

## ARTICLE VIII.

EVOLUTION THEORIES AND CHRISTIAN  
DOCTRINE.<sup>1</sup>

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THE word "evolution" has been popular for little more than a generation. In that time it has awakened the enthusiasm or the dread of large numbers of people who knew little or nothing of its previous history or inner meaning. It has been clothed by some with regal authority over all other ideas and theories that ever occupied the attention or guided the research of the human mind; and by them has been treated as the key to all mysteries, the one method of explanation to which all events and facts in the history of the universe must submit and by which their innermost secrets shall be laid bare. By others this word has been feared during these thirty years, aye, and hated too, just in proportion to the mystic delight which it conferred on the former class. Men have feared lest to believe in evolution necessitated a denial of the providence of God or of the reality of his self-revelation; lest some would be forced by holding this theory to give up their faith in Christianity with all the hopes of a future which are identified with that faith.

## I.

We must not yield to the idea that evolution is an isolated dream of our generation, that Darwin launched it upon the world on his own authority for the first time. The

<sup>1</sup> An address delivered before the Class of 1897 at Oberlin Theological Seminary, on the occasion of its graduation, May 6, 1897.

idea is one which had occurred to many of the master minds both in ancient and modern times. Towards the end of last century it began to attract and dominate the thought of men who were working in very different fields of investigation. On the one hand, the great metaphysical schools of Germany were full of the conception of development or evolution: to see all things as related to one another, and to read the inner secret of those relations, was their ambition and effort; to see a concrete universe unfolding logically step by step before his eyes was the lofty ambition of every true follower of Hegel. On the other hand, the students of science were working towards it in their strenuous efforts to understand the relations of the different classes of plants and animals to one another. The great work of classification had proceeded on certain generally accepted principles; but enormous difficulties attended the attempts of the most acute minds to state the principles of classification in a final form. No form could be found that was final. Exceptions to every rule abounded on every hand. Gradually there appeared one investigator after another who dared to suggest that, perhaps, species had not been separately and directly created, but that the later forms of plant and animal life could be traced back through intermediate stages to the earliest. That suggestion was in the air during the first half of the century. It assumed an impressive and authoritative form only when the great work of Charles Darwin appeared. The reason for his great success was that Darwin propounded the Theory of Natural Selection as that which could account for most, if not all, of the problems involved in the hypothesis that all animal species came originally from one source. As a further indication of the extent to which the minds of men were devoted to this problem and its solution, we may name these two facts: (1) that the great Philosopher of Evolution, Mr. Herbert Spencer, had begun to develop

his system several years before Darwin's book appeared; and (2) that the publication of Darwin's work was hurried on by his astonishing discovery that another investigator, Mr. Alfred Russel Wallace, had worked out the theory of Natural Selection on lines almost identical with his own.

In yet another direction the middle of our century saw another great scientific triumph which is of equal significance, perhaps of superior practical value, when compared with the theory of evolution. This was the discovery of the correlation of physical forces. By this discovery it was made plain, once for all, that the various physical forces which hitherto had been supposed to be separate creations are very closely related to, and even dependent on, one another. Heat and light and electricity are all commensurable with one another, and ultimately explicable as forms of motion of the molecules of various substances. The word "evolution" may be, as yet, quite inapplicable in this sphere. But I name it here in order to make clear the fact that, behind the specific scientific theories which reign in different spheres of investigation in our day, there is one ideal which gave them all their being. This is the principle of continuity.

According to this principle or ideal of reason, our mind refuses to think of any one fact or event as existing in isolation, apart from the rest of the universe. If Nature is one, then all her parts must be conceived as in some degree and fashion related to one another. Nothing is alone; nothing is for itself only; but each object of experience has some definite relation, some meaning or value, for every other object of experience. It is only on this assumption that we can think. To present the mind with a certain object in Nature, and say that this one object has been separately created by the absolute power of God is of course to stop any further investigation into its origin. Thought cannot master or surmount the fiat of creation.

That is an ultimate wall against which the eager student traveler rattles his staff and henceforth feels himself a prisoner. For example, if a man believes that the various species of animals were all directly created by the absolute power of God, he must believe that this is true of the thirty different species of crow which are found in various parts of the world. He may henceforth observe their habits, investigate their anatomy, if he will; but he cannot ask, Why are they so like one another, and yet so different? There is only one answer possible to him. They are so just because they were made so, and you cannot from them find out any other reason, why they are made so. That could only be known by a direct revelation of his reasons which might be given by their Creator. But consider these thirty species of crow as having taken their place in the history of Nature, as forming part of that history, as explicable in the matter of their habits, colors, organs, etc., by means of that history, and at once a limitless field of investigation and an alluring hope is held out to the student of Nature. By placing them in a relation of continuity with the facts of Nature which preceded and accompanied their appearance upon the scene of life, you make that appearance a subject of possible investigation and at least partial explanation. This is the task of every biologist in our day. I do not know the name of one man who is working upon the problems of plant or animal life who does not deliberately aim at thus following out the ideal of the Principle of Continuity.

Now Evolution is the name given in the world of science to the theory that all forms of life are thus *historically* related to one another. They have evolved. They have reached their present forms throughout the world through a long series of transformations from that first form which was assumed by living matter, whatever it was, and however it came to be. Evolution, as a strict scientific term,

says nothing as to whether there has been progress or not. As a matter of fact, what is called "degeneration" from a higher to a lower is as truly evolution as development from a lower to a higher form of life. All that science, strictly so called, is concerned with is the relation of continuity which subsists between each successive stage of Nature's history and its predecessors.

Now the chief reason why the doctrine of evolution has awakened so much dislike and dread is that, if this principle is consistently carried out, then man must be included in the process of evolution. His animal nature must stand in a relation of continuity with the animal world. It is for this reason chiefly that some people to this very hour contest the theory of evolution; it is for this reason that others come forth to assert that, because it is true, we must forthwith recast our whole theology; it is for this reason that yet others say, they cannot see their way to accept any theology whatsoever.

Now, in order to proceed carefully in this matter, it is necessary to say, *first*, that the evidence appears to be overwhelming, that man's physical nature does stand in a relation of historical continuity with the animal world. No amount of protests about man's powers as a rational being, or about his ethical or religious capacities, no amount of humorous or defiant inquiries regarding the missing link, no amount of appeals to the account of creation in Genesis, which is a religious document, can possibly overthrow the force of this ever-accumulating evidence, that man is thus, on the side of his physical nature, related by natural descent to the rest of the animal creation. The evidence, which can be scanned in any book that deals professedly with the subject, is positive and abundant. Those who oppose the idea of any historical connection whatever between man and the animals cannot do so on general principles. That is to court, and perhaps to confess, defeat. They

must meet that mass of evidence by presenting some other explanation of the phenomena adduced therein which shall satisfy man's reason more fully than this theory. Until that is done, it must be held that some form of evolution has taken place in which the human body was gradually formed out of preceding stages of animal existence.

In the *second* place, no one theory of evolution has yet been developed which can be said finally and fully to explain the causes, stages, and manner of the growth of species from species. Darwin began by laying almost exclusive emphasis upon Natural Selection, and later added certain significant modifications, including that of sexual selection. But at present the scientific world is full of most powerful disputants regarding the fundamental elements of the evolutionary process and their relation to one another. There are those who, like Weismann and Alfred Russel Wallace, stoutly maintain that the theory of Natural Selection is sufficient of itself to account for practically all the problems of the evolution of species. But they are met by an apparently increasing number of men who, while giving Natural Selection a position of great importance, would add to it the operation of other forces or principles, and some of whom would very profoundly modify the essential features of Natural Selection itself. The three main elements in the process of Natural Selection are: (1) the tendency of all offspring to vary from their parents in more or less minute and numerous characteristics; (2) the tendency of such to transmit their variations to their own offspring; and (3) the action of the surrounding forces which encircle the life of each generation of animals. These forces tend to destroy, prior to maturity, all such offspring as have variations which are less adequately related to their environment.

Now the real nature and influence of each of these factors in Natural Selection is, as I have said, at present a

matter of earnest investigation and much dispute. To Darwin these factors presented themselves in a comparatively naïve fashion. He was indeed troubled about the causes of variation, and did argue with some critics regarding the influence of environment on organisms which reach maturity. But he died when the real battle over these factors of his famous theory was yet in its earliest stages. No layman like myself can as yet dare to say how the campaign is moving. Suffice it to say, that it looks as if, on the whole, the tendency is very strong to emphasize what the late Dr. James Croll called the determination of forces, and not mere forces, as the cause of evolution. This determination of forces may lead to the idea that chance has not played that godlike function in the process of building up nature which, alas, Darwin himself so constantly emphasized; for if the real origin of evolution is not the mere forces, but their arrangement or determination, the idea becomes almost irresistible, that there must be a determiner behind them, whose plan is being realized.

But now, in the *third* place, it must not be supposed that a theory of evolution must necessarily mean that the higher forms of existence are wholly derived from the lower. No doubt this is the hasty conclusion to which some have run. Hæckel may insist, almost vauntingly, on the notion that now it is scientifically established, that all forms of animal life and rational existence can be traced back, step by step, till at last all their elements are found to have originated only in some primeval matter and motion. But of course that is not a necessary deduction from the theory of evolution, nor from the principle of continuity. I am afraid that here it is my duty to criticise the definition of evolution which has been given by Professor Le Conte, and which is being championed by Dr. Lyman Abbott, as if it were the final and unexceptionable form in which the doctrine of evolution is to be defined. According to that def-

inition, evolution is "continuous and progressive change by means of resident forces." Now that phrase "by means of resident forces" is one to which exception of the most serious kind must be taken. I am aware, of course, that both Professor Le Conte and Dr. Lyman Abbott are earnest and true defenders of faith in Jesus Christ. They both are Theists, and teach that all force ultimately has its source in God. Indeed Dr. Abbott speaks in the most absolute terms of God as the only Force. But in that definition of evolution no man of science would understand by the phrase "by means of resident forces," this, that God is continually pouring the energies of his Divine will into created forms and carrying them forward to their further development. Any man of science would understand that definition to mean, that the evolution of any form of life takes place wholly by means of the forces already resident in the forms of existence which had been realized in the preceding stages of history. That is a phrase which Hæckel or any other vigorous materialist would employ. It must mean, on a complete survey of the whole evolutionary position, that the various stages have been carried through by means of forces which were resident in the first stage of all. Away back at the beginning of time, God, the one Force, did somehow bring into being the earliest forms of matter with resident forces. The interaction of the various portions of this primeval matter did, by continuous and progressive changes, result in the production of all later forms of existence, including life and consciousness, reason and conscience. That is a theory of evolution which I believe to be false, and which would be repudiated by some of the leading physicists and naturalists of our day. Doubtless the motive for the use of those words "by means of resident forces" has been, the desire to preserve the principle of continuity. It has been feared by Professor Le Conte that, unless we can suppose that in the later stages

of history no forces are manifested in addition to those which constituted the visible universe in its earlier stages, then our scientific ideal is unrealized, the principle of continuity is broken, and evolution is not seriously accepted.

Now on this point let me appeal to three men whose scientific instincts and powers have given them a prominent place in our generation. Professors Stewart and Tait, in their little work entitled "The Unseen Universe," say: "Continuity, in fine, does not preclude the occurrence of strange, abrupt, unforeseen events in the history of the universe, but only of such events as must finally and forever put to confusion the intelligent beings who regard them."<sup>1</sup> And again: "We believe that an extension of purely scientific logic drives us to receive as quite certain the occurrence of two events which are as incomprehensible as any miracle; these are: the introduction of visible matter and its energy, and of visible living things into the universe."<sup>2</sup> A still more powerful opponent of this theory of "resident forces" will be found in the great co-discoverer with Darwin of the principle of Natural Selection, and one of its most consistent expounders and defenders, viz., Mr. Alfred Russel Wallace. He maintains that "there are at least three stages in the development of the organic world when some new cause or power must necessarily have come into action." Observe, he does not say "existence," but "action." The three stages of history on which Mr. Wallace concentrates attention are, "the change from inorganic to organic, when the earliest vegetable cell, or the living protoplasm out of which it arose, first appeared." The next stage he calls "still more marvelous. It is the introduction of sensation or consciousness, constituting the fundamental distinction between the animal and vegetable kingdoms." "The third stage is the existence in man of a number of his most characteristic and noblest faculties,

<sup>1</sup>The Unseen Universe (Ed. of 1886), p. 88. <sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 11.

those which raise him furthest above the brutes, and open up possibilities of almost indefinite advancement." Now Mr. Wallace maintains that "this involves no necessary infraction of the law of continuity in physical or mental evolution; whence it follows that any difficulty we may find in discriminating the inorganic from the organic, the lower vegetable from the lower animal organisms, or the higher animals from the lowest types of man, has no bearing at all upon the question. This is to be decided by showing that a change in essential nature (due, probably, to causes of a higher order than those of the material universe) took place at the several stages of progress."<sup>1</sup>

It is not, then, in the interests first of all of theology, that one condemns the use of the phrase "by means of resident forces," in the definition before us. Criticism of it must be primarily based upon the simple fact, that science has done absolutely nothing to throw a bridge across those mysteries by proving that life arose from the non-living, and the sentient from the vegetable world, without the action of what Mr. Wallace calls "a new cause." It is the most authoritative dicta of the philosophy and science of our own day which make that phrase impossible for those who would be careful as well as courageous in their thinking, and who shrink in a matter of such moment as the definition of evolution, from overstepping the actual attainments of actual investigation. It ought to be made clear, that the defense of that definition can be carried out only by an appeal, not to scientific results, but to philosophical principles. Indeed, one of the great difficulties encountered by serious thinkers on this subject at present is the tendency manifested in various directions to erect a philosophy of the universe under the term "evolutionary," and to defend it on the ground that it is demanded by science. But we must be all the more careful to discriminate be-

<sup>1</sup> Darwinism (1889), pp. 474-476.

tween, *first*, the actual results of scientific investigation; *second*, the general hypotheses regarding nature which underlie scientific processes; and, *third*, the theories of philosophy regarding the ultimate nature and principles of experience and reality as such. There are various definitions and theories promulgated to-day under the name "Evolution," including the philosophy of Mr. Herbert Spencer and the definition of Professor Le Conte, as if they were established by the results or demanded by the hypotheses of science, which are at bottom examples of metaphysical philosophy, pure and simple, and are to be discussed and judged as such.

There are two other remarks which, at the risk of being tedious, I should like to make upon this point. *First*, the principle of continuity does not of itself demand that no new cause shall be conceived as having entered into the history of the universe. That is an assumption which inductive science dare not make. It does not assert, for example, that in a world of physical forces either no new force like life shall appear; or if it does appear, it must be wholly caused and explained by the forces which already exist. That appears to be the conception of continuity present to the minds of the defenders of that definition. Now the principle of continuity will be abundantly satisfied if it is shown, that when new causes appear, each takes up and uses as its material or basis of operation the forces already existent, modifying their action only so far as may be necessary in giving them new uses. Thus does life stand to inorganic matter; thus does animal consciousness stand to organism; thus does conscience and reason stand to the animal consciousness. It is in each case, to use Mr. Alfred Russel Wallace's illustration, like "the change that takes place in the curve in which a body is moving when the application of some new force causes the curve to be slightly altered" (p. 476). There is, therefore, a continuity

both real and majestic, which connects the earliest movements of whatever forms of matter began the universe, even with the use which our most recent poet or preacher has made of his brain in the fashioning of lofty ideals or the stimulation of redemptive labors.

But this leads to the *second* observation. The theory of evolution, which is that each event or fact in Nature is related continuously with all preceding events or facts, is, as a theory of science, limited to historical events or concrete phenomena. It is not directly concerned with what I may call the ultimate elements of the phenomenal world. The investigation of the nature or relations of physical forces is the work of evolutionary science, but the problem as to what force is, belongs to metaphysics: the investigation of living things is the work of evolutionary science, but the problem as to what life is, will probably remain in the sphere of metaphysics: the investigation of the thoughts, emotions, and experiences of the human mind belongs to evolutionary science, but the problem as to what constitutes knowledge or experience in general is the fundamental work of metaphysics.

It is, I hope, evident from what I have said thus far, that, while evolution, in the domain of biology, has made vast strides in proving that the history of all organic forms is a continuous history, and that man's physical nature is involved in it, yet that there is much disagreement of opinion, even among the leaders of science, as to the principle under which this evolution has taken place. Further we have seen how dangerous it is to erect a scientific theory, which does its work in a prescribed system of concrete existence, into a philosophy which covers all spheres with an identical formula. The fact is that many, even competent theologians, are confused by the fact that Darwin and Spencer both use the word "evolution." They forget that, while Darwin uses it for the most part as a term of natural

science, Spencer uses it as a term of philosophy; while the one uses it to explain the development of individual forms of existence in Nature, the other uses it to explain also our very consciousness of existence, and makes it the keystone of reality. It is possible to be an evolutionist such as Mr. Alfred Russel Wallace, and yet not an evolutionist such as Mr. Herbert Spencer,—possible to believe that Natural Selection accounts for the various species of plant and animal life and yet to deny that we are bound to accept the philosophical theory, that all things have come to be as they are from some primeval condition of matter by means of “resident forces.”

## II.

It may be assumed that the general acceptance of a theory of evolution will exert a more or less extensive influence upon Christian doctrine. For Christian theology is not an abstract theory of an abstract world; it also is the explanation of experience; it also is, in part, an attempt scientifically to investigate certain ranges of history and to state their significance in regard to man's nature, relations, and destiny. Hence any alteration in our view of the meaning of history as a whole, or of the historical relations of man to nature, may be expected to alter or modify our conceptions of the meaning of man's history. And truly the air has been filled for five and twenty years with the voices of those who have attained certainty in this regard. The tumult has not yet subsided. The hosts of the assured are still at war with one another, and I much hesitate to risk the intoxication of battle. But certain things do begin to grow somewhat clear, and these it may be useful to state.

In the first place, the spirit of the evolution theory has produced an enormous effect in the region of religious historical investigation. Many results which have been at-

tained there are now beyond dispute. The world of theology has been penetrated and illumined by what is called the historical spirit or method. It recognizes now with the utmost frankness, that all religion, including the religion of revelation, has had a history; that that history has been continuous, and that its successive forms must be investigated in their mutual relations. Hence it is that we now have the science of Comparative Religion. This science has made it plain that the religions of the world, even in their poorest and darkest forms, are no longer to be looked upon as the wholly false and disgraceful and useless facts which they appeared to former generations to be. They have had some function in history, some power over man. This function, this power, must be studied and described, that we may understand both man in his attitude towards God, and God in his relations to the heathen world. The whole method and spirit in which evangelical scholars work at this matter of man's religious history and its significance is the fruit of that general attitude of mind indicated by the word "evolutionary."

Within the Christian religion it is now recognized that there has been a continuous history both of doctrine and of institutions. The religion of revelation has its place in history, which means that it has had stages, development, evolution. Abraham did not see Christ's day in the same sense and degree in which John and Peter saw it, or you and I see it to-day. But he saw the first rays of its dawn, and from Abraham's day to John and Peter and Paul the religion of revelation had a prolonged and continuous growth. The history of this growth will describe its movements, its varieties of degree and method, its positive relations to man's nature and the general history of the race. How and when revelation took its place in history, and how from that moment of its first beginning it has molded the fortunes of men and the character of human experience,

according to its own inherent character and tendency, is all a matter of historical investigation. That investigation has undoubtedly been made more intelligent, more thorough, more fruitful, during the past two generations, than in any earlier period: and this triumphant work has been the result of that historical spirit or method which is part of the "sphere of influence" of the idea of evolution. The religion of revelation did not end with the Apostles, it then passed into a new form, resulting in the establishment of the Christian church. That too has had a history. The doctrines and institutions of Christendom have in a very real sense evolved. You can trace them from the seed to the seedling, thence to the fullgrown tree, and to the fruit which ripens thereon for weal or woe to man. There are to-day hundreds of highly trained specialists who are at work upon this piece of evolution with the same patience, skill, and spirit which are manifested by the biologist or the physicist.

Manifestly this kind and extent of work cannot be done without producing considerable effects upon our understanding and formulation of specific Christian doctrines. These doctrines have always been described and stated in the light of their history and of their actual influence upon the men who lived in the presence of revelation; and hence the restatement of their history may be expected to lead to a restatement of their nature. This is being attempted all around us to-day, and the result is bizarre and bewildering. Clearness will no doubt gradually come out of the present confusion. But no thinker seems yet to have attained that standpoint from which he can speak with convincing power. Much of the confusion seems to me to be due to the ignoring of three facts which are of fundamental importance.

In the first place, a survey of the evolutionary process shows us that in no case can the lower of the three or four

great stages into which it is divided make any prophecy regarding the higher stages which succeed it. The laws of the physical forces contain no hint of the laws of life. The history of a plant contains not the slightest suggestion regarding the nature and laws of sensation. Mere consciousness of sensation does not bear the remotest resemblance to the laws of conscience or experience of a moral being. Mr. Herbert Spencer's philosophy is an attempt to find a formula which shall cover the universe and bridge these gulfs; but his philosophy is summed up in a formula which, after all, is but an empty abstraction, with no inward movement, or life, or grip of reality; but which enables him at each of these transitions, not to speak of other points in the total process, to elude the real problem, without even stating its true nature and difficulty.<sup>1</sup> From this fact it must follow that no study of animal life, as such, or of the conditions under which man's animal and mental nature have been developed, can finally lead us to any certainty regarding man's moral and religious nature or his positive relations to God.

In the second place, it must ever be remembered that you do not explain the nature of a fact by describing its historical origin or dawn. For example, you cannot reach a true understanding or definition of life by the study of protoplasm. Not even Mr. Herbert Spencer's definition of

<sup>1</sup> An example of this is Mr. Spencer's well-known definition of "life" which Mr. John Fiske calls "the most profound and complete definition of Life that has ever been framed." Mr. Spencer says: "Life is the definite combination of heterogeneous changes, both simultaneous and successive, in correspondence with external coexistences and sequences." Mr. Fiske in his paraphrase (*Cosmic Philosophy*, Vol. ii. p. 67) more naively says "within the organism." And of course there the whole mystery lies. The definition perpetrates the logical fallacy of containing the thing to be defined. For "life" is in that word "within." We do not speak of "within a stone" in defining it. What is that which has a "within" and a "without"? It is Life. Hence you do not define it by merely describing the relations of the "within" and the "without."

life could have been made possible by a summation of the observed facts of so poor a specimen of living things. On the contrary, you can understand the significance of protoplasm only by placing it in the light of a much larger fact. Similarly you cannot explain an oak-tree by the study of its seed; on the contrary, it is the life history of the whole tree which explains the seed. So with any statement of any portion of the relations of man to God, no adequate justice can be done to them by treating the first moment of their revelation or of their experience by man as containing the whole truth.

In the third place, if the faith of the Christian church be grounded in fact, then that which constitutes the subject-matter of theological science is, *the personal relations of God and man and their historical manifestation or realization*. The fact that they are personal relations must be kept strenuously in the forefront. To treat sin as the struggle between the animal and spiritual nature, in man; or revelation, as the history of man's consciousness of God; or the incarnation, as the attainment of the divine fullness by one human life, may be useful enough. But these are only half or quarter views of the whole fact. The real subject-matter of doctrinal investigation remains to be explored even after so much has been said of sin, or revelation, or incarnation. The personal relations of God to man, and of man to God, in the light of each of these great facts, remain to be grasped and expounded. Each thinker who keeps this principle patiently before his mind will find that the evolution theory is going to influence his statement of doctrine very really indeed, but not so directly and superficially as is sometimes imagined.

Let me briefly, and in conclusion, illustrate these principles in relation to two doctrines to which evolution is supposed to have much to say directly.

First, there is the Doctrine of Revelation. It is possible

to put this matter in what is supposed to be a scientific or evolutionary spirit by saying that revelation is ever proceeding, that God is ever making himself known to the human consciousness from the moment in creation when that consciousness develops the capacity for apprehending him. Hence the history of revelation is the history of man's ever-growing consciousness of God. Now that is all true, but it is not all the truth. To answer that question, we must not abide humbly at the feet of our general definition of evolution. We must in the true scientific spirit go to history. Now when we go to the history of the religion in which revelation has reached its climax, we find that from beginning to end it records acts which are described as specific acts, personal acts of God in relation to specific persons. The phenomena of prophetism in Israel cannot be brought under the general formula of an evolving consciousness of God. The consciousness of God did then undoubtedly develop, but through specific and personal acts of God towards individual persons. "The word of Jehovah" came to a prophet in such a fashion as it did not come to any other man in Israel except through him. It is impossible to deny that there was involved in the covenant with Israel and the inspiration of prophets a personal act of the divine will without denying to God any specific purpose of will concerning any specific portion of his universe and its history. But if that is so, then the doctrine of revelation is much more than the history of the development of man's consciousness of God,—as much more as it ever was. We may be in an indefinitely better position to investigate its meaning and methods; and we are. We may have gained enormously by the new emphasis which is placed upon the history of the human consciousness in this relation; and we have. We may be in a better position to understand the Divine acts as historically connected after a wider fashion than was possible three generations

ago; and we are. But the actual nature of revelation, as constituted by those acts of God in relation to individual men, from Abraham to Paul, which have a supreme significance and a divine authority for all human consciences for ever after, remains, as it ever has been, the free manifestation by a living person of his character and his purposes unto sinful men.

Second, there is the Doctrine of Sin. It is generally assumed, on the one hand, that the Doctrine of Evolution leads necessarily not only to a restatement, but to a *certain* restatement, of the meaning and nature of sin. The idea of a fall must, it is said, be abandoned. Man never fell except upwards. He did not begin in a state of innocence and break a known law of God deliberately, and so contract the racial guilt. Man, it is argued, must have awakened gradually from the sleep of sense in which the animal world slumbers. As, out of the control of appetite and the confusions of passion, the higher light of Reason began to shine, he became aware of a deep contradiction between his animal and spiritual self. The law of the animal life was, on the whole, "grasp-all"; the law of reason is "give-all." Man's struggle, man's long story of toil and bitterness, of wild self-abandonment and miserable self-contempt, is due to that inward war of the past animal life and its remainders with the new rational soul and its prophetic claims. This may of course be very largely true, but again it is not the whole truth. For instance, who knows yet what were the conditions amid which man first emerged from the animal to the human condition? No mere dogmatism from general principles can be allowed to rule our thought at this stage. We must strive to know something of the dawn of conscience and of the knowledge of God ere we can define man's earliest sense of sin. For, be it observed, the position which I have described is dogmatism pure and simple, since it is an attempt to deduce the form and na-

ture of an event from an abstract theory. Ere it can be considered valid or legitimate it must reckon alike with Anthropology and History. The fact is, we know nothing from evolutionary science, absolutely nothing, about man's earliest consciousness of personal relations with God; and until we have historical or other evidence, we are at least as warranted in holding that, when man first stood forth as man, rational and religious, he found sin to consist in his deliberate disobedience to the known will of God, as in holding any other theory. The degree of crudeness with which at the birth of his reason and freedom he conceived of God or law or disobedience, has nothing to do with the determination of the essential nature of sin.

But this leads to another point. In the light of the three principles enunciated above, it is obviously right to insist that we shall not make our doctrine of sin to depend on our theory as to its origin. That is one great mistake in which the older orthodox and some evolutionary theologies alike share. The nature of sin is not fully revealed nor a Christian doctrine of sin made possible, either by the story of the Fall downwards or of the Fall upwards. To understand sin we need to trace the relations of men to God through the whole course of his self-revelation. The Old Testament, in the prophetic writings including the prophetic histories, in the Psalms, in the development of the sacrificial ritual, presents us with a gradually deepening view of the nature of sin, both profound and humbling. The New Testament presents us with the most clear and unmistakable revelation of the nature of sin in the character and experience of Jesus Christ, as also in that form of religious consciousness which he awakened in the apostles after his resurrection, and which formed the real climax of the work of redemption and revelation. We need to look at the ripe fruit of man's history as he puts Jesus to death, defying Jehovah; we need to look at the ripe fruit of God's

grace as he offers his Son on the cross, if we would know what sin really is. The Christian doctrine of sin must come not from the study of the seed, but of the whole tree of revelation. And when it is seen that throughout the course of that unique history the personal nature and relations of both God and man were progressively unfolded, it will be seen, first, that the doctrine of sin can be adequately stated only when those natures and relations are adequately appreciated; and, second, that any account of the historical beginnings of sin will not carry any thinker far in that task.