

*Εἶναι γὰρ πάσης πλάνης καὶ ψευδοδοξίας αἴτιον, τὸ μὴ δύνασθαι διακρίνειν, πῆ τε ἀλλήλοις τὰ ὄντα κοινῶναι, καὶ πῆ διενήνοχεν. Εἰ δὲ μὴ κατὰ διωρισμένα τις τὸν λόγον ἐφοδεύει, λήσεται συγχέας τὰ τε κοινὰ καὶ τὰ ἴδια τοῦτου δὲ γινόμενον, εἰς ἀνοδίαν καὶ πλάνην ἐμπίπτειν ἀναγκαῖον.*

“For the cause of all error and false opinion, is inability to distinguish in what respect things are common, and in what respect they differ. For unless, in things that are distinct, one closely watch speech, he will inadvertently confound what is common and what is peculiar. And where this takes place, he must of necessity fall into pathless tracts and error.”

Clement of Alexandria.—“Stromata.” Book VI, chap. x.

## PART II.

### EVOLUTION AND DOGMA.

#### CHAPTER I.

##### MISCONCEPTIONS OF THEORY, ERRORS IN DOCTRINE AND MISTAKES IN TERMINOLOGY.

###### Evolution of the Evolution Theory.

IN the preceding pages we have considered what might be termed the evolution of the theory of Evolution. We traced its development from its earliest germs, as disclosed in the speculations of Hindu and Greek philosophy, and reviewed some of the evidence ordinarily adduced in its support, as well as the objections which are commonly urged against its acceptance. We also adverted to some of the many attempted explanations of Evolution, which have been proposed since the publication of Darwin's “Origin of Species,” and noted the wide divergence of views which obtains respecting some of the most fundamental elements of the theory. We learned that the great majority of contemporary scientists are believers in some theory of organic Evolution; that the controversy is no longer about the fact of Evolution—that being assumed, if not demonstrated—but rather regarding the factors which have been

operative in the onward march of animal and vegetable life, and the processes which have characterized organic development in its divers phases and epochs. We may not be prepared to go the same lengths as do Spencer, Huxley and Fiske, in the demands which they make for Evolution as the one controlling agency in the world of phenomena; we may refuse assent to the theories of Darwin, Mivart, Cope, Brooks, Weismann, Nägeli and others; but it seems difficult, if not impossible, to ignore the fact that some kind of Evolution has obtained in the formation of the material universe, and in the development of the divers forms of life with which our earth is peopled.

The question now is: How are we to envisage this process of Evolution, and what limits are we to assign to it? Is it as universal in its action as it is usually claimed to be, or, is the sphere of its activity restricted and confined within certain definite, fixed limits, beyond which it may not extend? And then, a far more important question comes to the fore, a question to which all that has hitherto been said is but a preamble—a long one, it is true, but still only a preamble—and that is, how is faith affected by Evolution, or, in other words, what is the attitude of Dogma towards Evolution?

#### Evolution and Darwinism.

To this last question various answers have been given, many of them contradictory, more of them absurd, few of them satisfactory or philosophical. All remember the storm that was raised against Darwinism on its first appearance, a few decades

ago. Darwinism, however, is not Evolution, as is so often imagined, but only one of the numerous attempts which have been made to explain the *modus operandi* of Evolution. Nevertheless, for a long time Darwinism and Evolution were regarded as synonymous—as in the popular mind they are still synonymous—even by those who should have been better informed. The objections which were advanced against Darwinism were urged against Evolution, and *vice versa*. And in most of the controversies relating to these topics there was a lamentable, often a ridiculous, ignorance of the teachings of the Church, and this, more than anything else, accounts for the *odium theologicum*, and the *odium scientificum*, which have been so conspicuous in religious and scientific literature during the past third of a century.

During the first few years after the publication of "The Origin of Species," there were but few, even among professed men of science, who did not condemn Darwinism as irreligious in tendency, if not distinctly atheistic in principle. "Materialistic" and "pantheistic," were, however, the epithets usually applied both to Evolution and the theory so patiently elaborated by Darwin. Prof. Louis Agassiz, as we have already seen, did not hesitate to denounce "the transmutation theory as a scientific mistake, untrue in its facts, unscientific in its method, and mischievous in its tendency." Certain others of Darwin's critics characterized his theory as "an acervation of endless conjectures," as an "utterly rotten fabric of guess and speculation," and reprobated his

"mode of dealing with nature" as "utterly dishonorable to natural science," and as contradicting "the revealed relation of the creation to its Creator."<sup>1</sup>

Darwinism was spoken of as "an attempt to dethrone God;" as "the only form of infidelity from which Christianity has anything to fear;" as doing "open violence to everything which the Creator Himself has told us in the Scriptures of the methods and results of His work." It was declared to be "a dishonoring view of nature;" "a jungle of fanciful assumption;" and those who accepted it were said to be "under the frenzied inspiration of the inhaler of mephitic gas." "If the Darwinian theory is true," averred another, "Genesis is a lie, the whole framework of the Book of Life falls to pieces, and the revelation of God to man, as we Christians know it, is a delusion and a snare."

Evolution naturally shared in the denunciations hurled against Darwinism. It was designated as "a philosophy of mud;" as "the boldest of all the philosophies which have sprung up in our world;" as "a flimsy framework of hypothesis, constructed upon imaginary or irrelevant facts, with a complete

<sup>1</sup> M. Flourens, perpetual secretary of the French Academy of Sciences, thus wrote of Darwin's "Origin of Species," shortly after its appearance:

"Enfin l'ouvrage de M. Darwin a paru. On ne peut qu'être frappé du talent de l'auteur; mais que d'idées obscures, que d'idées fausses! Quel jargon métaphysique jeté mal-à-propos dans l'histoire naturelle, qui tombe dans le galimatias dès qu'elle sort des idées claires, des idées justes. Quel langage prétentieux et vide! Quelles personifications puériles et surannées! O lucidité! O solidité de l'esprit français, que devenez-vous?"

departure from every established canon of scientific investigation." It was stigmatized as "flatly opposed to the fundamental doctrine of creation," and as discharging God "from the governing of the world." The distinguished Canadian geologist, Sir J. W. Dawson, in speaking of the subject, affirms that "the doctrine [of Evolution] as carried out to its logical consequences excludes creation and Theism. It may, however, be shown, that even in its more modified forms, and when held by men who maintain that they are not atheists, it is practically atheistic, because excluding the idea of plan and design, and resolving all things into the action of unintelligent forces."<sup>1</sup>

#### Evolution, Atheism and Nihilism.

To judge from the declarations of some of the most ardent champions of Evolution, it must be admitted that orthodoxy had reason to be at least suspicious, of the theory that was heralded forth with such pomp and circumstance. For it was announced with the loudest flourish of trumpets, not only that Evolution is a firmly established doctrine, about whose truth there can no longer be any doubt, but it was also boldly declared, by some of its most noted exponents, to be subversive of all religion and of all belief in a Deity. Materialists, atheists, and anarchists the world over, loudly proclaimed that there is no God, because, they would have it, science had demonstrated that there is no

<sup>1</sup> "Story of the Earth and Man," p. 348.

longer any *raison d'être* for such a Being. Evolution, they claimed, takes the place of creation, and eternal, self-existent matter and force exclude an omnipotent personal Creator. "God," we are told, "is the world, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable in its being and in its laws, but ever-varying in its correlations." A glance at the works of Hæckel, Vogt, Büchner, and others of this school, is sufficient to prove how radical and rabid are the views of these "advanced thinkers."

It is in accordance with the spirit of such teaching that "science," as Caro observes, "conducts God with honor to its frontiers, thanking Him for His provisional services." It is such science that declares that "faith in a personal and living God is the origin and fundamental cause of our miserable social condition;" and that advances such views as these: "The true road to liberty, to equality, and to happiness, is Atheism. No safety on earth, so long as man holds on by a thread to heaven. Let nothing henceforth shackle the spontaneity of the human mind. Let us teach man that there is no other God than *himself*; that *he* is the Alpha and Omega of all things, the superior being, and the most real reality."

It was in consequence of the circulation of such views among the masses, that Virchow and others declared Evolution responsible, not only for the attempts made by Hödel and Nobeling on the life of the emperor of Germany, but also for all the miseries and horrors of the Paris Commune. For the theory of Evolution, in its atheistic form, is one of

the cardinal tenets of nihilists, and their device is: "Neither God, nor master," *Ni Dieu, ni maître*. It is at the bottom of the philosophy of the Krapotkins and Réclus, who "see in the hive and the ant-hill the only fundamental rule of right and wrong, although bees destroy one class of their number and ants are as warlike as Zulus." And we all remember how Vaillant, the bomb-thrower in the Chamber of Deputies, boastfully posed as the logical executant of the ideas of the Darwins and the Spencers, whose teachings, he contended, he was but carrying out to their legitimate conclusions.<sup>1</sup>

#### Evolution and Faith.

But all evolutionists have not entertained, and do not entertain, the same opinions as those just mentioned. America's great botanist, Prof. Asa Gray, was not so minded. One of the earliest and most valiant defenders of Darwinism, as well as a professed Christian believer, he maintained that there is nothing in Evolution, or Darwinism, which is incompatible with Theism. In an interesting chapter on Evolution and Theology, in his "Darwiniana,"<sup>2</sup> he gives it as his opinion, arrived at after long consideration, that "Mr. Darwin has no atheistical intent, and that, as respects the test question of design in nature, his view may be made clear to the theological mind by likening it to that of the

<sup>1</sup> Ravachol, another dynamitard, of the same school as Vaillant, confessed on his way to the guillotine: "*Si j'avais cru en Dieu, je n'aurais fait ce que j'ai fait.*"

<sup>2</sup> P. 258.

'believer in general, but not in particular, Providence.'" So far, indeed, was Darwin from having any "atheistical intent," that when interrogated regarding certain of his religious views he replied: "In my most extreme fluctuations I have never been an atheist in the sense of denying the existence of God."<sup>1</sup> And the late Dr. McCosh declared, that he had "never been able to see that religion, and in particular that Scripture, in which our religion is embodied, is concerned with the absolute immutability of species."<sup>2</sup>

The Rev. Doctor Pohle thus expresses himself in an able and interesting article on Darwinism and Theism: "I feel bound to confess that I never could prevail upon myself to believe, that Darwinism contains nothing short of a hot-bed of infidelity and iniquity, brought into a system, and is, therefore, irreconcilable on principle with a sincere and pious belief in a First Cause and Designer of the world."<sup>3</sup>

The illustrious Dominican *conférencier*, Father Monsabré, records it as his opinion that the theory of Evolution, "far from compromising the orthodox belief in the creative action of God, reduces this action to a small number of transcendent acts, more in conformity with the unity of the Divine plan and the infinite wisdom of the Almighty, who knows how to employ secondary causes to attain his ends."<sup>4</sup> This is in keeping with the view of the dis-

<sup>1</sup> "Life and Letters of Charles Darwin," vol. I, p. 274.

<sup>2</sup> "The Religious Aspect of Evolution," p. 27.

<sup>3</sup> *American Ecclesiastical Review*, Sept. 1892; p. 163.

<sup>4</sup> "L'Évolution des Espèces Organiques, par le Père M. D. Leroy, O. P.," p. 4.

tinguished German Catholic writer, Doctor C. Güttler, who asserts that "Darwin has eliminated neither the concept of creation, nor that of design; that, on the contrary, he has ennobled both the one and the other. He does not remove teleology, but merely puts it farther back."<sup>1</sup>

Evolution and Science.

But there are yet others to be heard from. According to Huxley, who is an avowed agnostic, the "doctrine of Evolution is neither anti-theistic nor theistic. It simply has no more to do with Theism than the first book of Euclid has."<sup>2</sup> It will be observed that with Huxley, Evolution is neither a hypothesis nor a theory, but a doctrine. So is it with many others of its advocates. It is no longer something whose truth may be questioned, but something which has been established permanently on the solid foundation of facts. It has, we are assured, successfully withstood all the ordeals of observation and experiment, and is now to be counted among those acquisitions of science which admit of positive demonstration. Thus, a few years ago, in an address before the American Association for the Advancement

<sup>1</sup> "Lorenz Oken und sein Verhältniss zur modernen Entwicklungslehre," p. 129.

"Transformismus Darwinianus," declares the Rev. J. Coluoy, S. J., "dicendus est sensui Scripturæ *obvio* contradicere, non tamen *aperte* textui sacro adversari; tacet enim Scriptura *modum* quo terra varietatem illam specierum produxerit, an statim an decursu temporum, an cum specierum firmitate an cum relativa duntaxat. Sed et de sensu disputari posset quem Scriptura hic assignet nomini קַיִן," Min., "Specilegium Dogmatico-Biblicum," tom. I, p. 198.

<sup>2</sup> "Life and Letters of Darwin," vol. I, p. 556.

of Science, Prof. Marsh said: "I need offer no argument for Evolution, since to doubt Evolution is to doubt science, and science is only another name for truth." "The theory of Evolution," writes M. Ch. Martins, in the *Revue de Deux Mondes*, "links together all the questions of natural history, as the laws of Newton have connected all the movements of the heavenly bodies. This theory has all the characters of Newtonian laws." Prof. Joseph Le Conte, however, goes much further: "We are confident," he declares, "that Evolution is absolutely certain, not indeed Evolution as a special theory—Lamarckian, Darwinian, Spencerian—but Evolution as a law of derivation of forms from previous forms; Evolution as a law of continuity, as a universal law of becoming. In this sense it is not only certain, it is axiomatic."<sup>1</sup>

#### Ignorance of Terms.

But, wherefore, it may be asked, have we such diverse and conflicting opinions regarding the nature and tendency of Evolution? Why is it that some still persist in considering it a "flimsy hypothesis," while others as stoutly maintain that it is a firmly established doctrine? Why is it that some believe it to be neutral and indifferent, so far as faith is concerned, and others find in its tenets illustrations and corroborations of many of the truths of Dogma; that there are so many who see, or fancy they see in it, the negation of God, the destruction of religion, and the subversion of all order, social and political?

<sup>1</sup> "Evolution, and Its Relation to Religious Thought," p. 65.

These are questions which are frequently asked, and that press themselves upon even the most superficial reader. Are they insoluble? Must they be relegated forever to the domain of paradox and mystery, or is there even a partial explanation to be offered for such clashing opinions and such glaring contradictions? With all due deference to the judgment of those who see nothing good in Evolution, nothing which must not incontinently be condemned as false and iniquitous, I think that the enigma may be solved, and that it may be shown that the contradictions, as is usually the case in such matters, are due mostly, if not wholly, to an *ignoratio elenchi*, a misapprehension of terms, or to a deliberate intention of exploiting a pet theory at the expense of religion and Dogma, which are ostentatiously repudiated as based on superstition and falsehood.

The two words most frequently misunderstood and misemployed are "creation" and "nature." They are of constant occurrence in all scientific treatises, but no one who is not familiar with the writings of modern evolutionists has any conception of the extent to which these terms are misapplied. For this reason, therefore, it is well, before proceeding further, briefly to indicate the meaning which Catholic theology attaches to these much-abused words.

#### Materialism and Dualism.

From the earliest times, the dogma of creation has been a stumbling-block to certain students of