

## CHAPTER VI.

### THE SIMIAN ORIGIN OF MAN.

#### The Missing Link.

ANOTHER question in connection with Evolution which has attracted even greater attention than spontaneous generation, is that respecting the animal origin of man. If it be true that living has evolved from not-living matter; if it be admitted that the higher are genetically related to the lower forms of life, then, we are told, the only logical inference is that man is descended from some form of animal. With the majority of contemporary non-Catholic evolutionists, the conviction of the truth of man's animal origin is so strong, that it is accepted as a fact which no longer admits of doubt. According to their view, all that remains is to trace man's relationship with his dumb predecessor, to discover the "missing link" which connects him with the beasts of the field, and the controversy is closed forever.

Here again, as in the case of spontaneous generation, we must carefully discriminate between fact and theory; between positive evidence for man's simian genealogy, and the various assumptions which so many evolutionists are ever too ready to ask us to accept.

I can do no better than reproduce here the testimony of one who will not be accused of bias

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towards Theism; who, far from being opposed to the theory of man's descent from the ape, most strongly favors it, but who insists on having evidence of such connection before giving his assent. I refer to the celebrated anatomist and anthropologist, Dr. Rudolph Virchow, than whom no one is more competent to give an opinion on this much-vexed question.

In an address delivered before the twentieth general meeting of the German Anthropological Association, at Vienna, August, 1889, he gave a review of the progress of anthropology during the preceding two decades. In the course of his discourse he asserted, what he has more recently affirmed at Moscow and elsewhere, that there is as yet not a scintilla of evidence for the ape-origin of man, and that even the hope of discovering the missing link is something that does not find any warranty in the known facts of anthropology.

"At the time of our coming together twenty years ago," he says, "Darwinism had just made its first triumphal march through the world. My friend, Carl Vogt, with his usual vigor entered the contest, and through his personal advocacy secured for this theory a great adherence. At that time it was hoped that the theory of descent would conquer, not in the form promulgated by Darwin, but in that advanced by his followers; for we have to deal now not with Darwin but with Darwinians. No one doubted that the proof would be forthcoming, demonstrating that man descended from the monkey and that this descent from a monkey, or at least from some kind of an animal, would soon be established. This was



a challenge which was made and successfully defended in the first battle. Everybody knew all about it and was interested in it. Some spoke for it; others against it. It was considered the greatest question of anthropology.

"Let me remind you, however, at this point, that natural science, so long as it remains such, works only with real, existing objects. A hypothesis may be discussed, but its significance can only be established by producing actual proofs in its favor, either by experiments or direct observations. This, Darwinism has not succeeded in doing. In vain have its adherents sought for connecting links which should connect man with the monkey. Not a single one has been found. The so-called *pro-anthropos*, which is supposed to represent this connecting link, has not as yet appeared. No real scientist claims to have seen him. Hence the *pro-anthropos* is not at present an object of discussion for an anthropologist. Some may be able to see him in their dreams, but when awake they will not be able to say they have met him. Even the hope of a future discovery of this *pro-anthropos* is highly improbable; for we are not living in a dream, or in an ideal world, but in a real one."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See Smithsonian Report for 1889, pp. 563, et seq. In his address before the International Archaeological Congress at Moscow, in 1892, Prof. Virchow made the following declaration:

"C'est en vain qu'on cherche le chaînon, *the missing link*, qui aurait uni l'homme au singe ou à quelque autre espèce animale.

"Il existe une limite tranchée qui sépare l'homme de l'animal et qu'on n'a pu jusqu'ici effacer; c'est l'hérédité qui transmet aux enfants les facultés des parents. Nous n'avons jamais

But although there is no tangible evidence of the existence of the missing link, connecting man with the monkey or with lower forms of life, some people have, nevertheless, to use Virchow's ironical words, "seen him in their dreams." They have seen him in the gorilla and in the orang-outang, in the lemur and in the kangaroo. They have observed him in the Neanderthal man, and in the men of Naulette, Denise, of Canstadt and of Eguisheim. De Mortillet has scrutinized him in the imaginary being that fashioned the flint-flakes of Thenay, Puy-Courny and Portugal. And so sure is he that he has discovered our immediate ancestor, that he has dubbed him with the name, *anthropopithecus*, the man-ape, or the ape-man.<sup>1</sup> Darwin has described him as a hairy pithecoïd animal, arboreal in habits and a denizen of "some warm forest-clad land." According to Cope, man is

vu qu'un singe mette au monde un homme, ou que l'homme produise un singe. Tous les hommes à l'aspect simiesque ne sont que de produits pathologiques.

"A première vue, il est très facile de supposer qu'un crâne dolicocephale se transforme en un crâne brachycephale, et cependant personne n'a encore observé la transformation d'une race dolicocephale en une race brachycephale, et *vice versa*, ou celle d'une race nègre en une race aryenne.

"Ainsi, dans la question de l'homme, nous sommes repoussés sur toute la ligne. Toutes les recherches entreprises dans le but de trouver la continuité dans le développement progressif, ont été sans résultat; il n'existe pas de *pro-anthropos*; il n'existe pas d'homme-singe; le chaînon intermédiaire demeure un fantôme." *Revue Scientifique*, Nov. 5, 1892.

<sup>1</sup> In striking contrast with the fanciful theories of De Mortillet, are the clearly expressed views of De Quatrefages, one of the most eminent of modern anthropologists. Referring to the subject under consideration he asserts "Dolichocephalic or brachycephalic, large or small, orthognathous or prognathous, Quaternary man is always man in the full acceptance of the word." "The Human Species," p. 294.



but "a pentadactylic, plantigrade bunadont," and is genetically connected with the lemuroid, *phenacodus* and the *anaptomorphus homunculus*, both of which flourished in the early Tertiary Period. Hæckel goes further back and discerns in the skull-less, brainless and memberless amphioxus, an animal which we should regard with special veneration "as being of our own flesh and blood," and as being the only one of all extant animals which "can enable us to form an approximate conception of our earliest vertebrate ancestors."

All these imaginings, however, are, as Virchow truly observes, but dreams, hypotheses more or less extravagant, which have secured for their originators a certain amount of temporary notoriety, but which have no foundation whatsoever in any fact or legitimate induction of science.<sup>1</sup>

But if the fact of the animal origin of man has not been established, if there is no likelihood that it will be established, at least in the immediate future, even according to the testimony of those who are most desirous of seeing the pithecoïd ancestry of man demonstrated, what is to be said of the opinions of those who, nevertheless, maintain the animal origin of man, if not as a fact, at least as a tenable opinion? Is such an opinion compatible with Dogma, and can a consistent Catholic assent to any of the

<sup>1</sup> In his admirable study, "Apes and Man," St. George Mivart, a pronounced evolutionist, gives, in a few words, the verdict of comparative anatomy respecting the simian origin of man. He says, p. 172: "It is manifest that man, the apes and half-apes, cannot be arranged in a single ascending series of which man is the term and culmination."

theories now in vogue which claim that man is genetically related to the inferior animals? This is a question which is often put, and one which, far from being treated with derision, as is so often the case, should receive a serious and a deliberate answer.

We have seen that a belief in spontaneous generation, and in the development of the higher forms of animal and plant life from the lower forms, is quite compatible with both revelation and faith; but can this likewise be said of the development of man from a monkey or from any other inferior animal?

#### The Human Soul.

As to the soul of man we can at once emphatically declare, that it is in nowise evolved from the souls of animals, but is, on the contrary, and in the case of each individual, directly and immediately created by God Himself. I do not say that this is a *dogma* of faith, because the question has never been formally defined by the Church. It is, however, Catholic doctrine, and has been taught almost universally from the time of the apostles.

I say "almost universally," because other opinions regarding the origin of the soul have been held and defended even by some of the most eminent of the Church's Doctors and Fathers. Origen, for instance, misled by a conception of Plato, imagined that God, in the beginning, created a large number of spirits, all equally endowed with natural and supernatural gifts. Many of these spirits having sinned, God, to punish them, created the corporeal world and imprisoned them in various kinds of



bodies, according to the gravity of their transgressions. Those whose offences were slight were united with the heavenly bodies; those who transgressed most gravely were condemned to a union with cold and obscure bodies; whilst those whose sin was of medium gravity were compelled to seek an abode in human bodies. It is this third class of spirits that are known as human souls. This error found favor with the Manicheans and other heretics who taught the transmigration of souls, and is at bottom the same as the doctrine of modern spiritualists who teach the soul's reincarnation.

Another error regarding the origin of the soul, which has had numerous defenders, is that commonly known as Traducianism. There are, however, two kinds of Traducianism, which must be distinguished one from the other. These are corporeal Traducianism and spiritual Traducianism.

Corporeal Traducianism, St. Augustine tells us, was taught by Tertullian.<sup>1</sup> According to his view, the human soul is but a subtile, material substance, and the soul of the son, like the body, proceeds directly from the father by ordinary generation. Such teaching manifestly reduces the souls of men to the same level as the souls of brutes, and is tantamount to a denial of their spirituality and immortality. This error was adopted by the Apollinarists and Luciferians, and is essentially the same as that

<sup>1</sup> Cf. "De Anima," cap. XIX, where he asserts "hominis anima, velut surculus quidam ex matrice Adam in propaginem deducta, et genitalibus feminæ foveis commendata cum omni sua paratura, pullulabit tam intellectu quam et sensu."

which is held by materialists generally regarding the origin of the human soul.

Spiritual Traducianism, or Generationism, like corporeal Traducianism, teaches that the soul of the son proceeds from the soul of the father, not indeed through the agency of any corporeal action, but through a special superior and spiritual kind of procreation.<sup>1</sup>

This form of Traducianism was favorably considered by such a light of the Church as St. Augustine, and even in his "Retractationes" he hesitates between this opinion and that which declares, that God creates directly and immediately each and every individual soul. In his "De Libero Arbitrio," in his "De Anima et ejus Origine," and in a letter to St. Jerome, he speaks of no fewer than four theories regarding the soul, and declares himself unable to say which one should be accepted.<sup>2</sup>

Among the more prominent modern traducianists may be mentioned Leibnitz, Rosmini, and the Austrian priest, Froschammer. Their theories, it is true, varied considerably in detail, but fundamentally they were to all intents and purposes identical.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Incorporeum semen animæ, sua quadam occulta et invisibili via seorsum ex patre currat in matrem," as St. Augustine writes to Optatus, chap. IV.

<sup>2</sup> In his "De Libero Arbitrio" the saint writes: "Harum autem quatuor de anima sententiarum, utrumne de propagine veniant, an in singulis quibusque nascentibus novæ fiant, an in corpora nascentium jam alicubi existentes vel mittantur divinitus, vel sua sponte labantur, nullam temere affirmare oportebit." Lib. III, cap. XXI.

<sup>3</sup> A brief note will give the gist of the teachings of these three philosophers. In his "Essais de Théodicée," part. I, num. 91, the German philosopher thus expresses his belief, "Je croirais



This is, not, however, the place to discuss in detail the divers theories above referred to respecting the origin of the human soul, nor to refute the errors which these theories contain. It will suffice for our present purpose to state, that corporeal Traducianism, as well as the opinion of Origen, have been condemned as contrary to faith. As to spiritual Traducianism, as favored by Rosmini, Klee and Ubaghs, it will be sufficient to say that while it is not heresy, no one can now defend it without justly being regarded as temerarious.

I have said that Creationism has never been formally defined as a dogma of faith, but it can most probably be regarded as implicitly defined, and possessing all the conditions necessary to its being considered as one of those truths which constitute a part of revealed doctrine, and a portion, therefore, of the original deposit of the Christian faith. During the time of St. Augustine, owing to the Pelagian

que les ames qui seront un jour ames humaines, ont été dans les semences et dans les ancêtres jusqu'à Adam, et ont existé par conséquent, depuis le commencement des choses, toujours dans une manière de corps organisé." In his "Anthropologia," lib. IV, cap. v, Rosmini writes: "Unde in generatione individui speciei humanæ concurrunt duæ causæ simul operantes, homo generatione et Deus manifestatione suæ lucis; homo ponit animal, Deus creat animam intelligentem in eodem instanti quo animal humanum ponitur, creat animam eam illuminando splendore vultus sui, ipsi participando aliquid sui, ens ideale, quod est lumen creaturarum intelligentium." Froschammer, in his "Defensio Generationis Anime," attributes to parents the power of creating the souls of their children, for says he: "Generatione parentum homo secundum corpus et animam oritur vi potestatis creandi secundariæ, quæ naturæ humanæ immanens et in prima rerum origine a Deo collata est. . . . Itaque generatio est actus creationis naturæ humanæ, est creatio ex nihilo, per potentiam secundariam a Deo humanitati collatam."

heresy and the discussions which arose concerning the transmission of original sin, the dogmatic tradition respecting the origin of the soul was not so strongly affirmed as it was subsequently, and hence the vacillations of the great Bishop of Hippo, and others, between Creationism and Traducianism.<sup>1</sup> Since the time, however, of St. Thomas Aquinas and St. Bonaventure, the doctrine of Creationism has been regarded as practically beyond controversy, among all well-accredited theologians, and we can now look upon Melchior Cano as accurately expressing the mind of the Church, when he declares that it "without doubt pertains to faith, that the soul exists not through generation, but by creation."<sup>2</sup>

#### Creation of Man's Body.

So far, then, as the soul of man is concerned, it is manifest from the foregoing paragraphs that according to Catholic teaching, each individual soul is created directly and immediately by Almighty God. Man, however, is not a pure spirit, but a creature composed of a rational soul and a corruptible body. The question now arises: Was the body of the first man, the progenitor of our race, created directly and immediately by God, or was it created indirectly and through the operation of secondary

<sup>1</sup>"Tempore Augustini nondum erat per Ecclesiam declaratum, quod anima non esset ex traduce," writes the Angelic Doctor.

<sup>2</sup>"Nunc autem, cum post ea tempora theologorum fideliumque omnium firmatum sit, animam non per generationem, sed per creationem existere, sine dubio ad fidem illa quæstio pertinet." "De Loc. Theol.," lib. XII, cap. xiv.



causes? When the Bible tells us that "the Lord God formed man from the slime of the earth," are we to interpret these words in a rigorously literal sense, and to believe that the Creator actually fashioned Adam from the slime of the earth, as a potter would fashion an object from clay, or as an artist would produce the model of a statue from wax or plaster? Or, may we put a different interpretation on the text and regard man, *quoad corpus*, as indirectly created, as the last and highest term of a long series of evolutions which extend back to the first advent of life upon earth. In other words, is man, as to his body, the direct and special work of the Creator's hands, or is he the descendant of some animal, some anthropoid ape or some "missing link," of which naturalists as yet have discovered no trace?

This is one of the burning questions of science; one which has given to Darwinism most of its notoriety and importance, and one which is inseparably linked with every theory of organic Evolution by whomsoever advocated. We have seen that, as Catholics, we are at liberty to accept the theory of Evolution as to all the multifarious forms of animal and plant life, that it is, indeed, a probable, if not the most probable, theory, and that far from derogating from the wisdom and omnipotence of God, it affords us, on the contrary, a nobler conception of the Deity than does the traditional view of special creation. May we now extend the Evolution theory so as to embrace the body of man, and allow that it is no exception to the law which, we may

admit, has obtained in the Evolution of all other forms of terrestrial life? Or, is there anything in Scripture and in the dogmatic teaching of the Church, that will preclude such a view of the animal part of our first ancestor?

We have already learned that, as a matter of fact, no positive evidence has been adduced in support of the simian origin of man, and that there is little, if any, reason to believe that such evidence will be forthcoming. Since the publication of Darwin's "Origin of Species," naturalists have been exploring every portion of the globe for some trace of the missing link between man and the highest known mammal, a link which they said must exist somewhere, if the hypothesis of Evolution of man be true. Explorations have been conducted in the dark forests of equatorial Africa, in the dense jungles of southern Asia, in the slightly-frequented islands of every sea, in the caves and lake-dwellings of Europe, in the mounds and cliff-dwellings of America, in the gravel beds and stalactitic deposits of the Tertiary and Quaternary Periods, in the tombs and burial places of prehistoric man; but all to no purpose. Men have, indeed, fancied that they had discovered the missing link in the *dryopithecus*, in pygmies of Central Africa, in the Andaman Islanders, in the Ainos of Japan, in the *anthropopithecus erectus*, recently discovered by Dubois in the Pleistocene strata of Java, but if we may judge by those who are most competent to pronounce an opinion in the premises, the long-looked for link connecting man with the ape is as far away now, and its



existence as little probable, as it was thirty years ago, if indeed it is not less probable.

But granting that the search for the link connecting man with the ape has so far been futile; admitting, with Virchow, that "the future discovery of this pro-anthropos is highly improbable;" may we not, nevertheless, believe, as a matter of theory, that there has been such a link, and that, corporeally, man is genetically descended from some unknown species of ape or monkey? Analogy and scientific consistency, we are told, require us to admit that man's bodily frame has been subject to the same law of Evolution, if an Evolution there has been, as has obtained for the inferior animals. There is nothing in biological science that would necessarily exempt man's corporeal structure from the action of this law. Is there, then, anything in Dogma or sound metaphysics, which would make it impossible for us, *salva fide*, to hold a view which has found such favor with the great majority of contemporary evolutionists?

#### Mivart's Theory.

It was the distinguished biologist and philosopher, St. George Mivart, who first gave a categorical answer to these questions in his interesting little work, "The Genesis of Species," published nearly a quarter of a century ago. He contended that it is not "absolutely necessary to suppose that any action different in kind took place in the production of man's body, from that which took place in the production of the bodies of other animals, and of the

whole material universe."<sup>1</sup> To judge from his subsequent writings, time has but confirmed him in this view and afforded him opportunities of developing and corroborating his argument.

When Mivart's book first appeared it was severely criticised by the Catholic press, both of the Old and the New World, and its author was in many instances denounced as a downright heretic. Indeed, he was almost as roundly and as generally berated, by a certain class of theologians, as was Charles Darwin after the publication of his "Origin of Species." In England, France and Germany the denunciation of the daring biologist was particularly vehement, and strenuous efforts were made to have his work put on the Index. It was almost the universal opinion among theologians, that the proposition defended was heretical, and it was considered only a matter of a short time until it would be formally condemned. The book was forwarded to Rome, but, contrary to the expectations of all who were eagerly watching the course events would take, the book was not condemned. Neither was its author called upon to retract or modify the proposition which had been such an occasion of scandal. Far from censuring the learned scientist, the pope, Pius IX, made him a doctor of philosophy, and the doctor's hat was conferred on him by no less a personage than Cardinal Manning himself.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Page 282.

<sup>2</sup> "My 'Genesis of Species,'" writes Mivart, "was published in 1870, and therein I did not hesitate to promulgate the idea that Adam's body might have arisen from a non-human animal,



Since 1871, when Mivart's book was given to the world, a great change of sentiment has been effected among those who were at first so opposed to his opinions, and who imagined they discerned lurking in them not only rank heresy but also bald and unmitigated Materialism. Men have had time to examine dispassionately the suspected propositions, and to compare them with both the formal definitions of the Church and the teachings of the Fathers. The result of unimpassioned investigation and mature reflection has been, not indeed a vindication of the truth of the position of the English scientist, but a feeling that his theory may be tolerated, and that because it deals rather with a question of science than with one of theology. It has been shown that his propositions do not positively contravene any of the formal definitions of the Church, and that both St. Augustine and the Angelic Doctor, to mention no others, have laid down principles, which may be regarded as reconcilable with the thesis defended with so much ingenuity by the brilliant author of "The Genesis of Species."

Angelic Doctor on Creation of Adam.

The Angelic Doctor, in accord with the traditional teaching of the Fathers, holds that the body of the first man was immediately and directly formed by God Himself, but he admits the possibility of

the rational soul being subsequently infused. Great was the outcry against such a view, but I forwarded my little book to the Supreme Pontiff, and thereupon Pius IX benignantly granted me a doctor's hat, which the late Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster bestowed on me at a public function." *The Nineteenth Century*, Feb., 1893, p. 327.

angelic intervention in its formation and preparation for the reception of its informing principle, the rational soul.<sup>1</sup> According to this view God created absolutely, *ex nihilo*, the human soul, but delegated to His creatures, the angels, the formation, or at least the formation in part, *aliquod ministerium*, of man's body. It is manifest, however, that if God could have formed the body of Adam through the agency of angels, He could have communicated the same power to other agencies, if He had so willed. Instead, for instance, of delegating angels to form the body of the common father of mankind, He could, we may believe, have given to matter the power of evolving itself, under the action of the Divine administration, into all the forms of life which we now behold, including the body of man. The product of such an Evolution would not be a rational animal, as man is, but an irrational one; the highest and noblest representative of the brute creation, but, nevertheless, only a brute.

Such an irrational animal, the result of long years of development, and the product of the play, during untold æons, of evolutionary forces on lower forms of life, such a *substratum* it was, according to Mivart's theory, into which the Creator breathed the breath of life and man forthwith "became a living soul." According to this theory, then, God created

<sup>1</sup>"Quia igitur corpus humanum numquam formatum fuerat, cujus virtute per viam generationis aliud simile in specie formaretur, necesse fuit, quod primum corpus hominis immediate formaretur a Deo. . . . Potuit tamen fieri ut aliquod ministerium in formatione corporis primi hominis angeli exhiberent, sicut exhibebunt in ultima resurrectione, pulveres colligendo." "Sum. Theol.," pars 1<sup>ma</sup>, quæst. 91, art. 2.