pestilence and famine depopulate a country, we must resign ourselves, for it is all designed!

But perhaps the most conclusive evidence of all against the idea of special creation and design in nature is to be found in the useless and *purposeless rudimentary structures* throughout the animal and vegetable kingdoms. There are numerous rudimentary organs, such as eyes, legs, lungs, mammary glands, muscles, teeth, wings, pistils, stamens, etc., to be found both in animal and vegetable bodies, having no functions whatever, and wholly without utility. Were these designed? If so was the design intelligent? There are animals that live in the dark, with eyes that do not see,

being covered by a membrane; but when these animals are removed from a life of darkness to one of light the sight is ultimately restored. Does God or nature do this? In the upper jaws of calves are teeth that never cut; the dugong has tusks that never cut through the gums; the guinea pig has teeth that are shed before it is born; the boa-constrictor has little bones under the skin towards the tail, which have no present use, as they are the remains of hind legs and a pelvis; some whales and fishes have useless bones in the hinder parts of their bodies which are evidently the remains of hind-legs; in a certain worm (*Anguis*) there is a set of shoulder bones in the body but no legs attached to them. Were these all *designed*? In some breeds of sheep we find rudimentary ears, and of cattle small dangling horns. The males of the mammalia all have *mammæ* in a rudimentary condition, and sometimes so developed as to yield milk. Were these designed, and if so what for? They have no earthly use that the keenest naturalist can discover. Was the "bastard wing" in birds designed? Or the teeth in fetal whales which when grown up have no teeth? There are in animal and vegetable life thousands of such facts as these, of irredeemable *purposelessness*, so to speak,—facts which can never be reconciled on the theory of creation and design, but which are as plain as day on the Materialistic theory of development. If the Theist can give any rational account of them we will be glad to listen. "When we consider," says Haeckel "the attempts which the earlier naturalists have made in order to explain this mystery, we can scarcely help smiling." In the light of Evolution, however, we find the solution of the rudimentary organs as well as a thousand other phenomena; and hence the almost universal acceptance of Evolution at the present day by scholars and scientists. Touching this, Haeckel says, "It no longer occurs to physicists, chemists, mineralogists or astronomers, to seek to find in the phenomena which continually appear before them in their scientific domain the action of a Creator acting for a definite purpose. They universally, and without hesitation, look upon the phenomena which appear in their different departments of study as the necessary and invariable effects of physical and chemical forces which are inherent in matter."

You refer, Mr. Editor, to the adaptation of the eye to light, and ask the candid mind to decide whether Evolution furnishes a sufficient account of it. I freely admit that to the ordinary reader who has not studied carefully and thoughtfully the laws of heredity, of natural selection, of accidental variation, etc., as elaborated by Darwin and Haeckel, it would seem unreasonable. But the account is quite satisfactory to all the greatest living naturalists as well as thousands of others who have looked at the matter without prejudice. To all such the doctrine of development appears more reasonable and less mysterious than that of a personal god and design. Regarding the adaptation of the eye to light, if we had never seen any but the eyes of humans and the higher animals we might think it impossible that they could have been evolved by natural selection. But the belief becomes comparatively easy when we look at the gradual ascent from the lowest eyes in the lowest



animals to the highest in man; for we learn that "the eye in the lowest animal is a simple spot or pigment which does not yet reflect any image of external objects, but at most perceives and distinguishes the different rays of light. Later, we find in addition to this a sensitive nerve; then there gradually develops within the spot of pigment the first beginning of the lens, a refractive body which is now able to concentrate the rays of light and to reflect a definite image. But all the composite apparatus for the movement of the eye and its accommodation to variations of light and distance are still absent, namely, the various refractive media, the highly differentiated membrane of the optic nerve, etc., which are so perfectly constituted in higher animals. Comparative anatomy shows us an uninterrupted succession of all possible stages of transition, from the simplest organ to the most highly perfected apparatus, so that we can form a pretty correct idea of the slow and gradual formation of even such an exceedingly complex organ."\* From the lowest organism—the Monera, which are mere protoplasmic specks of mucus or slime—up to man, the ascent is so gradual as to be almost imperceptible, thus excluding at once and forever the idea of *special creation* or *design*.

With thanks for your space

Yours,

ALLEN PRINGLE.

SELBY, LENNOX Co., ONT. }  
March 30, 1881. }

\* Haeckel.

## MORE "DESIGN."

(REPLY TO THE C. C. ADVOCATE.)

The *Canada Christian Advocate* of March 16th contains a lengthy editorial under the caption "Logic Run Mad," (a very appropriate heading), in reply to that portion of my pamphlet which deals with *Design in Nature*. In its next issue the *Advocate* (evidently, dubious, as to the result of the other batch of "logic run mad,") returns to the subject in another lengthy leader, and, with praise-worthy frankness, gives as a reason for doing so, that many had "expressed the fear that he" (the pamphleteer,) "had made out his case," and adds, "if he has, then the plainest proof of a Divine existence is taken away; and if the plainest proof is gone then we need not present one less evident." Precisely so my Christian friend! The *Advocate* struggles through long columns (and there is not even a *method* in the "mad logic,") to try to show that this plainest proof of the Divine existence is *not* gone; but he comes no nearer making out his case than his brother of the *Guardian*. Indeed, less near, for in his zeal towards God he forgets to be courteous towards his opponents, and talks about the "ignorant absurdity" of "unmitigated simpletons," and reminds the "infidel" for the thousandth time that "the fool hath said in his heart there is no God." When will the Christian polemic learn that such stuff has no weight as evidence or argument? To call Darwin, Hæckel, Spenser, Huxley, Tyndall and thousands of others, who do not believe in the Christians' God "fools," or "unmitigated simpletons," will not do Christianity much good or the "infidels" much harm. The first duty of a controversialist is to fairly represent an opponent's position, but the *Christian Advocate* does not do this. He says: "The infidel says the statement that whatever manifests design in nature must have had a designer, is a pure assumption," and he then goes on with much parade of "logic" and "common sense" to demolish this counterfeit presentment. Now, this is what I said: "Whatever manifests design must have had a designer, is a pure assumption, *if by Design is meant adaptation in Nature;*" and the impeachment of the premise that "whatever manifests design must have had a designer" was, of course, on that ground. But this is quite different from what the *Advocate* imputes to me, and hence his rattling fusillade of so-called "common sense" against "ignorant absurdity," is only a waste of very uncommon sense and another exhibition of Christian unfairness. The *Advocate*, like his brother of the *Guardian*, strives to impeach the proposition that "God, in his alleged personality and attributes, manifests design." Perceiving that this premise, logically carried out, would foist upon him a whole regiment of gods, he declares the premise, "is not proved, cannot be proved, and is not true." Probably not, but the *onus probandi* of this does not devolve upon me. It does not rest with me to show that this premise, *per se*, is true, for I deny his fundamental premise of which this is a legitimate correlative. The disputed premise is an inevitable corollary of his

other premises. If *they* are true *it* must be true. In this design argument the Theist's premises are these: Fitness and adaptation in nature prove intelligent design; intelligent design proves a designer; whatever manifests intelligent design must have had a designer. These are his propositions fairly stated. Now, my position, and it is invulnerable, is this: If your primary proposition that fitness and adaptation in nature prove a designer, is true, then its correlative that fitness and adaptation in your alleged God, prove a designer, is also true. If one position is tenable the other must be, for they both rest upon precisely the same evidence. If fitness, order, and adaptation in the Universe, prove design, will the *Advocate* tell us why the same quantities in a God do not prove design? If the *plan* of a steam engine in the mind of a Fitch is evidence of design, why is not the *plan* of a universe in the mind of a God evidence of design! The *Advocate* says, however, that the fitness in Nature is as different from the fitness in God as effect is different from cause, and accuses me of confounding cause and effect; but by making the following extraordinary statement he shows conclusively that it is he who is confounding cause and effect, as well as making distinctions where there is no difference: He says, "Whoever asks for the cause of a cause falls into an absurdity." This will surely be news to the natural philosophers and scientists, for they all know that effects continually become causes. Modern science has shown the *indestructibility of force* as well as *matter*, and hence there can be no such thing as a first cause or last effect, for every effect, whether physical or dynamical, becomes, in turn, itself an efficient cause. The *Advocate's* statement, therefore, that it is absurd to ask for the cause of a cause, is itself a palpable absurdity, and in direct opposition to modern science. Besides, by making such a statement he stultifies himself, for he says man is the *cause* or contriver of a machine, and that God is the *cause* or contriver of the man; but on his own showing he has no right to say the man has any cause, for is he not a *cause* himself? He says fitness in nature is an effect, but fitness in God is not an effect but a cause; but he has no warrant for this assumption, except theology and the bible, and these will scarcely pass muster to-day, as authority in scientific or philosophical discussion. You simply beg the question, Mr. *Advocate*, and dogmatically assume what is to be proved. When you say the fitness in God is uncaused, eternal, I reply that the fitness in the Universe is uncaused, eternal. If the fitness in God to plan a Universe is without beginning, I reply, the fitness and power inherent in matter to produce all phenomena are without beginning. You look at man with his power of thought, his power to plan, to contrive, etc.; you see the fitness in his nature to do all this, and you say this fitness is evidence of design—that he must have had a designer. Let us now look at your alleged personal God. He, too, you say, has the power to plan—for did he not plan the Universe; he too, as the power to think, to cogitate, to contrive—for did he not say, "Let *us* make man in our own image," and contrive to make him out of a lump of clay; and woman—dear woman!—out of a rib, aye, a rib! Of course he must be wonderfully *fitted* to do all these marvellous things. Why, then, is this *fitness* not evidence

of design? If the fitness in one proves a designer, there is no earthly reason why the fitness in the other does not prove a designer, especially as they are both *Persons*, and so nearly alike that one is made in the *image* of the other! You cannot, my Christian friend, by any sophistry or theological *finesse*, escape this conclusion; for you will not venture to deny that the plan of a thing is as much evidence of design as the thing itself. Indeed, one of the best theologians in the Dominion, and a clever scholar, whose able letter to me in reply to my pamphlet, is before me, says: "When a man plans a steam engine he has a design. The design is not in the engine, but in the intelligence that plans the engine."

The *Advocate* says:—"The first thing to be settled then, is this: Is it true that whatever manifests design must have had a designer?" But who ever said or thought that this is not true? Nobody. And hence his appeal again to logic and "common sense" to prove what nobody ever thought of disputing, becomes positively ludicrous. The first thing to be settled is, not whether "whatever manifests design must have had a designer," but whether the adaptation in Nature proves *intelligent design*. The Theist claims it does. The Materialist denies it. But the duty of proving rests with the Theist. By all the rules of logic the affirmative must make out its case. How does the Theist make out this case of "Design in Nature?" After failing metaphysically and logically, how did Mr. Paley try practically to convince the aboriginal, whose primitive mind had not yet been "obfuscated" with theology, that God made the world? Why, he showed his watch to the savage, to make him understand that as the watch had a maker, (pale face) the world also must have had a maker (Great Chief.) The rather unsatisfactory result of Mr. Paley's demonstration has already been noticed.

The *Advocate* declares:—"There is not a single fact known in nature but that manifests design." Here, for once, he has stated a distinct issue, and I am quite willing to accept it; and being now on the affirmative, the burden of proof fairly falls upon my side. I affirm that there are multitudinous facts in nature which do not manifest intelligent design. The moral as well as the physical world is, as shown in the reply to the *Guardian*, full of irredeemable *purposelessness*. But I need not repeat here the argument there.

Conscious, apparently, of his failure, with all his diffuse logic and "common sense," to make out his case, the *Advocate* resorts to Authorities to make out design in nature, and disprove the doctrine of Evolution. Of course it is as natural for the Theologian, when hard pressed in argument, to seek refuge in *Authority*, or personality, as for a fox, when hard pressed by the hunters, to seek refuge in his burrow with a parting yelp of defiance. But mere Authority doesn't go far in these days, unless it can show the credentials of *fact* and *reason*. To be merely a Duke, or Reverend, or Vicegerent, or Holy Father in God, will not do here. To prove Design, and explode Evolution, the *Advocate* quotes as witnesses, Rev. W. Mitchell, the

Duke of Agyle, St. George Mivart, Janet, Hugh Miller, Max Muller, "A German Authority," not designated, Principal Dawson, Agassiz, and even Darwin, Huxley and Hæckel themselves. Just fancy Huxley and Hæckel in the witness-box against Evolution! To what straits theistic polemics are reduced! Mr. *Advocate*, who has been charging others with "confounding" things, is himself confounding not only cause and effect, but plaintiff and defendant. To show its relevancy on the *Advocate's* side, I here give his extract from Hæckel:—"Hæckel says, 'Darwin's doctrine is directly opposed to the consideration that the 'vegetable and animal kingdoms are the products of creative agency, working with definite design.'" This is directly and obviously against the *Advocate*, but he does not see it. So far as Authorities go, I reiterate the assertion that there is not a single living naturalist or scientist in the front rank who has not accepted Evolution.

Because Materialists do not believe in design in Nature, in gods and devils, in a future life of heaven and hell, and other myths and legends, they are, forsooth, a forlorn lot, with a "creed of cold negations," and are deserving of much commiseration! So says the Christian. And so it goes: *we* pity the poor, deluded dupe of a Christian, with his superstitious beliefs—and *he* pities the poor, "God-forsaken" infidel with his "barren, frigid system of negations." The question is: Which is the more deserving of the pity of the other? The stigma "cold system of negations" has become so stereotyped with the Christian that he has come to consider it an excellent argument against us. Even the *Mail*, in its weekly disquisitions on Theology and Agnosticism, and its homilies on Christian Ethics, *par excellence*, also harps upon these threadbare "negations" of infidels. But there is no truth in it! Ours is the *positive*—yours, the *negative*. We believe in everything worth believing—every fact, every principle, every truth in the Universe—and who could have a better creed? Moreover, we stand ready to accept any doctrine the Christian holds, the moment he shows its titles. The real "negations" are the dogmatic creeds and confessions, the superstitious fables and fictions; and these we, of course, deny. We believe, however, in the positive, the real, the natural—while the Christian believes in the negative, the unreal, the supernatural. It is, therefore, he who believes in a "system of negations"—not we. It is said we have no ethical standard, no sanction for morality; but we have—and it is infinitely superior to the untenable and arbitrary standards of Christianity. *Whatever is useful is good*. This is sanction enough for human conduct, and better and higher than the "fear o' hell or hangman's whip." Whatever conduces to the happiness and well-being of my fellows and myself, is right and good; and this is a better rule of life than to be vainly striving to do the will of an imaginary being who has left his will in such a "slip shod" shape that his followers have been quarrelling for eighteen centuries as to what it really means—and will never probably know—except, indeed, the mystery should be cleared up next month, (May) when we shall have presented to us a new—bran new—"will" or "word of God," duly revised; and then, peradventure, all

will be so plain (!) that it is to be hoped, and is partly expected, that all will be made infidels together. A new bible!! Think of that, dear Christian friends!—you who have been trying honestly to save your souls under the old bible! Everything mathematical ought now to be put under revision, not even excepting the axioms of Euclid—for if that infallible book, which is the divinely inspired Word and Will of God, was not sound, and needed revising—how much more the merely human arrangement that two and two are four, or that the angles of a triangle are equal to two right angles? Nothing is safe now—not even the multiplication table! There seems to be nothing certain in this world! Just imagine the souls that have been lost under the old bible, and the mathematical demonstrations that have been made all in vain!

“Great God! on what a slender thread  
Eternal life depends!”

But it is urged by some that it is better to believe even fables that are pleasant than to embrace cold truth. It is said that our doctrine of the everlasting sleep of death is a cold and dreary one, and that the Christian doctrine of a future existence in heaven or hell is a very comfortable one. But let us look at this for a moment. It is perhaps better to be too cold than too hot! Which is to be preferred—a quiet and everlasting sleep, that knows no awakening—or excruciating, never-ending torture, which, if the bible were true, would be the lot of the majority of mankind? To any benevolent mind it would seem better that *all* should go forever into utter oblivion than that *one* should be tortured in hell forever. We, therefore, think that to be swallowed up in the soul of the Universe and lost in the eternal forgetfulness of *Nirvana*, is infinitely more comforting, or less repugnant, than the Christian doctrine of conscious existence in a future life of heaven and hell. We do not, however, either affirm or deny a future existence; but simply *disbelieve* it because we can see no evidence in Nature that the doctrine is true. Should it prove true, however, we hold that the wisest course for us in this life, and the very best preparation for another, are *good works*—not mere belief in absurd creeds and dogmas.

