

CHRISTIAN ASPECTS OF
EVOLUTION

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CHRISTIAN ASPECTS OF EVOLUTION ¹

IT is not strange that the doctrine of evolution should have taken a hold upon the present age, which has in many quarters become a tyranny. It is a grand and comprehensive idea, which has now been taught to speak the language of the palpable sciences to every ear. It also clears up several of the more obvious difficulties that have posed the ordinary intelligence in the natural world by indicating that creation is not yet done. And 'every new idea', says Goethe, 'acts like a tyrant when it comes to light: hence the gain it brings only too soon turns to loss'.

It is a youthful mistake, of course, to suppose that the idea of evolution in nature entered through Darwin or even Lamarck. It was a philosophic idea long before it was scientific, and it was far more comprehensive. It did not even dawn with Hegel (who has room for Darwin's greatness in a side pocket). It plays an unformed and mystic part in the Neoplatonic systems of Alexandrian times, and, through Augustine, had much place in medieval thought. It was an intuition of speculative genius (like so much in Lucretius, for instance), before it was a biological theme.

There is no doubt, also, it still exerts a great imaginative fascination. No small source of its influence is outside of its scientific utility as a hypothesis. Its popular spell is largely aesthetic; and it is due to the imposing features read into it by the imagination, which quietly elevates it from a physical hypothesis to be a scheme of the world. It seems to bring

¹ This paper first appeared in *The London Quarterly Review* in 1905.

life from the dead. It represents a kind of evangelical revival, if not indeed a reformation, in the scientific mind. It offers to the mind, in a world which had seemed to antiquity so finished and fixed, the spectacle of a universe in vital movement, a *ζῶον*, in movement, too, on a vast scale, and in an overwhelming *crescendo*. Creation seems at last to be on the march—nay, on the path of victory. It is as if we were lifted to a place where we could safely look down on the whole battlefield of existence and see in rapture the vast deployment of the fight. It replaces the old mechanical conception of the world by the more engaging idea of organic growth. At the same time, it spreads the realm of cause and law to cover the vast region of new knowledge laid open by the explorers in all kinds; so that our growing experience reveals still a universe ordered in all things and sure; controlled, not to say centralized, yet instinct with vitality and promise. Again, it calls upon every individual to show cause for its existence in its contribution to the whole; and this, even if it swamp the individual's ultimate right to be which is drawn from his relation to the absolute God, is in tune with other instincts of the age, and seems a useful curb upon unchartered egoism. It seems to show that the moral and social forces, which repress undue claims for self, are the great agents and guarantees of human progress, that godliness is not only good but useful, and profitable for both worlds if we look widely enough. And it appears to take some of the gloom from the struggle and pain of existence by showing that it is not all fruitless, not gratuitous and suicidal, but a condition of progress so far. It writes one aspect of the Cross, its sacrifice, on the whole area of life, and traces the roots of it among the minute crevices of all sentient being. It may at once be said that in principle the evolutionary idea has a place and value in science that can never be lost, however

questionable we may find it in philosophy. And it has foregleams and points of contact for the nobler morality, fatal as it may be to it on the whole (for its altruism has a strange trick of suddenly doubling back into a hard egoism). But to fight it or begrudge is no duty of religion, and no service to it, so long as the theory is not elevated to be a new religion, and a complete guide of life.

I

The doctrine is now so well established upon its own ground that it can afford to welcome some indication of the limits within which it must move.

In the first place, it does not cover the whole of its own area. The part of it which deals with descent may be sound, but it does not follow that the other part, the theory of selection, is adequate. There would seem to be other factors involved in the process than adaptation to environment. It is not yet shown to be impossible that the distinctive native constitution of the organism may not have its effect among the forces that determine the result. And the theory of selection will not account for the cases of 'sudden and discontinuous variation' which, from their first beginning, have 'more or less of the kind of perfection which we associate with normality'. The doctrine is far from final on the side of selection as distinct from heredity; and there is room for another Darwin to arise to do for *his* positions much of what *he* did for those that went before. Within biological science itself there are many who are preparing the way for such a genius, and making the need of him more and more clear.

It has been pointed out, also, that there is a lack of clearness in the idea even as applied to its own area. There is a silent substitution of a qualitative for a quantitative. Selection is a mechanical idea; it is the adjustment of parts,

or of the creature and its environment. Whereas the idea suggested by evolution is an organic one; it is the growth from within outward of a self-contained force, which is not a mere abstraction, nor a brute urgency, but force, surely, with a specific-content of features and qualities imposing themselves on the surroundings. And no small amount of the fascination in the doctrine arises from this quiet transfer to mechanical conditions of associations which only belong to an organic and organizing power. Indeed, it is not fair to class the Darwinian evolution with those ideas of evolution which have belonged to speculative science from antiquity downwards. These all insisted on the evolving of something already within—whether as the educt of a minutely preformed creature, or as the product of a mere epigenetic power. But in biological evolution there is no such interior, and the forms and species are but the result of chance variation, and external collision.

II

At most, and even supposing the missing link or links were found, the doctrine simply registers a method of past procedure. It has no world goal. It has no teleology on one great cosmic scale. There is nothing that gives us to know the problem set us as living souls in the world, far less to find ourselves in that problem. It does not explain the world, it only marshals it. It is an organizer and not an interpreter. It sets up the type in lines and pages, but it cannot read the book or open its seal. It follows its grammar, but not its logic; and it does not discern its spirit. It is not revelation, but illumination. Knowledge of the world is one thing, and that can be expressed in science; but the explanation of the world is another thing, and it has to do with destiny. Even the knowledge is as yet very incomplete. At the source of

each step is a variation whose cause is unknown, and whose method of appearance is unexplained. Far less have we a causal explanation of the origin of one particular variation—consciousness; less still of the origin of self-consciousness and spiritual, responsible life. There is no scientific bond connecting the finest movement with even a primitive consciousness. And the gulf is not bridged between the ideas and duties in human thought and the pictorial conceptions of the animals below. But supposing many of these gaps were connected up, we should still have but a splendid sequence, waiting for its true explanation in some great interpretive *Word*. This word can only express an end, goal, or destiny; and for such a word science not only has not, but cannot have, the secret. Explanation has far more to do with purpose than with cause or method. *How* man was made does not tell us *why* he was made, and cannot. History alone does not give destiny. It is only in a modified sense that the history of a truth is its criticism. We may ask what caused all this and marshals it, or we may ask what means all this and crowns it; and while science has a place in dealing with the first question, with the second it has nothing to do, nor anything to say upon it. The answer to the first does not necessarily answer the second, and the second must not arrest the first. Science seeks causes or methods, but not ends. She can but know and formulate the world so far as it has gone, she cannot interpret it by the end to which it is going. She must claim the region of etiology, but let teleology alone. The explanation of the world is in its nature revelation, and only faith can apprehend it. For it is an unfinished world, and a destiny corresponding to its vast scale cannot be forecast by us. But it may be foretold to us, and in principle it is—in the absolute revelation which breaks through the midst of history in Christ. The goal of the world is a spiritual

power already in the midst of the world. The final whole is given us in Christ's spiritual whole. It is the perfecting, the universalizing of our present miraculous communion with the Eternal God. It is the kingdom of God—which is given us and not achieved, which is matter of revelation and not of discovery. Redemption is man's destiny. The purpose of the world is the correction of a degenerate moral variation on its way to become universal. Only our responsive faith gives us that knowledge of the infinite whole in which evolution works as a partial procedure. Yet for explanation it is the whole that we need. I am not myself a true and whole self till I find my place in the whole. We need something on which man as evolved can stand while he construes the process of his evolution. For our security we ask, What is the vast power going to do with us at last? We need a moral, universal, and final teleology; and that is the gift in Christ. Let us only take care that we treat that gift as a teleology and a power. Let us not waste it upon questions of causes, to which it brings no direct answer. In this region its best service is the promotion of a true science, equipped for causal research, and counting among its first equipments those spiritual and ethical conditions in which alone a true science can rise and thrive.

What is the end of it all? *Cui bono?* Who gains by the struggle? And what science can tell that? What evolution? What induction? For all that appears the individual is a mere pawn in the game with our dark partner; and not the individual only, but whole species and races. Even when the individual seems to thrive, it is at the cost of his moral initiative. The doctrine of evolution substitutes process for effort. We are caught in a tendency which, we are taught, no effort can control. We are borne along on a tide against which we cannot swim. We learn the fruitlessness of moral struggle

against these age-long forces that have submerged so many of the best moral attempts. We climb a climbing wave. We are creatures of the time and of the world. We lose the moral vigour which resists a majority, the public, or the priest; and the moral sympathy which helps to its feet the inferior race or the struggling right. We learn to distrust truth itself. It is all relative only, something in the making, and something which we can make. And it is all over with truth when man feels himself its creator. His truth is not worth martyrdom then, for it is too changing to be an object of faith; and is hardly worth propagandism, for it will change ere he can convert an audience, to say nothing of a generation. Reality gives way under our feet, and standards vanish like stars falling from heaven. 'Growth (it comes to be thought) does not issue from being, but being from growth.' Man becomes his own maker, and he has a moral fool for his product. Goodness, by becoming but one contributor to the struggle for existence, ceases to be goodness and becomes a mere utility. A spiritual interior ceases to be man's distinction. And the scientific thinker himself, thus hollowed out, ceases to trust and respect his own thought; he himself comes to be part of the lie of an empty world. Thought on these false lines, therefore, destroys its own conditions; it commits suicide, and mankind evolves over an abyss.

III

And when we ask what progress means, what it is measured by, how it is distinct from mere movement, what shall we reply? What entitles us to say whether any increase of movement or complexity is progress?¹ Must the newest be

¹ The very Church has come to confound size with power, and bustle with growth. It gets excited about a Church census, and it stupefies its ministers by incessant demands for what is slangily called 'work'.

the truest? We have from science no answer. Evolution is quite silent, because quite ignorant, as to its own goal and standard. It looks to yesterday with a smile, which fades whenever its glance turns to tomorrow. To what do we move? Over Niagara? To what do we climb? To the top of a slumbering volcano, on whose slopes the vines grow lush only because of its one day fatal fires? What has the individual to reconcile him to all that is exacted from him in toil, suffering, and death to feed the progress of the race? What profit is there in his blood? What is the recompense of whole races and ages thus crushed and erased? What private, personal, inward, and spiritual gain have they won? Why should they toil and suffer for the sake of a posterity equally blank and barren? The struggle naught availeth. What is there to translate their cross into glory, their sorrow into hope? What is to transfigure their body of grief and death? What is to change them from victims into martyrs, and from martyrs into the seed of some triumphant Church? If there be any such integrating agent it must surely be something which is at once the final victory and the present power; some purpose which runs through all things as the truth in all and the crown upon all; some will which turns mere matter into purpose, which elects to proceed in the way of selection, and to sustain in the way of communion. We must find the end of living in the living God, the goal of all in the stay of all. And this is a power which we have only in the revelation of the Cross and its foregone (may I say its prophetic?) conquest. The empirical world is far too vast, complex, and tragical now for any philosophy of history to prophesy its goal from the necessities of speculative surmise and the categories of an irresistible ideal embedded in thought. We must turn for our certainty elsewhere where philosophy fails as a foundation. We turn to historic faith and its

experience. We are cast onward and upward to faith as our divine destiny. We were born to believe; and we are harried, as it were, into our heaven. We are carried reluctantly to our true glory, which is to know because we trust, rather than trust because we know. Our chief knowledge is of that whereby we are known. We are cast upon faith, neither as a *pis aller*, nor as a leap in the dark, upon a faith which finds in the historic work of the superhistoric Christ an absolute warrant of the Kingdom of God as the close and crown of all. This realm will not be on earth; but it grows from earth, though planted from heaven. It is only evolved because it has been infused. It is one of the great gains of our time to have realized the organic continuity of the spiritual future with the growing present. The modern world but prolongs the soul of the seen through the crisis of death. And our heaven is more a fulfilment of our earth than its reward. Glory is but the consummation of grace, and grace arises in the very heart of nature and history, though it springs out of neither. The Kingdom of God is to faith the immanent truth of things, their soul and *nisus*, subtly, slowly supreme on earth, and eternal in the heavens.

IV

It has been often enough admitted by leading exponents of evolution, like Huxley, that the doctrine contains nothing incompatible in principle with a teleology. And a great jurist who studied the doctrine from the view-point of his own science (Ihring), adds that 'the idea of an end proposed by God for the world is quite compatible with the most rigid law of causality'. Everything turns on the kind of teleology and the range of its lines. There is nothing in evolution fatal to the great moral and spiritual teleology of Christianity, whatever may happen to the antiquated, and what I ask

pardon for describing as even the paleological, forms of design.

This old conception of purpose in nature was mechanical, and did not rise much above the level of contrivance. Nature was construed as if it were a product of skill like human art. It was noticed that man in the production of things most valuable always preceded the means with an end conceived in thought. He proposed the result first as an end in his thought, and then disposed his resources to its attainment in face of obstacles foreign to himself. This analogy gave the devout mind a deep sense of an intelligent personal creator and governor of the world *ab extra*. But it fails when the range of thought passes beyond mechanism, transcends contrivance, and engages with the final problem and purpose of all reality. It does not give us an immanent God but a Demiurge. Growth, and not manufacture, is the method of reality. Manufacture, indeed, was but a half-way-house on the road from a theory of chance to the theory of growth. Plan and its pursuit form but a subsidiary element in all the greatest energies of life. The great products flow not from an understanding which anticipates every perilous juncture and is ready with the right means to deal with alien and intractable material, but from a germinal idea or power which pervades matter, from its central throne makes all things new, and lives in the world it has made. It is so with Christianity, which flows in its true course and conquest of life from the vital principle of faith in Christ. And it is so with every minor product and victory of the spirit on the great scale. Nay, the scheming understanding itself is a product of evolutionary growth.

The lower teleology fails also to deal with the problem raised by pessimism, whether Being blindly blundered on man's suffering soul, and stumbled on a lucid interval of

intelligence, out of whose agony it must find its way back into the dark reality which is the ultimate power in things; whether the good of life is not the negation of ultimate reason, purpose, and adjustment; whether thought's business is not to hasten the death of thought and so escape its pain. It fails, too, when it is asked whether the adaptation in the natural world is not imported into it by *our* purposive reason, and imposed by us on what is really no more than the survival of the fittest in the struggle for existence between different forces. We must grant to pessimism that that simple teleology will not apply if we are looking for all things to work together for our natural and worldly weal. An individualist teleology, or a eudaemonism, can no longer be maintained. The world does not exist for the happiness of its several units. It is there for man only as a member of society, and for his happiness as a lover of the kingdom of God. And we must also concede to the evolutionists that in some regions utility is only provable as the outcome of variation, selection, extinction, survival, and evolution through a conflict of immense duration and infinite experiment. But if it be proposed to limit the whole process of existence to the field of these concessions, to make the principle of natural well-being or biological fitness the scheme to which the whole creation moves, we object to such a dwarfing of life, man, or the world. History alone bears witness to a destiny far beyond a range so narrow. The pessimist must be reminded that an intelligence which embodies purpose and yet is unconscious may be conceivable at the end of an evolutionary series, but not at its beginning. The mechanism of purpose once stumbled on might run on as a kind of unconscious habit, as automatic intelligence without initiative, like the nesting instinct which builds the abode for the family but in thousands of years does not alter its fashion or adjust it better to the creature's need. But this

could not be the primal Being. Even if the final unconsciousness were a return to the unconsciousness of the beginning, why must we say that the consciousness which is at least penultimate has no counterpart at the origin of the series? There may be, there is, an unconscious element in mind; but a conscious mind can only arise from conscious mind. The cell capable of development into conscious mind cannot be divorced from conscious mind at the outset without postulating a breach and a miracle greater than the special creation of separate species. Conscious purpose must have presided over the origin of the moral world, however remote or however simple that origin may have been. The *Iliad*, it has been said, could never arise from a fortuitous concourse of letters. And the infinite interlocking of conditions in the growth of a unitary world of body, soul, and society could never have arisen from an accidental collision of causes all disparate and purposeless.

There is, for life at its last and largest, an end of all things which is only given in the moral world. There are so many cases of maladaptation both in nature and society that it is impossible to base a fixed faith on a teleology which takes account only of the happy adjustment we can trace in either. It is not in nature at all that we can find nature's end. Nor is it in living society that we find the sure word of prophecy as to the social goal. And if it be in history, it is not in history as a series. It is not an induction from the whole area of history (which we see not yet), or the abstraction of an apparent tendency. It is at a point of history, where for once and all the soul becomes a personality as absolute and final as it is in God. In Jesus Christ we have the final cause of history, and the incarnation of that kingdom of God which is the only teleology large enough for the whole world. It is

to faith, to the loving soul believing in Christ, that all things work together for good. Let the text be finished. All things co-operate for blessing to them that love a God in Christ reconciling the world, and are the called in His purpose. It is this frame of mind and heart that all nature and history are adjusted to produce at the long last. It is this order of heart that is the destined and called, according to life's original and final purpose in God. And it is this faithful union with Christ that affords to the individual soul power to rise up against the pressure of an environing world and an evolutionary past, and to assert itself with an originality which the vast process tends to stamp out. This is especially so in the case of repentance against a degenerate past. It is only faith, and faith in Christ, that enables the soul, lamed by its own schism and treason, to resist the tendency to go with the huge natural stream, and to submit to be classed as a thing among things. Each man, indeed, is a child of his age, but only so far as the form of his problems go. Their essence is perennial. And the answer must come from that in him which is both within and above his age, which links him to the Unseen and Eternal and gives him intelligence of its ways. Redemption is the one goal. Christ is the purpose of God for the world. The Redeemer Himself is already our redemption, the Saviour is our sanctification, who Himself is made unto us righteousness and perfection. Our salvation is to be in Christ, and we are complete in Him, in whom and for whom are all things.

Till science appreciate and explain the historic fact of Christ, it has not subdued the world. When He is explained we possess the world's explanation. Only, it is an explanation which to science as science is always impossible. For science cannot concern itself with ends or destinies. And

these are the categories that explain Christ. It was in these He chiefly wrought. And the Christian explanation proceeds by the knowledge of faith, not of sight; by the faculty which interprets the value of facts, and not simply their cause or co-ordination. It appreciates the why of the world, and not simply its how. Science here is like the balance which says this is heavy and that is light, but cannot say if either be silver or gold.

So, besides the limitations of the evolution doctrine in its own area, there are great areas of existence and life to which it does not apply at all. What solves the biological problem does not solve the philosophic. The formula for the evolution of a section is not the norm for the evolution of the whole. The great conflict of the age is the battle for a spiritual interior, a spiritual totality, and a spiritual interpretation of life and the world. This is the test of every new doctrine which comes before us. Does it make for the spiritual value of life? Or does it discourage it? Or does it preclude it at the outset? And judged by this test the higher we rise towards man's spiritual life, the more inadequate does the evolutionary principle seem. It would be foolish to say that our spiritual life is unaffected by it; but it would be more foolish to say that it is expressed by it, far less explained. Evolution is not the complete formula for human progress. Righteousness and peace are worth more than mere progress and prosperity, and what does not bring them is neither a revelation nor a gospel.

V

Reference has been made to the sudden appearance of well developed variations in the biological region, and the same phenomenon is much more striking in the moral and

spiritual world. I allude, for instance, to the emergence, at very early and immature stages, of men uniquely endowed, who carry genius to a pitch which all after ages can but submit to admire afar. Homer, Virgil, and Dante, to say nothing of the Bible writers, may have appeared on the summit of particular civilizations, but they belong to the race more than to epochs, nations, or civilizations; and in the history of the race they appeared early, and not late. And the like applies in a higher degree to the appearance of Jesus Christ Himself, as the spiritual focus of the race. Here spiritual mankind produces its blossom long before its leaves. And the finisher of its spiritual life is at the same time the historic author of it and its fountain-head. Moses created Israel; as Heine said, *er schuf Israel*; he was not its great product. And so the fullness of Christendom is He who made Christendom and was not made by it. Great men are not made great by their *milieu*, which gives them no more than a field and form. It provides them a language, it offers them their problems, and presents them the issues. But the answers are latent in the miraculous quality of their native genius, and not inhaled by them from the spirit of their age. They are not orators who absorb a vapour and give it forth as a flood. They are prophets whose spiritual quality is an original but rational mystery, and whose revelation is as secret in its source as it is fertile in its course.

Whenever we have great spiritual initiative there the theory of natural evolution must retire. Its tendency indeed is to crush out that initiative, and to suppress for ever the individual which for a moment it evoked. Like a stamping machine it goes on to produce an immense number of individuals, but to starve individual variety. It extends the multiplicity of the world, but discourages its characteristics. It increases quantity and reduces quality. It enhances the

numbers only to depress the inner wealth and intrinsic resource of life, to increase the people and not multiply the joy. This is the result of a democracy merely natural and evolved.

In the region of moral freedom this is especially true. No freedom of this high sort is possible on a theory of natural selection. And with moral freedom vanishes the initiative which is the real spring of human progress and the real condition of glory. There could indeed be no fall in a purely evolutionary world; but we pay too dearly for the immunity at the cost of that liberty which, if it do make fall possible, is yet the only condition of true life, as of fresh resurrection.

The higher we rose there would be the less power of new departures, and the deeper we fell there would be the less possibility of revival and recovery. The tragedy of existence in the area of natural selection is great enough, the fruitless sacrifice, the pitiless, deadly fate; but if the principle of natural selection were made to cover the whole moral area the tragic meaning of life would die away, we should lose the sense of tears in human things, and we should be left with the sordid miseries that are enacted among creatures incapable of the tragic sense. Concurrently with the victory of Darwinism, literature develops its *Badalia Herodsfoots* and its *Tales of Mean Streets*. To banish the tragic sense from life, as all evolution and much religion of the breezy sort tend to do, is to condemn us to a shallow happiness which has within it the conditions of endless ennui and fatted death. Attention has been called by critics to the present decay of tragedy and the passion for comedy, high or low—and mostly low, or trivial at least. Comedy was the drama of the Restoration, and it turned out the tragedies of the great Puritan age. It is not an accident that a similar taste coin-

cides with the obsession of the public mind by the evolutionary idea. Whatever discourages greatness of soul, spiritual enterprise and moral initiative makes for the rule of the comic spirit, the mocking, the ironic providence, and it worships the great 'Aristophanes of heaven'. It is the badge of our evolutionary time, which rejoices in excellent periodicals and is a fine taster of the tertiary poetry, but has little sense for great literature or ultimate thought. It is the index of the suppression of soul and the evolution of everything else, religion included—except faith. The moral callousness of the times and the growth of cynicism, indicate a state of mind produced by a general belief in little higher than the struggle for existence.

VI

The slowness of moral progress also, compared with mere civilization or social evolution, might suggest to us that there is in the moral realm some action which is rebellious to the evolutionary law. How comes it that moral progress is so slow while the advance of civilization gains in velocity as it moves through time? (Is this the acceleration of a falling body?) If moral progress be the chief, how is it that it does not run with all and more than all the accumulated speed of the forces that led up to it? Is it not because in the moral region we are in another than the evolutionary zone, where we must stoop to conquer and go back to leap? We have to return to fight out anew the old conflicts and regain the old conquests. Each man and age has to return for itself to headquarters; and we cannot pick up our goodness, our character, just where our father left off, as we can with his research, his estate, his position. No age can inherit moral worth, as it does civilization, by legacy. We cannot live upon our father's faith as we can on his fortune. An uncertainty keeps

invading the moral foundations of life which does not assail its achievements, and we must here know for ourselves. And this return, this arrest, alone suggests a great qualification upon any theory of mere development which pretends to cover the world. When we enter this region we draw near to the world's centre, where its unity and totality reside. We are in contact with processes which involve the vital all and regulate the world's soul, processes which are utterly recalcitrant to the formula of a sectional sphere. It is even questioned by many whether in all these centuries of evolution the average man is really better, more worthy and noble in his motive or ideal than he was before. We need not answer the question. The very fact that it is capably raised by men who would never think of stirring the same question about social development in the more outward and natural sense shows that they recognize a vast difference between the two worlds of morals and of civilization in their principles of progress. We may discard, if we think well, the theological explanations which are offered in doctrines like those of original sin or total depravity, but we ought to recognize that they arose first as explanations and were not spun as dreams. They were efforts to explain things which we alert dreamers are pleased to ignore. They were forced from men by the existence of highly intractable facts. And facts which remain when these explanations are discredited. The absence of explanation today is due in some part to the absence also of that courage which faced the facts, and that insight which realized their moral seriousness.

But it is something more grave than moral slowness that we have to contend with when we come to the summit of evolution in man; it is moral sedition. It is not mere spiritual reluctance; it is recalcitrance and rebellion. It is not that progress lags, but that regress speeds. The higher we rise in

the scale of development, the more we are impressed with degeneration as an active and deliberate force. If it be true that there is in man a steady current of exaltation, it is equally true that man also makes his debasement one of his serious pursuits. There is not only indifference to his good, nor aberration, but hostility, which can be bitter. And this cannot be integrated into any theory of natural development. It belongs to a region which natural faculties can neither explain nor reform. We come to a point where nature, and even genius, must give place to grace, where salvation must take up what development laid down, and redemption give us what even our goodwill failed to attain. We arrive at a perversion whose only remedy is conversion, and to a principle which is revolution rather than evolution, or, in so far as it becomes evolution at all, is the evolution of a fundamental revolution in Jesus Christ. But it is not unjust to say that the vogue of the evolutionary theory, its popular vogue outside of strictly scientific circles, owes much to the fact that it has a great ally in the indifference, passing into hostility, of the average man to moral effort or spiritual height. He would be carried, for he cannot go, like a heathen god.

VII

There is another consideration. The study of history soon shows that the race does not move forward in an unbroken progress like a mighty stream. There are periods when it seems to contract in all ways, to say nothing of stagnation. It grows narrow without growing deep; and it seems even to settle into malarial swamps. (That it appears to go backward would not matter, because it might be progress none the less. The river may return upon its course in many a curve, moving all the time in growing volume, through a

country blessed and beautified, to the sea.) But the analogy of a stream is drawn too much from mere natural process to fit the level of growth where man appears. And what we have there is rather to be described as progress by crisis, by catastrophes (or, if we keep the previous image, by cataracts). Beyond the steady conflict of the struggle for existence the course of history gets into tangles and knots at particular periods. Seasons of calm and beauty discharge themselves in thunderstorms, which clear the moral air and open space for new energies and new periods. There are harvests which are the end of an age. Good and evil work together till their intrinsic antipathy refuses any longer to be compressed; then there is an explosion which changes the face of things. There comes a day of the Lord, and a new world. The appearance of good often has its first effect in aggravating the energy of evil. The revelation of sanctity is at the same time a revelation of sin: and the growth of the one accentuates the antagonism of the other. The one forces the other to show itself plainly, to throw off its mask, and to put forth all its wicked resource. Grace enters to develop sin into transgression, to bring sin to the surface and make it overt. Then comes the encounter, and the prince of the world is judged.

These Armageddons are repeated in history, issuing in waves, as it were, from the central and absolute crisis of the Cross. And what we look down on from God's right hand is a great wager and waver of battle, a winning campaign of many swaying battles, progress by judgement, a rising scale of crises, working out in historic detail to an actual kingdom of God, with its strategic centre and eternal crisis in the death of Christ. The Scripture idea of history is not a stream of evolution but a series of judgements. It is an idea more revolutionary in its nature than evolutionary. It is a series

of conversions rather than educations. The world is redeemed rather than perfected, and it is saved by 'shocks of doom'. It is there that we find the formula of providential evolution, and therefore of all evolution upon the universal scale. The key is a moral one; and the principle of a saving judgement is deeper than that of a guiding providence. Its pattern is very different from the formula of a simple evolution as we might deduce it from the growth of our stature, or the life-history of a species. We have some prelude of it in the catastrophes which have ended epochs or species and made room for others on their graves.

VIII

I have spoken of the inadequacy of evolution as a formula for the region of spiritual originality, and for that of the morally backward and forward. But there is another area besides where its writ does not run. I mean the whole world of the changeless which is so indispensable as a background, an interior, nay, a constant source for the world of change. The development of spiritual faculty it is that brings us into touch with this permanent world. As we rise in human affection we realize how fixed the primal passions are. The human heart beats to the same measure today as in the Eddas. 'Homer's sun lights us, and we see it with the same eyes.' The old and aching riddle of life is substantially the same for us as it was for Job. The refinement and flexibility of human relations demand more and more urgently a fixed moral world, an eternal and immutable morality, an authority that cannot be shaken, a standard that is not relative but absolute for the soul. Even change lends itself to a philosophy of development only in so far as it is methodic, calculable change, normal variation, going on by fixed laws, and partaking of the uniformity of nature. Parallel to all the change

is a presence and permanency of law which gives it its scientific value. The laws of the persistence of matter and the conservation of energy are inseparable from every extension of the area of evolutionary change. Without this permanent element evolution is impossible. But it is an element which accompanies the evolutionary process rather than is subject to it. It holds change in a hand that knows no change. The very regularity of change lifts it out of the realm of change. And we are warned here of our approach to a region which is not subject to mutation, but is the source of those very fixtures and orders that convert variation into real progress and life. For the fixity that regulates such change is but an index of a spiritual fixity at once final and fluid, whose true name is the Eternal God, leading all time and marshalling all space.

In the evolution of history we who are alive are not simply at the end of an ordered series, the last links in a continuous chain. The fixed order of the past has not simply made us possible, or been the pedestal on which we stand. But all that is most permanent in the past lives on in us. In a true sense we are all the past. We do not stand apart and regard it simply as a panorama; we embody it and live it out in the conditions of our time. And it is impossible to take a scientific view of our time unless we transcend it, and realize in it the elixir of the past. The spirit of an age can only be valued by reference to an ageless spirit. And, indeed, could we have a present if there were not some spiritual pause within life, some inland lagoon of being, some repose of life within itself, some arrest of perpetual variation and process, and some elevation of the successive points of movement above the mere sequence of time into the co-existence of eternity. To make all but movement, process, and evolution is to dissolve and empty the present, and to pulverize the soul. We do

not realize our present except in the power of a present which is timeless and superior to time and time's methods. If everything in us moved as fast as all around us, there would be no progress, certainly no sense of progress, or even of movement. All would feel stationary. To perceive movement we must be fixed beyond the flux; and that we may call it progress our footing must be above it. For the translation of movement into progress implies a judgement of value. And for such a verdict there must be a place of judgement fixed and secure within both present and past, before whose stable seat the panorama passes and takes sentence as it goes. And what applies to life and history applies to the whole of existence, to all the phenomena of our experience at least. We do not understand any one of them except in its relation to the whole. It is the infinite whole that explains the part and gives it its value and life. It is the whole not only as around the part but as in the parts, not as environment but as soul. In one wide word, the fact, or the time, is only intelligible by the presence and energy in it of eternity. 'Every moment,' says Goethe, 'is of infinite value, it is the representative of all eternity.' The moment must not engross and limit us. Something exempt from evolution is the condition, the $\pi\omicron\upsilon\sigma\tau\hat{\omega}$, not of the evolutionary future alone but of the real present. The condition of all change, and its law, is the changeless; and both evolution and its science are impossible if we renounce the idea of an eternal world which is not subject to its law, neither indeed can be. This eternity has time, and chance, and change not only beside it, but beneath it. They issue from it and they return to its presence to be judged. And this Eternity must be spirit with its living mastery over time. Without this eternal Spirit there is no knowledge or command of time. Time has not even existence. For two successive points cannot form time unless they cohere in

something which is superior to movement and exempt from time. Without this spirit we cannot read time's changes aright. But for this changeless continuum in memory, we could not remember enough to recognize change. That is to say, we have no possible science of evolution except from the vantage ground of an exempt region which evolution does not rule but only partially express. What is it that distinguishes progress from mere extension but some contribution from the timeless life which makes the new thing not simply another thing but a different, not merely a prolongation of the past but an enrichment of it with its own power?

The great movement of life for each generation is not from the present onward into the future; it is from the present upward and outward into the eternity which pervades it, and which does not simply surround it but perpetually receives it. We must cease to construe evolution so exclusively in the category of duration or sequence. We must not view it so much as the advance of the present into the future but as its translation into spiritual reality. We must learn to think more of the qualitative and less of the quantitative movement in things. The social and useful must become the moral and holy. Eternity stands at the heart of each moment, as Christ stands at the heart of all time. This eternity is the source of each mysterious variation, and it is also the unseen providence which controls all the variations to their collective end. It is something that cannot be given by evolution, which is but the formula of a time process; and it is something that it cannot take away. History, natural or political, survives its agents and its historians, but it cannot outgrow its Maker and Builder, who is God. 'What is eternity,' says Ritschl, 'but the power of the spirit over time?'

IX

It must be fully recognized, of course, that evolution plays a great part both in the moral soul and in the history of society. Character can only be formed by a process; it cannot be created. And society has no abiding city. A social condition which claims eternal permanence raises its hand against its own mother. It rose from the impermanent, and it must not deny its birth. The social idea is one of constant growth. What arises perishes, what abides is what was always there. But it will be shown later within what limitations this is true, for Christian history in particular. It may be well here, however, after the admission just made, to indicate some dangers of a moral kind which waylay evolutionary doctrine, and to indicate some cautions.

The most obvious peril needs, perhaps, the least attention here, after so much said on the subject by every Christian thinker. It is the erasure of the absolute distinction between good and evil, and the destruction of the idea of sin by the denial of moral freedom. The real danger, after all, is not the doctrine of evolution, but the doctrine of monism which underlies it for so many, with its wiping out of the essential difference between God and the world, right and wrong. Evil is then something which might possibly have God for its Author. Christ is but a phase of life, a flash of history. We have only a less or more, or perhaps a thereabouts. We have only more or less bondage, but no real freedom. And no freedom means no responsibility and no guilt. Man has never fallen, he has only lagged.¹ He has not sinned, he has only erred. He has not chosen the evil and refused the good. He has only been handicapped by the start given to the

¹ It is not a question, of course, of the historicity of the narrative of Genesis and the version of a fall given there.

sensual and selfish impulses at the weak outset of his racial history. There is no need of repentance, and no question of forgiveness—unless it be our forgiveness of the Maker who overloaded the first raw stages of our career, and so stunted our growth and reduced our pace. The distinction between good and evil is easily lost if the mind is turned from what is above and concentrated on the things behind. If we are always looking to our issue from matter, we forget that the goal and distinction of man is the spirit of God. We forget that the image of God lies nearer our true origin than any cell or simian. And not only so, but we come to regard sin, and especially refined sin, which loses its grossness without parting with its guilt, as no more than our incomplete stage; and so regarding it we become tolerant of it—tolerant, that is, of what is intrinsically bad, devitalizing, and so at last fatal to that life of the soul which is the true progress of man. Thus the moral principles of evolution are such as make evolution impossible. A thoroughgoing doctrine of evolution destroys the possibility of evolution. A doctrine that issues thus is suicidal. Its principle robs it of power to cast off its deadliest defect. And it need not be pointed out how utterly incompatible it is with a religion which lives and moves in repentance and the faith of a real forgiveness.

X

But, again, there is much in the doctrine of evolution to destroy a feature so essential to moral character as humility. It cannot be good for the soul to look down on all that we look back to. Each age then becomes the object of its own chief admiration. And each man will go on to treat his age as his age treats the past. With the love of humility, sympathy and pity must also be lost. To look down on the past is to

lose respect for the present, which is a past ere we have well spoken. To view our long parentage as a sacrifice for ourselves is a habit that must extend in individuals till it become the sacrifice of the whole present to themselves. How alien it all is to the Christian mind! In Christianity the higher we rise the more we realize our imperfection and guilt. It is a great but guilty past we look down on, marvellous but deplorable; and it is *our* past; and as we increase in moral sensibility, and identify ourselves with it by moral sympathy, we become more intolerable to ourselves, till we learn to bear with ourselves in the forgiveness of God. We can abide the past only by grace of that revelation which creates a profound humility in the present. We can read the past, and measure it aright, only as we see it in Christ, in the Eternal thought and, above all, the Eternal purpose. It is our Redeemer that gives us the standpoint of eternity from which alone we truly view each age converging to our feet. It was the same Eternal to whom we bow that stood over each age, read it clear, and received it at last; and we know it best when we read it with His eyes, from our place with Christ at God's right hand. We have clear prospect o'er our being's whole. The largest vision is the humblest; and the vision which does not humble is but partial and false. The progressive spirit is morally hollow, and fatal as well, if it encourage in an age the pride and insolence which not only go before a fall but produce it. There is nothing humbling in a view of the world which is evolutionary and no more. There is much that is crushing at one time, and much that inflates us at another. But there is nothing to teach our dying life that in dying behold we live!

XI

Again, the moral inquirer might ask whether it is the highest qualities that this struggle for existence draws out

when it is extended from the biological to the social area and made a principle of action. He might observe, with pain, that as the struggle grows older and more refined it is the commoner, not to say meaner, faculties that succeed. Courage succumbs to cunning, and nobility to astuteness. Democracy, as giving the freest scope to the struggle, does not tend to produce really great men. In many ways it is a moral failure. Its idols are not of the finest quality. Its potentates are of the earth earthy. Its affinities are with a plutocracy rather than with an aristocracy, either of taste, principle, genius, or faith. It is venal and gullible. It is not certain that in this struggle the better will prevail or the worthiest find place. The fittest are often the least worthy. And it is certain that the tendency at least is to supersede coarseness by cleverness, and simplicity by ignoble art.

For it is another drawback to evolution that it measures everything by present utility and treats nothing as an end in itself. It tends to exclude purpose and dwell in utility. Everything is viewed as it may contribute to some fashion of life conceived and not revealed. We cultivate an earthly other-worldliness. We aspire to a mere millennium at best. Some Utopia is our goal, not a present God. Nothing is of final and absolute value within life. This inevitably means a hardening and flattening of life, and it breeds that vehement restlessness of the hard, the tense, and the lean. We are not living, but always wanting to live. We live in gasps, dashes, and breathless moments. Our object is motion and not action; life is something we snatch at, and the iridescent bubble bursts as we seize. We live in a passion for the thrilling, the new, the next article. We crave for effects, sensation, all the monotonous kaleidoscope of the average man, and the dreary excitements of suburban mediocrity. Attention is monopolized not by life but by its lenitives, or by

the means or living, or of aggrandizing life. The absolute value of the individual disappears. The mere fact of the individual, it is true, is exaggerated. He is insulated as atom from all the rest of the world by the absence of any but a causal nexus. He is knit into no fabric of purpose or destiny, of sympathy or glory. His existence, his demands are extravagantly emphasized. But meantime his *worth* is diminished. He grows as a unit, but he fades as a world. He has place and force, but no interior, no meaning. He is a quantity without quality. He issues, in the most favoured cases, as the unmoral *Uebermensch*. The right of the weak vanishes, as does the pity for the weak. The infinite preciousness of the soul sinks. The value of life decays. With the soul's worth sinks the soul's freedom. Liberty is of small account. 'Empire' and 'firm government' engross men's thought and care, as ends and not means. Religious zeal and even unctious are found to co-exist with moral stupidity and vulgarity. These are fruits which we see only too palpably round us. And they are much due to the extent to which evolution has unconsciously become a theology, and has ceased to be a scientific hypothesis. It has spread, by an act of imaginative and non-moral faith, from being a theory of nature to be a solution of the world, from a fact of observation to be a philosophy, even a guide of life, nay, a form of religion. From a sectional formula it becomes the principle of the whole. From a method it has become a doctrine, and then with the stalwarts a dogma. Have the extravagant claims of a narrow theology ever been more grasping and withering than this in certain well-known cases? It is a case of hasty idealization in which imagination plays as much part as knowledge, and dogmatism ousts philosophy. A leap is made for an aesthetic and imposing completeness of system which is a work of art more than science. We are supplied at best

with an object of reverence rather than faith, and a source of enthusiasm rather than love, wherewith to replace the spiritual trusts and divine affections that have been thrown away on the plea of being outgrown.

XII

The doctrine of evolution is a record, or a theory, and not a standard. If it aim at perfection it carries no clue to what perfection is. It has no absolute cosmic end. If it speak of moral perfection, it works in a circle: it is begging as its definition the question to be solved. It has taken for granted that perfection is morality. It has not told us, and cannot tell us, what moral, as distinct from material or civilized, means. So the world has gone, it says; but it has no word of how the world should go, or shall. You cannot educe the conscience from a mere happy complex of natural tendency or aspiration. You cannot get a 'must' out of mere spontaneity. And if it point the individual to his own perfection and the culture of a beautiful and symmetrical character, it talks from a balloon, not from the experience of life. It substitutes an aesthetic for an ethic. It takes no account of the one-sidedness of all endowment, on the one hand; nor, on the other, does it realize the limitations placed on everybody who is not a Goethe by the necessities of their calling and its inevitable development of them in particular directions. It is not the balanced men that are the 'providential personalities'. A defect of faculty which spoils our balance, mental or temperamental, is not necessarily a moral defect.

And evolution is a theory of but a part of the universe. When it does not extinguish a soul, it leaves the soul without a law of duty, because it leaves it without a goal of endeavour. It gives us a formula for certain facts, but no precept or obligation for moral acts. It describes certain procedure, but

provides us with no test of life and no rule of judgement. Supposing that evolution has brought us to where we are, is there any real reason for pursuing the path of that progress? What means has the evolution of the past for convincing us that the same course should rule the future? Are the blessings of progress so unmixed and indubitable as to leave no room for doubt that it must be the formula of the future? How can evolution convince us of its claim to be the method of all time and of all existence? There was a time when the idea did not exist, as man's conscious principle at least. Antiquity was occupied with the idea of fixity, finality, and not movement, not progress. Is it certain, on evolutionary grounds alone, that we ought not to return to that idea of the *beati possidentes*, though now perhaps on a larger scale? The river moves to the sea by many a backward turn; how shall we know that the sea does not lie to the rear of our whole previous course, and that the present or proximate age may not be the point at which history turns to retrace its way, forsake the old direction, and seek its destination in an ocean as monotonous as the billows of mist and cloud where it rose? The mere evolution and variety of existence is a very empty and abstract creed. We must know that what is evolutionary is humane, is heart, conscience, and soul, something with inalienable feature and spiritual nature. And this is a certainty that evolution in itself, the mere formula of the physical and social past, cannot give us. It gives us an endless increase of complexity, but it does not give us in its midst the infinite simplicity, repose, and character, which are the staying power of life, the source of its mightiest ideals, and the seat of its permanent authority. It increases change, sacrifice, and pain. It sets history in a bloody flux. Some powerful thinkers have concluded that all progress in civilization means a decay of happiness, that sensi-

bility to pain grows keener, while the appetite for enjoyment becomes more intense. Civilization, they say, develops wants more quickly than it can supply them, and rends the soul, even to collapse, with desires which it can neither satisfy nor control. Development increases discontent and destroys illusions, till life goes out in dust. The theory of evolution is then incompatible with the culture of happiness or the communion of blessedness. It does not enhance for us that eternal and inmost power which is our refuge, recompense, and courage after the worst that the outward world can do to unsettle, pierce, foil, and crush us. That refuge and that goal, that finality of thought and power, that spring of heart and hope, is only to be found in the moral soul. And our authority can only be found in the great white throne where, in the soul, Christ sits at the right hand of God. The goal of a humane end is a different thing from the formless goal of an indefinite progress. The progress does not guarantee the humanity. And the Christian position is that this truly, universally, and finally humane end of action is to be found both as ideal, as impulse, and as authority only in the redemption by Jesus Christ; which divine rescue is the greatest source in the world of human progress.

XIII

I have admitted the large extent to which evolution must be recognized in the course of history, which has now been changed from a picture-book to a great and ordered treatise. Human history becomes the evolution of purpose. And since Christ, it appears as the evolution of the redeeming purpose of God. The revelation of this purpose was indeed the first influence that led to the construing of history as a vast historic evolution; and it remains the greatest of such in-

fluences. Christ, it was seen, could not be crucified again. When He entered history once for all it gave to all history the unity of His person and work. And a universal history presided over by one purpose must be an organic and an evolutionary history as soon as the catastrophic idea of the parousia in the New Testament had disappeared from practical expectation. All things were moving to the city of God shining upon the far horizon of expanding time. The antique idea vanished in which history was a series of cycles or periods repeating each other without a common aim or progress. All that had gone before had been working up to Christ, and all that followed was to work Him out. And today this is the theme to which the historical process moves. No doctrine of evolution is sound history, or other than sectional, which does not leave place for the redeeming purpose of God by intervention and revolution, and take its own place under it. No evolutionary order must exclude that moral teleology whose key is not in nature or society but in the kingdom of God. Natural process does not carry with it its own explanation or reveal its own goal. And the crucial point of this issue, the focus of the problem, is the historical appearance of Christ which publicists persist in refusing to assess. It is true that He came in a fullness of time. He was long prepared for, long prophesied by men who did not know all they said. But Christ was not simply the product of the past, He was not merely the flowering of His race, the fruitage of the soul, the genius of goodness. The spiritual life He represents is not another faculty but another self. It is a new order of life, a new kind of reality, and a new test of it (indeed, the final test, as being eternity in action). It is not a new energy in man, but man, the whole eternal man, as a new energy, with a new power to give scope and value to every partial and inferior energy which swells the forces of civiliza-

tion. Not only was His character a divine act, but His gospel was still more so. God not only produced Him, but acted finally through Him. It is thus that He gives us the fixed point at which we can make stand against the torrent of civilization, and bring our hurried evolution to its moral senses. We get foothold in the Eternal. For the spiritual life in Christ is not a mere feature or aspect of man taken by himself, but it is the whole man, as partaker and agent of a higher being than his own, and an eternal. Psychology will not explain Christ—as it cannot explain the inspiration of the prophets whose burden He was. He produced the prophets more than they produced Him. They came because He had to come. And we could say this even if we denied that His heavenly personality had been the agent of their inspiration. Again, He Himself grew. He grew even in the clearness of His grasp of the work given Him to do. It may be that the cross was not in His first purview. But when all such things have been admitted, He is not explained. He is not explained when we have made all due concessions to the historical treatment of His religious environment. The connexion between Him and His antecedents is not causal, but teleological. He was the inspiration of prophecy, as its end more even than as its immediate source. He was, as Hegel would say, the 'truth' of prophecy. He was not a product of the past so much as of the future. He was the reaction of all eternity upon time, an invasion of us by that Eternal of whom the future and the unseen is a part so much greater than all we see in the past. Always the best is yet to be; but also the best is the God who always is. Christ was the product of the final divine plan and the absolute divine purpose, the same yesterday, today, and for ever. He was more of a miracle than a product, the intervention of the Great Final Cause more than the Great First Cause, a miracle of grace

more than a miracle of power. He was not the expression of latent law, but the incarnation of unique Grace, utterly and for ever miraculous, however we read His birth, and however we treat His wonderful works.

XIV

And the like applies to the history of His Church. Much has been done, and much is to do, in the application to the Church's history of the evolutionary principle. Doctrine especially has been powerfully shown to be an evolution of the thought of faith, faith's progressive consciousness of itself. But let no such fascination blind us to the miraculous, the revolutionary, nature of the faith itself thus evolved. That is the product of no psychical process. We believe in the Holy Ghost. We believe in the essentially miraculous nature of the spiritual life. With and beneath all the historic evolution of the Church is the perpetual self-reformation of the gospel, the new creative action of the Spirit, His inspiring and guiding presence by the supernatural power of a real effectual communion with the miraculous Christ. It is the very nature of the Church to be supernatural, as it was the nature of the Church's indwelling Lord—supernatural in His soul and work, however we regard His actual entrance on the world. History, indeed, does not give destiny, but in Christ destiny is given in the midst of history, by the way of history, and under historic conditions. Revelation is an historic fact, but with a value much more than historic. It is the decisive, absolute incarnation in a soul of that eternity which each moment only represents—but does represent, if it is viewed scientifically, viewed in relation to the whole of reality.