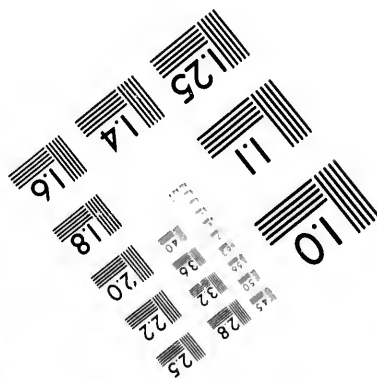
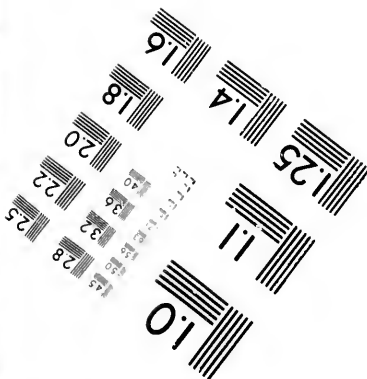
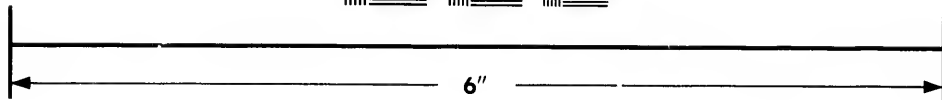
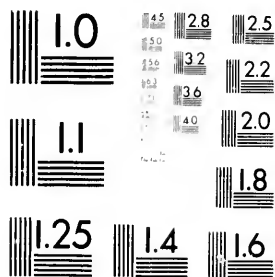


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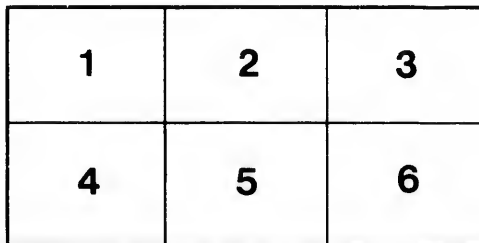
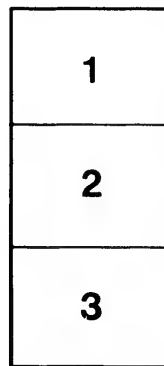
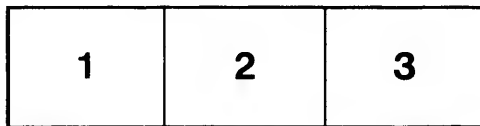
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OF

**MODERN THOUGHT.**

IN REPLY TO A RECENT PAMPHLET, BY THE  
BISHOP OF ONTARIO, ON

“AGNOSTICISM.”

BY

W. D. LE SUEUR, B.A.



Toronto:  
HUNTER, ROSE & COMPANY.  
1884.

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THE Bishop of Ontario has been moved, like many another Bishop, to bear his testimony against an evil which, it is stated, is making serious ravages in the Christian world—an evil which goes by many names, but which his Lordship finds it most convenient to deal with under the name of Agnosticism. His views on this important subject were first delivered orally to the Synod of the Diocese of Ontario, and were subsequently, at the request of that body, given to the world in pamphlet form. We have therefore before us one more recognition of the fact that the ancient doctrines are becoming harder and harder for modern men to believe. The opposition to them, the Bishop of Ontario informs us, is no longer confined to professedly “rationalistic writings, but is manifest in conversation, magazines and newspapers.” “It has crept,” he adds, “into our churches; and heads of families, who are churchgoers and outwardly believers, are at heart Agnostics.” This is very true, and should always be borne in mind when attempts are made to estimate the strength of the churches on the basis of their nominal adherents. A man who is outwardly an “agnostic” may be relied on to be one in reality; but an outward profession of orthodoxy calls for confirmation, a Bishop being the witness.

Seeing that the Church is thus face to face with a movement of the most hostile kind, it would certainly seem desirable that in calling attention to the fact some distinct attempt should be made to determine the probable limits of the movement—to show how far it can proceed and where it must stop. For men may reasonably ask, "How do we know that this falling away from the faith, as you call it, is not in reality the rise of a new faith destined to overspread the world? You say that the old doctrines are ceasing to be believed by many: how do we know that a hundred years hence they will be believed by any? If the doctrine of Evolution can so shake the foundations of orthodoxy, what may not be expected from some further, and possibly still more important, scientific construction?" It would be easy to answer these questions by simply quoting certain alleged Divine guarantees of the permanence of the Church; but such an answer would not be to the purpose in what claims to be a philosophic discussion. What, after all, is the Church? Surely it consists of its members, and if one member may be lost to it why not one thousand? If one thousand, why not one million, or one hundred millions? All must be held to be alike in the Divine eye; that is to say, of equal interest and value. The Church is really overthrown every time it loses a member—as much overthrown, so far as that member is concerned, as if all his fellow-believers had fallen away with him. We only have to conceive the operation that takes place in the individual case multiplied a certain number of times, and, lo! there is no Church. Of course, as already observed, it is possible to rely on a promise given that this result will never befall; but an enquirer of anything like a scientific turn of mind would like to have the matter otherwise and more satisfactorily explained to him.



From the point of view of the present writer, there are good reasons for believing that a general readjustment of thought is now in progress, and that it is destined to go on until old forms of belief, inconsistent with a rational interpretation of the world, have been completely overthrown. This progressive readjustment is not a thing of yesterday ; it is simply that gradual abandonment of the theological standpoint which has been taking place throughout the ages. As a modern philosopher has remarked, the very conception of *miracle* marks the beginnings of rationalism, seeing that it recognises an established order of things, a certain "reign of law," with which only supernatural power can interfere. The progress beyond this point consists in an increasing perception of the universality of law, and an increasing disposition to be exacting as to the evidences of miracle. No candid person can read the history of modern times without arriving at the conclusion that the whole march of civilization illustrates, above everything else, this gradual change of intellectual standpoint. Man's power keeps pace ever with his knowledge of natural law, and his recognition of the uniformity of its operations. What we see to-day is simply the anticipation by thousands of the conclusion to which all past discoveries and observations have been pointing, that the reign of law is and always has been absolute. This is really what "agnosticism" so called means. It means that thinking men are tired of the inconsistencies of the old system of belief, and that they desire to rest in an order of conceptions not liable to disturbance. The great Faraday, who had not brought himself to this point, used to say that when he had to deal with questions of faith he left all scientific and other human reasonings at the door, and that when he had to deal with questions of science he discarded in like

manner all theological modes of thought. The region of science was one region, that of faith was another; and between these he placed a wall so high that once on either side he could see nothing that lay on the other. He did not attempt to reconcile faith with science as some do; he separated them utterly, feeling them apparently to be irreconcilable. Thus he virtually lived in two worlds—one in which no miracles took place, but in which everything flowed in an orderly manner from recognised antecedents, and another in which the chain of causation might be broken at any moment by supernatural power. Since Faraday's time, however, men of science have grown bolder. They have renounced the attempt to live a divided life. They do not believe in insuperable barriers between one field of thought and another. They believe in the unity of the human mind and in the unity of truth. They have made their choice—those of them at least whom the Bishop of Ontario designates as agnostics—in favour of a world in which cause and effect maintain constant relations. In doing so they do not act wilfully, but simply yield to the irresistible weight of evidence. Miracle is a matter of more or less uncertain testimony, while the unchangeableness of natural law is a matter of daily observation. Miracles never happen in the laboratory. Supernatural apparitions do not haunt the museum. Distant ages and countries or lonely road-sides reap all the glory of these manifestations. What wonder then that the man of science prefers to trust in what his eyes daily see and his hands handle, rather than in narratives of perfervid devotees or in traditions handed down from centuries whose leading characteristic was an omnivorous credulity. There is nothing negative in this attitude of mind. On the contrary, it is positive in the highest degree. The true man of science

wants to know and believe as much as possible. He desires to know what *is* and to adapt his thoughts to that; and the universe is to him simply an inexhaustible treasure-house of truths, all of more or less practical import.

It is right, however, before proceeding further, to examine this word "agnosticism" a little, to see whether it is one that is really serviceable in the present controversy. That some have been willing to apply the term to themselves and to regard it as rather *ben trovato*, I am quite aware; but I think there are good reasons why serious thinkers should decline to call themselves by such a name and should object to its application to them by others.

A question proposed for discussion either can or cannot be settled; it either lies within or beyond the region in which verification is possible. If it lies within that region, no man should call himself an agnostic in regard to it. He may withhold his judgment until the evidence is complete, but suspension of judgment is not agnosticism which, if it means anything, means a profession of hopeless and, so to speak, invincible ignorance in regard to certain matters. But if it would be absurd for a man to profess himself an agnostic in regard to problems admitting or believed to admit of solution, is it not idle for any one to accept that designation because he believes that there are other problems or propositions which do not admit of solution? All one has to do in relation to the latter class of problems is to recognise their unreal or purely verbal character. It is the nature of the problem that requires to be characterized, not our mental relation thereto. The latter follows as a matter of course from the former. Moreover, why should any one wish or consent to be designated by a term purely negative in its meaning? It is what we know, not what we do not

know that should furnish us with a name, if it is necessary to have one. The little that a man knows is of vastly more consequence to him than all the untrodden continents of his ignorance. The chemist calls himself so because he professes to have a knowledge of chemistry: he does not invent for himself a name signifying his ignorance of political economy or metaphysics. Why then should any man adopt a name which defines his relation not to things that he knows or to questions to which he attributes a character of reality, but to things that he does not know and to questions which, so far as he can see, have no character of reality? Let others give him such a name if they will, but let no man voluntarily tie himself to a negation.

There are some, as I believe, who have adopted the appellation of agnostic thoughtlessly; some through indolence, as appearing to exempt them from the necessity of a decision in regard to certain difficult and, in a social sense, critical questions; and some possibly for the reason hinted at by the Bishop of Ontario, namely, lack of the courage necessary to take up a more decided position. Whatever the motive may be, however, I am persuaded that the term is a poor one for purposes of definition; and I should advise all earnest men, who think more of their beliefs than of their disbeliefs, to disown it so far as they themselves are concerned. If it be asked by what appellation those who do not believe in "revealed religion" are to be known, I should answer that it is not their duty to coin for themselves any sectarian title. They are in no sense a sect. They believe themselves to be on the high road of natural truth. It is they who have cast aside all limited and partial views, and who are opening their minds to the full teaching of the universe. Let their opponents coin names if they will: they whom the truth has made free feel that their creed is too wide for limitation.

The Bishop of Ontario stands forth in the pamphlet before us simply as the champion of the two great doctrines of God and Immortality. In reality, however, he is the champion of much more, for he does not profess that these doctrines can stand by themselves apart from a belief in revelation. The issue between the Bishop and those whom he styles agnostics is not really as to these two abstract doctrines, but as to the validity of the whole miraculous system of which his Lordship is a responsible exponent. If we can imagine a person simply holding, as the result of his own individual reasonings or other mental experiences, a belief in God as a spiritual existence animating and presiding over the works of nature, and a further belief in a future existence for the human soul, I do not see that there would necessarily be any conflict between him and the most advanced representatives of modern thought. No, the trouble does not begin here. The trouble arises when these beliefs are presented as part and parcel of a supernatural system miraculously revealed to mankind, and embracing details which bring it plainly into conflict with the known facts and laws of nature. To detach these two doctrines therefore from the system to which they belong, and put them forward as if the whole stress of modern philosophical criticism was directed against them in particular, is a controversial artifice of a rather unfair kind.

We are reminded by the right reverend author that no chain is stronger than its weakest link, and we are asked to apply the principle to the doctrine of Evolution, some of the links of which his Lordship has tested and found unable to bear the proper strain. The principle is undoubtedly a sound one; but has it occurred to his Lordship that it is no less applicable to the net-work of doctrine in which he believes than to the

doctrine of Evolution? Some links of that net-work are snapping every day under no greater strain than the simple exercise of common sense by ordinary men. It is a beautiful and well-chosen position that his Lordship takes up as champion of the doctrines of God and Immortality against "agnostic" science; but it would have argued greater courage had the banner been planted on the miraculous narratives of the Old and New Testament. A gallant defence of the Scriptural account of the taking of Jericho, of the arresting for a somewhat sanguinary purpose of the earth's rotation, of the swallowing of Jonah by a whale, and his restoration to light and liberty after three days and nights of close and very disagreeable confinement, of the comfortable time enjoyed by Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the fiery furnace, of the feeding of five thousand men with five loaves and two fishes and the gathering up of twelve basketsful of the fragments—a gallant defence, I say, of these things would be very much more in order; for *these* are the links that criticism has attacked and which the common judgment of the nineteenth century is daily invalidating. Modern philosophy in its negative aspect is simply a revolt against the attempt to force such narratives as these upon the adult intelligence of mankind—against the absurdity of assigning to Hebrew legends of the most monstrous kind a character of credibility which would be scornfully refused to similar productions of the imagination of any other race. Let there then be no misunderstanding: science is not concerned to prove that there is no God, nor even that a future life is an impossibility; it simply obeys an instinct of self-preservation in seeking to repel modes of thought and belief which, in their ultimate issues, are destructive of all science.

One has only to reflect for a moment, in order to see how much theological baggage the orthodox disputant throws away,

when he confines his arguments to the two points of God and a Future Life. Were it thrown away in sincerity argument might cease ; but no, the manœuvre is first to make a formidable demonstration as champion of two cardinal doctrines which in themselves arouse little opposition, even where they do not commend assent, and then to apply the results of the proceeding to the benefit of those parts of the system which had been kept in the background. It is not in the interest of a simple theistic belief, unconnected with any scheme of theology, that the Bishop of Ontario writes : what he has at heart, I venture to say, is that men may believe as he does. The theism of Francis Newman, or of Victor Hugo, or Mazzini—all convinced theists—would be very unsatisfactory in his eyes, and it may be doubted whether he would take up his pen for the purpose of promoting theism of this type. It should therefore be thoroughly understood that while his Lordship is professedly combating agnosticism, he is really waging war on behalf of that elaborate theological system of which he is an exponent—that system which bids us look to the Bible for an account of the creation of the world and of man ; and which requires us to believe that the Creator found it necessary in former times, for the right government of the world, to be continually breaking through the laws of physical succession which he himself had established. In arguing against the doctrine of Evolution, he labors to establish the opposite doctrine of the creation and government of the world *by miracle*.

The question therefore is :—Can science be free and yet accommodate itself to the whole elaborate scheme of Christian orthodoxy ? The great majority of those who are most entitled to speak on behalf of science say No : and it is this negative which his Lordship of Ontario converts into a denial of the

two doctrines above-mentioned. But let those who are at all familiar with the course of modern thought ask themselves if they recall in the writings of any leading philosopher of the day arguments specially directed against the hypothesis of God or even against that of a possible future state of existence for humanity. What every one can at once remember is that the writers who are called "agnostics," the Spencers, Huxleys, Tyndalls, and Darwins, plead for the universality of nature's laws and the abiding uniformity of her processes. That is what they are concerned to maintain, because it is upon that that all science depends. Scientific men in general are but little disposed to disturb any one's faith in God or Immortality, so long as these doctrines are not associated with, or put forward as involving others which really invade the domain of science and tend to cast uncertainty upon its methods and results.

In seeking to account for "the modern spread of agnosticism," the Bishop finds that it is to "the widely spread popularity of the theory of Evolution, leading as it does to materialism," that the phenomenon is to be attributed. Consequently the theory of Evolution must be destroyed. The episcopal edict has gone forth, and the episcopal batteries are raised against this later Carthage of infidelity. But, alas! it does not sufficiently appear that the right reverend director of the siege understands either the nature of the task he has undertaken or the significance which would attach to success could he achieve it. To take the latter point first: science was making very rapid progress before the evolution theory had acquired any wide popularity, before in fact anything was known of it outside of one or two speculative treatises; and already the opposition of science to a scheme which makes this earth the theatre of miracle-working power was well-marked. Twenty-two



years ago, when "The Origin of Species" was but two years old, and had still a great deal of opposition to encounter even from men of science, before even the term Evolution had any currency in the special sense it now bears, a leading prelate of the Church of England, Bishop Wilberforce, discerned a sceptical movement "too wide-spread and connecting itself with far too general conditions" to be explained otherwise than as "the first stealing over the sky of the lurid lights which shall be shed profusely around the great Antichrist." \* To charge the present intellectual state of the world therefore on the doctrine of Evolution is to ignore that general movement of thought which, before the idea of evolution was a factor of any importance in modern speculation, had already, as the Bishop of Oxford testified, carried thousands away from their old theological habitations, and which, with or without the theory of evolution, was quite adapted to produce the state of things which we see to-day in the intellectual world.

The doctrine of evolution is simply the form in which the dominant scientific thought of the day is cast. As a working hypothesis it presents very great advantages; and the thinkers of to-day would find it hard to dispense with the aid it affords. But supposing it could be shown that the doctrine, as at present conceived, was untenable—what then? Would men of science at once abandon their belief in the invariability of natural law and fly back to mediæval superstitions? By no means. If there is any class of men who have learnt the lesson that the spider taught to Bruce, it is the class of scientific workers. Destroy one of their constructions and they set to work again, with unconquerable industry, to build another. In fact they are always testing and trying their own construc-

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\*Vide Preface to "Replies to Essays and Reviews,"

tions ; and we may be sure that if the evolution theory is ever to be swept away it will be by scientific not theological hands. It holds its ground now, because it is a help to thought and investigation ; if it should ever become so beset with difficulties as to be no longer serviceable it will be withdrawn from use, as many a theory has been before it, and as many a one will be in the days to come. Amongst contemporary men of science there is probably none who believes more strongly in the doctrine in question than the Editor of the *Popular Science Monthly*, Prof. E. L. Youmans ; yet in a recent number of his magazine he has marked his attitude towards it in a manner which for our present purpose is very instructive. " It is undeniable," he writes, " that the difficulties in the way of the doctrine of evolution are many and formidable, and it will no doubt take a long time to clear them up ; while the solution of still unresolved problems will very possibly result in important modifications of the theory as now entertained. But the establishment of the doctrine of evolution, as a comprehensive law of nature, is no longer dependent upon its freedom from embarrassments, or that absolute completeness of proof which will only become possible with the future extension of knowledge. Notwithstanding these drawbacks the evidence for it is so varied, so consistent, and so irresistible, as to compel its broad acceptance by men of science, who, while disagreeing upon many of its questions, find it indispensable as a guide to the most multifarious investigations."

We come now to the further question of the validity of the criticisms directed in the pamphlet before us against the doctrine of evolution, in discussing which the competency of the critic for his self-imposed task will necessarily come more or less under consideration. Let us first notice the quotations

which his Lordship brings forward, remembering that the doctrine of evolution in its present shape may be said to be the work of the last twenty years. Well, his Lordship quotes three leading scientific authors, Owen, Agassiz and Lyell; but it is noticeable that, in no case, does he give the date of his quotation, and in the case of the first two does not even mention the work in which the passage he refers to is to be found. The quotations are intended to show that these eminent authors rejected the doctrine of the "origin of species by natural selection." As regards Agassiz, who died ten years ago, every one knows that this was the case; and most are also aware that the great Swiss naturalist left behind him a son, a naturalist almost equally great, who supports the Darwinian theory as strongly as his father opposed it. Owen, though not a Darwinian in the full sense, held views which were clearly in the direction of natural selection. It is, however, when we come to Lyell that we have cause for astonishment. Here we have the most eminent of English geologists, whose adhesion to the Darwinian theory, announced for the first time in 1863—the date of the publication of the first edition of his "Antiquity of Man"—created such a sensation in the scientific world, quoted, at this time of day, as an anti-Darwinian! What are we to think of this? I cannot and do not believe, nor would I wish to suggest, that the Right Reverend the Bishop of Ontario was carried so far in his zeal against evolution as deliberately to misrepresent Sir Charles Lyell's attitude towards that doctrine. The only other hypothesis, however, is that of extreme ignorance. Of this his Lordship must stand, not only accused, but convicted. The fact of Sir Charles Lyell's conversion to the views of Darwin on the origin of species was one of which the whole reading world took note at the time, and which has been known to

every tyro in general science from that day to this. His Lordship, quoting from the "Principles of Geology," but without any mention of edition, represents Sir Charles as holding "that species have a real existence in nature, and that each was endowed at the time of its creation with the attributes and organization by which it is now distinguished." That these *were* Sir Charles Lyell's views when the earlier editions of his Principles were published everyone is aware; but it is a most extraordinary thing that anyone should have quoted them as his full twenty years after he had distinctly abandoned them. The preface to the fourth edition of the "Antiquity of Man" opens as follows:—"The first edition of the "Antiquity of Man" was published in 1863, and was the first work in which I expressed my opinion of the prehistoric age of man, and also my belief in Mr. Darwin's theory of the 'Origin of Species' as the best explanation yet offered of the connection between man and those animals which have flourished successively on the earth." In the 10th edition of his "Principles," published in 1868 he says (page 492) that "Mr. Darwin, without absolutely proving this (theory), has made it appear in the highest degree probable, by an appeal to many distinct and independent classes of phenomena in natural history and geology." Darwin himself would not have claimed more for his theory than this. Professor Huxley would not claim more for it to-day. Enough for either of them the admission that, by arguments drawn from many quarters, it had been rendered "in the highest degree probable." In his "Antiquity of Man,"\* Sir Charles Lyell expressly acknowledges the inconclusiveness of the arguments he had used at an earlier date to prove that "species were primordial creations and not derivative." His

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\* See 4th edition, page 469.

reasonings, he frankly confesses, could not hold their ground "in the light of the facts and arguments adduced by Darwin and Hooker." As regards the "descent of man," after quoting a passage from Darwin to the effect that "man is the co-descendant with other mammals of a common progenitor," he observes that "we certainly cannot escape from such a conclusion without abandoning many of the weightiest arguments which have been urged in support of variation and natural selection considered as the subordinate causes by which new types have been gradually introduced into the world." On every point, therefore, the real views of Sir Charles Lyell, as formed in the light of the facts adduced by Darwin and of his own maturer reasonings, were totally opposed to those quoted in the Bishop's pamphlet. Is it not remarkable, such being the case, that not one member of the reverend and learned clergy of the Diocese of Kingston, by whose special request this document was given to the world, should have suggested a correction on this point? Was there not a lay delegate who could have done it; or were they all—Bishop, clergy, and laymen—equally in the dark? It would really seem so. Who can wonder that the doctrine of evolution does not make much progress in certain quarters?

Sir Charles Lyell unfortunately is not the only author misrepresented. Huxley is said to "discredit" the origin of life from non-living matter. Huxley does nothing of the kind; he simply says that the experiments heretofore made to show that life can be so developed have not been successful. On the page of the pamphlet immediately preceding that on which this statement is made in regard to Huxley, we are informed, correctly, that the same great naturalist professes "a philosophic faith in the probability of spontaneous generation."

Surely his Lordship could not have understood the force of these words, or he would not have said, almost immediately after, that "the origin of life on earth \* \* \* is not only discredited\* by Huxley but by many other great scientists." A writer who finds such comparatively simple language beyond his comprehension is not, one would judge, very well fitted to enter the lists against the leading thinkers of the day, except perhaps for strictly diocesan purposes.

That his Lordship is really hopelessly at sea in discussing this question is evident by many signs. Such sentences as the following speak volumes for the mental confusion of their author: "Agnosticism takes refuge in Evolution in order to get rid of the idea of God as unthinkable and unknowable." Here again inaccuracies of language. An idea may be unthinkable in the sense of not admitting of being *thought out*, but can an idea be said to be "unknowable?" What is an unknowable idea? An idea must be known in order to be an idea at all. But this mere verbal inaccuracy is not the worst. We had been told that Agnosticism was a form of opinion according to which nothing could be known of God. Now it seems that Agnosticism has to fall back on Evolution, "in order to get rid of the idea of God as unthinkable and unknowable." Now the so called Agnosticism could not have been agnosticism in reality, otherwise it would not have required the help of evolution in such a matter. If we ask how Evolution helps Agnosticism to regard "the idea of God as unthinkable and unknowable," we shall only find the confusion grow-

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\* His Lordship means "discredited not only by Huxley, but by &c." The inaccuracy of expression observable here is paralleled in many other passages of the pamphlet. For example, his Lordship says, page 5: "They are not content to speak for themselves, but for all the world besides." A Bishop should write better English than this.

ing worse confounded. Evolution has nothing to do with such questions : it is a simple theory as to the mode of generation and order of succession of different forms of existences.

It is, however, when his Lordship comes to discuss the doctrine of the survival of the fittest that his sad want of acquaintance with the whole subject shows itself most conspicuously. Let me quote : "By some means or other 'the survival of the fittest in the struggle for existence' is assumed to be a law of nature, and if it be so our faith is severely taxed. Survival of the fittest—fittest for what ? If the answer be, fittest for surviving, we argue in a circle, and get no information whatever. The only rational answer must be, they survive who are fittest for their environments in size, strength and vigour." Let me here ask what sense the learned author can possibly attach to these last words except the very one he had just discarded as meaningless—"fitness to survive." How is fitness to environment proved except by the actual fact of survival ? Do environments always require "size" as an element of fitness ? By no means, they sometimes require smallness. When a mouse escapes into a hole, where the cat cannot follow, it survives not by reason of its size, but by reason of its smallness. Strength again is one element of adaptation to environment, but only one ; and it may fall far below some other element, swiftness, for example, or cunning, in practical importance. The fact however that the learned author sees no meaning in the answer "fitness to survive," tells the whole story of his own unfitness for the special environment in which he has placed himself in attempting to discuss the doctrine of evolution, and rather tends to create doubt as to the survival of the work he has given to the world. This is a matter in which no aptitude in quoting Horace is of any avail. The

road to an understanding of the terms and conceptions of modern science lies in a careful study at first hand of the works in which these terms and conceptions are expounded. His Lordship assumes that, if we say that those survive who are fit to survive, we utter a barren truism. It is a truism we may grant, but not a barren one, any more than the axioms of geometry are barren. The simple word "fitness" implies a definite external something, adaptation to which is the price of existence. The definiteness of the mould involves the definiteness of that which is moulded ; and all the miracles of life and organization we see around us are in the last resort merely examples of adaptation to fixed conditions of existence. "Born into life we are," says Matthew Arnold, "and life must be our mould." By "life" understand the universe and we have a poetical version of the doctrine of the survival of the fittest. It so happens, and this is a further truth which it would not be well to pass over, that adaptation does more or less imply excellence even from the human standpoint. All those adaptations that favour human life and happiness we of course call excellent, even though they may not be favourable to the life and happiness of other living creatures. And as man has thriven mightily and prevailed, adaptation *in general* presents itself to him in a favourable light. Occasionally, when his crops are destroyed by some insect pest wonderfully adapted for its work, or when his cattle are infested with deadly parasites, or when some germ of disease is multiplying a million-fold in his own frame, he sees that *all* adaptations are not yoked to his especial service.

His Lordship seems to suppose that the believers in the doctrine of the survival of the fittest are bound to show that there has been a steady improvement of type from the first



dawn of life. To show how gross and inexcusable a misunderstanding this is, I need only quote two sentences from Sir Charles Lyell's "Antiquity of Man":—"One of the principal claims," observes the great geologist, "of Mr. Darwin's theory to acceptance is that *it enables us to dispense with a law of progression as a necessary accompaniment of variation. It will account equally well for what is called degradation or a retrograde movement towards a simpler structure, and does not require Lamarck's continual creation of monads; for this was a necessary part of his system in order to explain how, after the progressive power had been at work for myriads of ages, there were as many beings of the simplest structure in existence as ever.*"\*

Writing thus in ignorance of what the law of the survival of the fittest, as formulated by Darwin, and accepted by modern men of science, really means, his Lordship is able to ask such pointless questions as whether the law is illustrated in the slaughtering of the flower of a nation in war, and whether it is the fittest who survive famines, pestilences, shipwrecks, &c. His Lordship evidently does not himself believe there is any provision for the survival of the fittest in the Providential government of the world; yet, strange to say, he taunts evolutionists with this lack in the general scheme of things. If it be an embarrassment to their theory how much more should it be to the Bishop's theology? The evolutionist might, however, turn round and instruct the divine out of his own pocket Bible, where it is expressly stated that the wicked shall not live out half his days; and then out of the newspapers which continually show us what happens to the violent and bloody man, to the intemperate and to various other

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\* Fourth edition, 4th page 459.

classes of evil doers. The evolution philosophy does not guarantee, as has been already shown, continuous progress in what, from the human standpoint, may seem the best directions; but evolutionists are able to note, and do note with satisfaction, that the qualities which the moral sense of mankind most approves do in point of fact tend to the survival of their possessors. War itself illustrates the principle; seeing that the most important element of strength abroad is cohesion at home, a condition which must depend on a relatively high development of social justice. To take an example from our own history: English arms would not have been so successful as they have been abroad, had there not been an united country behind them. It was the virtues, not the vices, of the Roman people that enabled them to conquer the world. It was their vices not their virtues that led to their fall. Fitness to survive is a quality the import of which varies according to circumstances. In shipwrecks (to pursue his Lordship's illustrations) the fit to survive are those who can swim, or who have readiness of resource or strength of constitution. In famines and pestilences the physically stronger will as a rule survive; though here prudence and self-control become also most important elements of safety. Let it always be remembered that the problem with which evolutionary philosophy has to grapple is not how to account for a perfect world, or a perfect state of society, but how to account for just such a mingling of good and evil (accompanied by general tendencies towards good) as we actually witness. This once settled, most of the objections of the theologians would be seen to fall wide of the mark.

To persons unfamiliar, or but slightly familiar, with the present subject, it is possible that the Bishop of Ontario may appear to have touched a weak point in the doctrine under discussion where

he says;—"Laws of nature should be obeyed and co-operated with, not fought against and thwarted; and, if the survival of the fittest be one of those laws, we ought to abolish all hospitals and asylums for the blind, the deaf, the drunkard, the idiot and the lunatic, and we ought to expose to death all sickly, puny and superfluous infants." A word therefore in regard to this objection may not be thrown away. The first observation to make is, that there is nothing whatever in the law of the survival of the fittest, as understood by men of science to-day, which could possibly be converted into a rule of conduct. The scientific world is not aware that nature has any ends in view, or is capable of having any ends in view, which she needs the help of man to enable her to realize. Science does not attribute purpose to nature. Science has simply obtained a glimmering of how, in point of fact, nature works. It sees that survival is a question of fitness, in other words a question of the fulfilment of the conditions on which continued existence depends. In some cases, as is well known, superiority of type becomes an impediment, not a help, to the preservation of life; and in a vast number of cases the differentiations on which survival depends imply neither progress nor retrogression.\* What moral guidance, therefore, can possibly be found in a simple perception of the fact that in the realm of nature there are conditions attached to survival? We may ask, in the next place, whether there is any single law of nature which men "obey," or ever have obeyed, in the sense in which his Lordship bids us obey the law of the survival of the fittest. When a conflagration rages, do we "obey" and "co-operate" with nature by

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Vide Spencer, "Principles of Sociology," Vol. I. pp. 106-7, and Haeckel, "History of Creation," Vol. I. p. 285.

adding fuel to the flames ? When pestilence is abroad, do we try to increase its deadly activity ? When we stumble, do we make a point of yielding to the law of gravitation and throwing ourselves headlong ? When the winter winds are howling, do we throw open doors and windows that we may feel all the force and bitterness of the blast ? Or do we, in these and all other cases, seek to modify the action of one law by that of another—a process his Lordship calls “thwarting”—in order that their combined or balanced action may yield us as nearly as possible, the results we desire. We throw water on the fire. We use disinfectants and prophylactics against the plague. We set muscular force against that of gravitation. We oppose warmth to cold. In none of these cases do we ask what nature wants ; we are content to know what *we* want. We don't really believe that nature wants anything ; so we have no hesitation or compunction in letting our wants rule. In the matter of the weak and sickly, they might perish if unconscious forces alone were at work, or even in certain conditions of human society ; but it does not suit *our* interests, for very obvious reasons, to let them perish. To do so would strike at all human affections, and would so far weaken the bonds of society and render the whole social fabric less secure. Moreover a sick man is very different from a sick animal. The latter is inevitably inferior as an animal, whereas the former may not only not be inferior, but may be superior as a *man*, and capable of rendering much service to society. Two instances occur to me as I write—that of the late Professor Cairnes in England, and of the late Professor Ernest Bersot in France, both smitten with cruel and hopeless maladies, but both fulfilling, in an eminent degree, the highest intellectual and moral offices of *men*. What the well do for the sick is of

course obvious and attracts sufficient attention ; but what the sick do for the well, not being so obvious, attracts less attention than it deserves. Yet how many lessons of patience, fortitude, and resignation—lessons that all require—come to us from the sick bed, or at least from those whom weakness of constitution or perhaps some unhappy accident has robbed of a normal activity and health. At times we see superiority of intellectual and moral endowment triumphing over the most serious physical disabilities ; as in the case of the present Postmaster-General of England, who accidentally lost his sight when quite a youth. The late M. Louis Blanc, a man of splendid talents, never advanced beyond the stature of a child. The ancient Spartans might have exposed one of so feeble a frame on Taygetus ; for with them every man had to be a soldier ; but, in modern life, with its greatly diversified interests, many a man too weak to be a soldier can yet render splendid service to the community. It will, therefore, I trust, be sufficiently obvious, first, that nature has no commands to give us in this matter ; and secondly, that there are excellent reasons why we should not treat the sick and weakly, as the lower animals commonly, but not universally, treat the sick and weakly of their own kind. \*

There is, however, another view of this question which should not be overlooked. While human beings in civilized countries manifest, and always have manifested, more or less sympathy with the physically afflicted, their steadfast aim has been to get rid of physical evil in all its forms. No care that is taken of the sick has for its object the perpetuation of sickness, but rather its extirpation. We do not put idiots to death ; but when an idiot dies there is a general feeling of re-

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\* See Romanes, "Animal Intelligence," pp. 471, 475, as to the sympathy exhibited by the monkey tribe towards their sick.

lief that so imperfect an existence has come to an end. Were idiots permitted to marry, the sense of decency of the whole community would be outraged. Public opinion blames those who marry knowing that there is some serious taint in their blood ; and commends on the other hand those who abstain from, or defer, marriage on that account. There is probably room for a further development of sentiment in this direction. We need to feel more strongly that all maladies and ailments are in their nature preventible, inasmuch as they all flow from definite physical antecedents. As long as our views on this subject are tinged in the smallest degree with supernaturalism, so long will our efforts to track disease to its lair and breeding-grounds be but half-hearted. How can we venture to check abruptly, or at all, the course of a sickness sent expressly for our chastisement ? Is it for us to say when the rod has been sufficiently applied ? How do we dare to fortify ourselves in advance against disease, as if to prevent the Almighty from dealing with us according to our deserts ? We vaccinate for small-pox, we drain for malaria, we cleanse and purify for cholera, we ventilate and disinfect, we diet and we exercise—and all for what ? Precisely to avoid the paternal chastenings which we have been taught are so good for us, and the origin of which has always been attributed by faith to the Divine pleasure. Evidently our views are undergoing a change. We all wish to be fit to survive, and all more or less believe that it is in our power to be so and to help others to be so. We believe in sanitary science ; and, if we attribute any purpose in the matter to the Divine mind, it is that all men should come to the knowledge of the truth, as revealed by a study of nature, and live.

One might be tempted to bestow a word on the singular opinion expressed by the right-reverend author that “some

men are born colour-blind towards God." This perhaps we may say : that, as the Bishop does not believe in evolution, it becomes a very critical question on whom the responsibility for the unhappy condition of these individuals lies. Are they the predestined vessels of wrath of whom St. Paul speaks? There are few, it seems to me, who would not be disposed to fly to Evolution or even to Agnosticism as a refuge from so dire a doctrine.

It is time, however, that I should deal in a more direct and independent manner with the question as to the moral and intellectual status of those who reject the Bishop's theology. One's own position is not made good by simply showing that the particular criticisms directed against it by a particular adversary are of no weight. The Bishop in this case may be all wrong, but those whom he qualifies as agnostics may be all wrong too. Are they right or are they wrong?—that is the main question. In discussing this question I desire to speak with the greatest frankness, knowing how pressing is the need for sincere utterance, in order that the true thoughts of many hearts may be revealed. "Not every one who saith unto me Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven." Not every one who says that the old theology is false has entered truly into intellectual or moral liberty. The division of men into orthodox and heterodox is, after all, a very superficial division. It is possible, we are told, to "hold the truth in unrighteousness," and, if so, it is no doubt conversely possible to hold error in righteousness. The best thing in the old theological system is the inspiration it affords, or has afforded, towards right living ; and this again is the best fruit we can expect from the new beliefs. Only in so far as they yield this fruit can they be depended on to supersede the old. The ag-

nostic, *as such*, has, I freely grant, no particular inspiration towards any line of conduct ; and this, if all other reasons were wanting, is reason enough for not making profession of agnosticism. Moral inspiration and guidance can only come from realized knowledge, however moderate in amount ; not from the negation of knowledge on however magnificent a scale. The question therefore is : Upon which resources can we depend for the moral future of humanity if the creeds cease to be believed ?

This question can perhaps best be answered by considering what we should do if, in point of fact, it were demonstrated beyond all possibility of doubt that the theological system of Christendom had no better foundation than any of the theologies it has superseded. Let us try to imagine the situation for a moment. The discourses of the clergy, the services of the several churches, would (let us say) come to a stop, and there would be a general feeling of amazement and uncertainty amongst the vast multitude of those who had held to the creeds with entire confidence. But when people had had time to talk the matter over, and to consider what it was best to do under the circumstances, is it in the least likely that the conclusion would be to abandon all attempts at a recognition of moral obligation and to make selfish appetite their sole guide ? I do not in the least believe that any such decision would be arrived at, any more than I believe that the decision of a ship's crew cast upon a desert island would be that the best thing to do would be to sit down passively and starve. No, men would very speedily set about adapting themselves to their new circumstances. Some would perhaps refuse their aid or sympathy to any efforts made to establish a new order and new moral sanctions ; yet none the less, I imagine, would these



individuals wish to profit by the labours of others in that direction. They might talk as they liked about the vanity of trying to establish, or even recognise, any moral law in the absence of a clear knowledge of the existence of God and of a law revealed by Him : yet none the less would they crave justice from their fellow men : none the less would they feel aggrieved if that justice were denied. I imagine that, under the circumstances described, men would begin to bethink themselves how the various situations of life call for duties to which the heart of man instinctively responds. They would think at once of the family, that training-school of the affections, that sphere which types to us what the constitution of society in general may some day be. They would remember that, even in the lower creation, the beginnings of family and social life are seen ; that brute parents will sacrifice themselves for their offspring ; that when one of a pair is killed, the survivor will show a sense of bereavement ; that to many animals companionship with others, even not of their own species, is a visible source of pleasure. These are not merely curious facts ; they are facts of the most important significance for the true understanding of human life ; for they show us how deep the foundations of affection and therefore of morality are laid. The theologies that have talked so much to us of better worlds—that, as Matthew Arnold says, have “long fed(us) on boundless hopes”—have caused us to ignore this world, and the ample provision it makes for our moral life. For what is society among the brutes to society among men ? There we see but the rudiments, as it were, of those sentiments that in the life of humanity are destined to reach the perfection of their development, and which in some individuals of the human race, we might almost say, have already reached that perfection. True,

there are wars amongst men—and no more potent breeder of wars than theology ever visited this earth—but wars are the natural results of ignorance and as yet untamed individualism. The starting-point of man was perfect ignorance and complete individualism. Let us never forget that little by little he is learning the true laws of life, learning to adapt himself to his environment, and to live a wider than a merely individual existence. Shall we despair because everything is not done in a day? If it takes a thousand years to bring some trees to maturity, how long may we expect it to take to mould into perfect harmony all the complex elements of human existence? In the ties and affections that grow out of family life, we see the force that has worked, and yet is working, the elevation of our race; we see the leaven that yet will leaven the whole lump.

I say that, were the theological beliefs of society to be suddenly smitten, as with a blast, men would begin to think of these things, and of all the noble words that have been spoken and the nobler deeds that have been done with no help from supra-mundane hopes or fears, but in the mere native strength of humanity. There is a fine passage in the 6th volume of Merivale's "History of the Romans under the Empire," where the author pays a just tribute to the devotion and patriotism of many of the generals of the Empire, though serving under most unworthy masters and in an age of great corruption and licence. "Human nature," the historian goes on to say, "like running water, has a tendency to purify itself by action; the daily wants of life call forth corresponding duties, and duties daily performed settle into principles and ripen into graces." \*

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\* Loc. cit. page 268. How much nobler a view of human nature this gives than that which is ordinarily presented in the pulpit! There is much of wisdom packed in the simple Lucretian phrase: "consuetudo concinnat amorem." The distinct recognition by the ancients of duty as something

We need but to open our eyes in order to see and feel what treasures of moral force we have been trampling under our feet, at the bidding of a theology that teaches us to regard this life as a poor blighted thing, of value only as it may serve to prepare us for another state of being. At present whatever of good we discover in human nature we are told to attribute to a higher source; whatever is in us of evil we are to consider all our own. Is it any wonder that, after the world has listened to such teaching for centuries, and to hardly any other, there should exist grave doubts in men's minds as to whether the natural conditions of human life furnish any basis for morality? Rather is it matter for astonishment that there are still a few found to-day who dare to raise their testimony for poor depreciated human nature, who dare to trust it, who dare to say that, without any knowledge or any distinct hope of a life beyond, men might, on this earth, cultivate justice, love mercy, and walk in the light of truth.

We have been considering what mankind would do if some unexpected disproof of all their most cherished theological beliefs were suddenly presented; and in doing so we have perhaps succeeded in showing what are our grounds of hope for the future of humanity. What men *would* do, under such circumstances, is what it would be well if they would set about doing now—namely, endeavouring to discover what are, in the normal conditions of human life, the springs of right and useful action. Let any one try to imagine what an enormous

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springing out of the ordinary conditions of human life stands in admirable contrast to much of the teaching of later Christian ages. Take for example a very familiar passage of Cicero: "Nulla enim vitae pars neque publicis neque privatis, neque forensibus, neque domesticis in rebus, neque si tecum agas quid, neque si cum altero contrahas, vacare officio potest; in eoque colendo sita vitae est honestas omnis, et in negligendo turpitudine." *De Officiis*, Lib. I., Cap. 2.

difference it would make in all our thoughts if, instead of listening continually to a teaching which represents human nature as fallen, and the earth as curst, and which justifies the most contemptuous disparagement of mere human goodness, we were with equal regularity instructed by grave men who had patiently studied the natural order of things until it had become luminous to their minds with lessons of the highest import to mankind, men who, while cognizant of the weakness of human nature, yet knew and revered its strength, men who would esteem it blasphemy to weaken any impulse to right action or to quench the light of hope in any human heart, men with a profound interest in all the problems of life, and whose every word would be an incitement to put forth all our powers not towards the attainment of supernatural grace or favour, but towards the realization of the best in thought, feeling, and action which the conditions of our finite existence place within our reach! The difference would be enormous and all in favour of the teaching which, leaving what is or may be beyond this life to take care of itself, should make a religion of a knowledge of this life and a careful obedience to its ascertained laws. I do not say that there never was a time in the world's history when it may have served a useful purpose to concentrate men's thoughts upon a supernatural order of things. In times of great ignorance and confusion this may have been one of nature's own methods to prevent men from giving way to too great discouragement; or, from an intellectual point of view, losing all power of systematic thought. Theology was, to a certain extent, the mathematics of the middle ages—an instrument of mental discipline. When therefore the profound author of the "Imitation" utters the sentiment: "*Ista est summa sapientia per contemptum mundi tendere ad regna coelestia,*" we can bear with him, remembering the time.

But the later accents of the same strain fall with a hollow sound upon the ear. It is not pleasant even to read such a passage as the following from a letter written by Whitfield to Wesley when the latter was supposed to be dying: "A radiant throne awaits you, and ere long you will enter into your Master's joys. Yonder he stands with a massy crown, ready to put it on your head amid an admiring throng of saints and angels. But I, poor I, that have been waiting for my dissolution these nineteen years, *must be left behind to grovel here below.*" "To grovel"—such is the term applied to a life of untiring effort for the good of others—the most contemptuous word in the language. We hear, however, the same word to-day in the same application, and on every hand a parrot-like iteration of phrases full of insult to whatever is *natural*. Unhappily the lesson which these phrases convey is only too easily learnt, and many who cease to believe all else that their priests have taught them, remember this at least, that there are no *natural* sanctions of morality and no reasons apart from the doctrines of the Church for placing any restraint upon their passions. It seems to me that it is a terrible thing to stand responsible for having taught such a lesson as this. According to all accounts—according, as we have seen, to the testimony of the Bishop of Ontario himself—thousands are falling away from "the faith"; but, instead of having been fitted by the previous teachings of the clergy to hold fast the cardinal principles of morality, they have been encouraged to believe that the whole basis of moral obligation disappears when once the *supernatural* sanction is called in question. To say that this doctrine acts as a poison upon many natures is to speak strictly within bounds. It is indeed the most pernicious doctrine that could possibly be proclaimed. It is intended no doubt to keep men within the pale of orthodoxy by appealing to their

fears; but it fails sadly of the effect proposed. The creeds lose their vitality by a natural process; and then those who have absorbed this teaching are left rudderless. Some indeed prematurely emancipate themselves from the creeds in order that they may cease to feel any pressure of moral obligation. In this way what is held out as a deterrent, becomes to a certain class of minds a lure. To think that hereafter it will have to be said of the Christian clergy that a large part of their labours was devoted to making the natural sanctions of morality of none effect, to proclaiming the pessimistic doctrine that the natural conditions of human life furnish no valid canons of right and wrong, and offer no sufficient inducement for the practice of virtue! The credit side of their account will have to be very heavy to leave a balance in their favour after this has been charged.

But what, it may be asked, is the intellectual stand-point of those who find themselves unable to accept the Christian theology? How do they explain the universe to themselves? Of course no individual writer, *outside the churches*, can presume to speak with authority for others. Speaking for myself, and for such as may chance to agree with me, I would say that the part of wisdom is not to attempt any explanation; and, for an intellectual stand-point, to assume that of a simple observer of facts and their relations. Absolute knowledge (if there be such a thing at all) is interdicted to us; and it therefore behoves us to satisfy ourselves with relative knowledge, that is to say, the knowledge resulting from perceptions of agreement and difference. Of the universe as a whole we know nothing, because we have never seen it as a whole, nor had any opportunity of comparing it with other universes. And seeing that such knowledge is too high for us, and that we cannot attain unto

it, we cease to aim at it, and, with due humility, take our place as mere parts in an all-embracing and thought-transcending system. It is often said that thought cannot acknowledge any limits, and that the mind *must* feed upon the ambrosia of metaphysical and ontological speculations ; but some dispute this opinion, and, as I venture to hold, with justice. Our minds, I believe, are just as amenable to discipline as our bodies, and there is no radical impossibility—I go further, and say, no serious difficulty—in keeping our thoughts down to their proper work.

To my mind, and to the minds of many others, the theistic hypothesis is of no service in an intellectual sense, that is to say, it does not help to render the universe any more intelligible. What the Marquis de Laplace said to the first Napoleon, who was scandalized to find no mention of God in the “*Mécanique Céleste*,”—“*Sire, je n’avais pas besoin de cette hypothèse-là*”—is an answer which may properly, and without any shade of irreverence, be given to those who would urge the *intellectual* necessity of that doctrine. When once we seek to transcend the ever lengthening series of finite causes, it matters little what hypothesis we adopt, since none can be brought to any test : each man must then satisfy himself as best he may. Whether it is a tortoise or an elephant that finally upholds the world it is for the individual believer to say ; for nobody can put him in the wrong by going down to see. When, however, the idea of God is put forward, not as an hypothesis at all, but as the expression of man’s instinctive faith in goodness and justice, as an instinctive solution, in the interest of goodness and justice, of all the enigmas of human life, there are few—and I am not of them—who will not bow in reverent silence. It may be that, to some of us, the thought has been borne home

that men in the future will turn more and more from absolute ideals—to which of course no definite form can be given—to the contemplation of goodness and justice as historically manifested, and that so the spiritual life of the individual will draw its nourishment from that of the race ; but meantime the ideal we find existing is and should be sacred. The important thing in regard to any moral belief is that it should be effective, that it should really sway the hearts of men for good. Its logical character is of quite secondary consequence. The logical standards of to-day are not those that will be in force to-morrow, and those of to-morrow will in turn give way to the canons of a yet more enlarged experience. At the same time it should be remembered that even the most deeply-rooted beliefs do in lapse of time cease to harmonize with the thought and knowledge of the age, and that then they lose their moral efficacy, which was always dependent on a conviction of their truth. Happy the people who, as one noble ideal fades, can replace it by another, not less noble, and truer to the thought of the time !

But it may be said : “ Do not the specific arguments used by his Lordship of Ontario move you ? What have you to say to them ? ” To this I reply that his Lordship's arguments on this great question seem to me no stronger than those he has directed against the doctrine of evolution. Let us take an example. On page 21 he says : “ It requires intelligence to understand natural laws, and much more intelligence to have established and worked them. \* \* \* Whenever and wherever we see one intelligence exceeding another, or the highest human intelligence anticipated or surpassed by some other, we are led to a belief in a supreme intelligence.” The confusion here is simply lamentable. When one reads this and similar incoherent passages it is hard not to revert to those lines of “ Lycidas ”—



“The hungry sheep look up and are not fed,  
But swollen with wind and the rank mist they draw”—

but no, we need not continue the quotation. What ratio is it possible to establish between the intelligence necessary to discover a natural law and the intelligence (assuming that intelligence had anything to do with it) necessary to create the law? A child may make a puzzle that a wise man cannot unravel. A fool may ask a conundrum the answer to which will never be given unless he gives it himself. To know how much “intelligence” went to the making of a natural law we should require to know precisely how the law was made and what were the difficulties encountered. If there were no difficulties then there was no need of intelligence at all. But again: “whenever and wherever we see one intelligence exceeding another \* \* \* we are led to belief in a supreme intelligence.” The words I have omitted are introduced by what in the old grammars was called a “disjunctive conjunction,” and do not in any way modify the sense of those I have quoted. Think of the absurdity—the fact of one intelligence exceeding another leading to a belief in a supreme intelligence! When therefore we see one horse exceeding another horse in size or strength we must believe in the existence of a supreme horse. If we see a difference in stones we must believe in one supreme stone. Again: “where we see \* \* \* the highest human intelligence anticipated or surpassed by some other, we are led to a belief in a supreme intelligence.” If we see signs of an intelligence higher than the human, we have, it seems to me, simply to acknowledge the fact. Whether the higher intelligence of which we see the signs is a “supreme” one or not, how are we to tell? The intelligence of man is superior to that of the horse; but that fact alone does not prove man’s intelligence to be “supreme.”

Let us however consider this matter of intelligence a little. Intelligence implies a condition of mind the result of successive accretions of experience. That or nothing. Divorce intelligence from experience and it becomes a disembodied ghost fit only for limbo. Intelligence may be said to mean "reading between the lines," in other words, from things known gathering a meaning that does not at first appear on the surface. But between what lines could a Supreme Mind read? What are the problems with which it might grapple? The very idea of such a Mind grappling with any problem is absurd. Intelligence is in its very essence limited; and it can only be attributed, therefore, to a limited being. Intelligence is the edge put upon human faculty by contact with the world. Does it follow, because the world, by the variety of its appeals to consciousness, creates intelligence, that intelligence must have created the world? Because the grindstone gives sharpness to the axe, does it follow that the sharpness of some greater axe made the grindstone? We recognise the works of human intelligence because they stand out distinct from unorganized nature. We perceive the contrast between the cathedral and the quarry from whence its stones were hewn. But against what background of unorganized forces and indeterminate forms do the adaptations of nature stand out? Why the very atoms, we are told, bear the stamp of manufactured articles—that is to say, they present definite forms and properties. Then where in particular is the demiurgic intelligence to be quoted? If we cannot quote it anywhere in particular we cannot quote it at all. The works of man are clearly distinguishable from the raw materials furnished to his hand by nature. We see at a glance where his intelligence has passed and produced a kind of organization not known in nature. We do

not need to look twice to distinguish the city from the forest, or the printed book from the cotton plant. Well now, will somebody who wants us to see Intelligence in the world at large, show us what are its works and what are not its works. We know that the watch is a product of human intelligence, because we know, as a simple matter of experience, that watches do not grow on trees nor fall from the clouds. But the so-called adaptations of nature do not stand out in contrast to anything of a totally different character. If we are asked to recognise the eye, the ear, the hand as examples of intelligence, we can only say: "Yes, we shall gladly do so if you will only show us a few things that do not illustrate intelligence in the same sense. Give us the same means of affirming intelligence in these cases that we have in the case of the watch, show us first where a power *not elsewhere exemplified in the universe steps in*, and it sufficeth us. Short of this we must be content with simply recognising the facts of existence without striving to account for them."\* To put the whole argument in a nut-shell: We recognise man's intelligence because we see where it begins and ends. It has a background. But the intelligence which you say exists in nature has no background; and therefore we have no means of bringing it into comparison with anything else, or of passing any judgment on it whatever.

Let there be no misunderstanding. I am not arguing now, nor have I any need or wish to argue, against the theistic hypothesis. That hypothesis, taken by itself, if it affords no aid to science or philosophy, certainly causes neither any embarrassment. But when arguments are brought forth in-

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\* Mr. Goldwin Smith has somewhere said very forcibly that *existence* is the only ultimate mystery. Whatever exists, we may add, *must manifest itself, if at all, under definite forms, and must therefore show organization, or what teleologists call design.*

tended to show that the hypothesis in question has logical claims on our acceptance, and that it should therefore be made the basis of all our thoughts and speculations, it is right to examine those arguments, and, if we find them weak, to say so. And here let a distinction be drawn. There are many lines of argument which can be used to prove how natural and how serviceable in many ways is, or has been, the thought of God as the universal Father, the source of all good and of all law ; and it might not be difficult to show an identity of nature, an identity, so to speak, of moral content, between this idea and any truly regulative conception which it may be given to the human race hereafter to form. It may be shown that men can only worship that which is *good*, that their natures can only gravitate to that which is good ; and it might be asked whether there is really any very important difference between one conception of good and another. To this I would reply that whatever difference may exist between two such conceptions is altogether unimportant in comparison with the great fact—if it be one—that, under all varieties of formal belief, heart and flesh are crying out for some living good, that the hunger and thirst of our higher natures is for righteousness. Taking therefore the idea of God as the pole, marked upon the vast compass of the universe, towards which our souls are magnetic, what can we say but that it is well—a thousand times well—that such help and guidance should be afforded us on the voyage of life ? The arguments which tend to bring home to our minds all that humanity has gained by the concentration of its thoughts upon one conception and personification of good have nothing weak about them ; they are historically irrefutable. It is when an attempt is made to translate the hopes and instincts of man-

kind into an abstract and absolute dogma that openings are left for criticism. And fortunate, I hold, it is that criticism does not shrink from her task. The successful building up of the dogma would be death to the spontaneous activity of the human mind in its search for what is highest and best. We see this clearly in the very stereotyped morality of those who have come most completely under the influence of dogma. The world is full of people who have lost all *moral originality*, so to speak. They have lost that which, according to an apostle, is the very test of spirituality, the power of judging all things; for they cannot judge anything as of themselves. Upon their minds dogma has had its perfect work, and a miserable result it shows.

Let the mind, therefore, we say, weave freely for itself such conceptions as are for the moment most serviceable, and let it be free to modify them with the growth of knowledge and the increasing definiteness of thought. The time may come when instead of straining our eyes upon an infinitely distant horizon for a mark by which to guide our course, we shall take our direction from things nigh at hand. Is it not written: "The word is very nigh thee, in thy heart and in thy mouth?" What the word will be that shall dominate and inspire the further progress of society it might be rash to affirm: but as of old it will be a "word of faith," a word that will summon mankind to that strong belief which makes all things possible.

There are two great practical problems with which men of intellect may grapple to-day. One is how to *put back* the thoughts of men so that all that was credible to their forefathers may be credible to them. The other is how to *put forward* men's thoughts so that they may harmonize with the new knowledge the world has acquired—so that a new intellectual and moral equilibrium may be established. At the first

of the setasks the priesthoods are labouring, with many helpers from the ranks of the laity. In regard to many of these, both priests and laymen, one must testify that they have a true zeal for human welfare. Still, in spite of all the reactionary efforts made by men who are true, and by men who are not true, the intellectual standpoint of the world is shifting. Men do not believe as they once did, they cannot believe as they once did ; though they may religiously utter the old formulas, and close their eyes harder and harder against the growing light. The second cause has as yet but few avowed helpers. There are scoffers enough in the world in all conscience. Those who confess to one in private that they have ceased to believe what the churches teach are to be met everywhere ; they seem at times almost to outnumber the professors of orthodox opinions. But, when it is a question of openly advocating what they hold to be the truth, the great majority decline a responsibility so fraught with chances of social and public disfavor. One great reason for this timidity is, that hitherto it has not been seen how a new construction might rise upon the ruins of the old. To see this, however, all that is needed is to study closely the framework of things, and mark how society is actually put together, and how it has grown together throughout the ages "by that which every joint supplieth." These pages have not been written solely for a controversial purpose. They have been written in the hope that some may be moved to assert for themselves a larger intellectual liberty, and that the great cause of putting forward men's thoughts, and preparing the new equilibrium, may in some humble measure be advanced.

