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PRIMITIVE MAN AND REVELATION.*

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The battle-ground of opposition in the name of Science and Philosophy to the Holy Scriptures is ever changing, but in modern times most of it, in so far as Science is concerned, has centred on the early history of the earth and man as contained in Genesis. One portion of the controversy may be held to be disposed of. The geological record is so manifestly in accordance with the Mosaic history of creation that to all those (unfortunately as yet too few) who have an adequate knowledge of both stories, the anticipation of our modern knowledge of Astronomy, Physics, and Geology in the early chapters of Genesis is so marked as to constitute a positive proof of inspiration. Recent discoveries and hypotheses have given another turn to the discussion, and have directed it to questions relating to primitive man and the connection of the modern period with previous geological eras. Man, we are told, is a descendant of inferior animals. His primitive condition was one of half brutal barbarism. His rise to the actual position of humanity was through countless ages of progressive development, extending over periods vastly longer than those of Sacred history. These doctrines, supported by much plausible show of proof, are given forth by popular writers as ascertained results of scientific research, and we are asked to accept a new Genesis, shorn of all the higher spiritual features of that with which we are familiar, holding forth no idea of individual life and salvation, but only a dim prospect of some elevation of the race as the result of an indefinite struggle for existence in the future.

Many good men are naturally anxious as to whereto this may grow, and whether we are not on the brink of a decided breach between the Word of God and the study of the earliest human remains. My own belief is that the doctrines of the antiquity and descent of man, as held by the more extreme evolutionists, have attained to their maximum degree of importance, and that henceforth the more advanced speculators must retrace their steps toward the old beliefs, leaving, however, some most valuable facts in explanation of the early history of man. The subject is too extensive to allow of a full exposition of my reasons for this belief in the time to which this address must be limited, but I may refer to a few of the most recent facts in proof of my statement.

The physical characters of the known specimens of primitive men are unfavourable to the doctrine of evolution. Theories of derivation would lead us to regard the most degraded races of men as those nearest akin to the primitive stock; and the oldest remains of man should present decided approximation to his simian ancestors. But the fact is quite otherwise. With the exception of the celebrated Neanderthal skull, which stands alone, and is of altogether unascertained date, the skulls of the most ancient European men known to us, are comparable with those of existing races, and further,

* The value of Dr. Dawson's paper will be apparent to all who have watched the controversy, of which the Flint Implement discussion is one phase; it was read at the New York Conference last year, and he has now kindly placed a revised and corrected copy in my hands.—[Ed.]

the great stature and grand development of the limbs in those of the most ancient skeletons which are entire or nearly so, testify to a race of men more finely constituted physically than the majority of existing Europeans. The skull found by Schmerling in the Cave of Engis, associated with the bones of the mammoth and other extinct animals, is of good form and large capacity, and presents characters which, though recalling those of some European races, also resemble those of the native races of America. The bones described by Christy and Lartet from the Cave of Cro-Magnon, in France, represent a race of great stature, strength, and agility, and with a development of brain above the European average; but the lines of the face show a tendency to the Mongolian and American visage, and the skeletons present peculiarities in the bones of the limbs found also in American races, and indicating, probably, addiction to hunting and a migratory and active life. These Cro-Magnon people lived at an epoch when France was overgrown with dense forests, when the mammoth probably lingered in its higher districts, and when a large part of the food of its people was furnished by the reindeer. Still more remarkable, perhaps, is the fossil man, as he has been called, of Mentone, recently found in a cave in the South of France, buried under cavern accumulations which bespeak a great antiquity, and associated with bones of extinct mammalia and with rudely-fashioned implements of flint. It appears from the careful descriptions of Dr. Riviere that this man must have been six feet high and of vast muscular power, more especially in the legs, which present the same American peculiarities already referred to in the Cro-Magnon skeletons. The skull is of great capacity, the forehead full, and the face, though broad and Mongolian and large-boned, is not prognathous, and has a high facial angle. The perfect condition of the teeth, along with their being worn perfectly flat on the crowns, would imply a healthy and vigorous constitution and great longevity, with ample supplies of food, probably vegetable, while the fact that the left arm had been broken and the bone healed shows active and possibly warlike habits. Such a man, if he were to rise up again among us, might perhaps be a savage, but a noble savage, with all our capacity for culture, and presenting no more affinity to apes than we do.

If the question be asked, What precise relation do these primitive European men bear to anything in sacred history? we can only say that they all seem to indicate one race, and this allied to the old Turanian stock of Northern Asia, which has its outlying branches to this day both in America and Europe. If they are antediluvians, they show that the old Nephelim and Gibborim of the times before the flood were men of great physical as well as mental power, but not markedly distinct from modern races of men. If they are postdiluvians, then they reveal the qualities of the old Rephaim and Anakim of Palestine, who not improbably were of Turanian stock. In any case, they may well have points of historical contact with the Bible, if we were better informed as to their date and distribution.

I have referred to European facts only, but it is remarkable that in America the oldest race known to us is that of the ancient Alleghans and Toltecas and their allies, and that these, too, were men of large stature and great cranial development, and agricultural and semi-civilized, their actual position being not dissimilar from that attributed to the earliest cultivators of the soil in the times of Adam or Noah.

So far the facts bearing on the physical and mental condition of primitive man are not favourable to evolution, and are more in accordance with the theory of Divine Creation, and with the statements of the sacred record.

Recent facts with reference to primitive man show that his religious beliefs were similar to those referred to in Scripture. The whole of the long isolated tribes of America held to a primitive monotheism or belief in a Great Spirit, who was not only the creator and ruler of the heaven and the earth, but had

the control of countless inferior spirits—manitous or ministering angels. They also believed in an immortality and a judgment of all men beyond the grave. Hence arose in various forms the doctrine of guardian manitous, represented by tokens or teraphim, and watching over individuals, families, and places. Hence arose also the practice of burying with the dead the things he had valued in life, as likely, in the vague imaginings of the untaught mind, to be useful in the other world. Their traditions also embraced in various and crude forms the idea of a mediator or intercessor between God and man. No one who studies these beliefs of the American tribes can fail to recognize in them the remnants of the same primitive theology which we have in the patriarchal age of the Bible, and more or less in the religions of all ancient peoples of whom we have historical records. I may say here in passing that the tenacity with which the red man of America has clung in his barbarism and long isolation, to remnants of primitive truth, is an additional reason why we should strive to give him a purer gospel.

With reference to those prehistoric men, known to us only by their bones and implements, it may not be possible to discover their belief as to the unity of God; but we have distinct evidence on the other points. On the oldest bone implements—some of them made of the ivory of the now extinct mammoth—we find engraved the totems or manitou-marks of their owners, and in some cases scratches or punctures, indicating the offerings made or successes and deliverances experienced under their auspices. With regard to the belief in immortality, perhaps also in a resurrection, the Mentone man—whose burial is perhaps the oldest known to us—was interred with his fur robes and his hair dressed as in life, with his ornaments of shell wampum on his head and limbs, and with a little deposit of oxide of iron, wherewith to paint and decorate himself with his appropriate emblems. Nor is he alone in this matter. Similar provision for the dead appears at Cro-Magnon and the Cave of Bruniquel. Thus the earliest so-called Palæolithic men entertained beliefs in God and in immortality, perhaps the dim remains of primitive theism, perhaps the result of their perception of the invisible things of God in the works that He had made.

The antiquity of man as revealed by his prehistoric remains has probably been greatly exaggerated. A careful study of the latest edition of *The Antiquity of Man*, by Sir C. Lyell, in which that great geologist has summed up all the scattered evidence on this point, must leave this impression. The particular facts adduced are individually doubtful and susceptible of different interpretations, though collectively they present an imposing appearance, and many of them have been weakened by recent observations and discoveries. American analogies teach us, as I propose to show in papers soon to be published, that undue importance has been attached to the distinctions of Neolithic and Palæolithic ages. The physical changes which have taken place since the advent of man have been measured by standards inapplicable to them, and the extinct quadrupeds of the later post-Pliocene period may have lived nearer to our time than has been supposed. No human remains have been found in beds older than the close of the so-called Glacial period, and the earlier indications succeeding this period are not actual bones of men, but only rude implements, some of which are possibly, naturally-shaped stones, and others have had their antiquity exaggerated by misapprehension as to the mode of their occurrence.

It is, however, probable that the investigations now in progress will establish the fact that, in the earlier part of man's residence in the Old Continent, he was contemporary with many great quadrupeds now extinct, and that some of them, as well as some races of men, may have perished in a great continental subsidence which occurred early in the modern or human period. Both of these conclusions will, I think, bring themselves finally into harmony with the Biblical account of the antediluvian world, notwithstanding

the strenuous opposition of the large party opposed to any correlation of natural and spiritual truth.

Science may soon enable us to account for the divergence of mankind into permanent races in a way more satisfactory than heretofore. It has heretofore been a stumbling-block with many in the doctrine of the unity of man, that we find evidence of distinctness of race as great as at present in early Egyptian monuments. Modern ideas of derivation have swept away this as an infidel objection, but they have not failed to demand an enormous lapse of time for the early development of these races. A new law is, however, coming into view, which may render this unnecessary. It is that species, when first introduced, have an innate power of expansion, which enables them rapidly to extend themselves to the limits of their geographical range, and also to reach the limits of their divergence into races. These limits once reached, the races run on in parallel lines until they one by one run out and disappear. According to this law, the most aberrant races of men might be developed in a few centuries, after which divergence would cease, and the several lines of variation would remain permanent, at least so long as the conditions under which they originated remained. This new law, which was hinted at long ago by Hall, the Paleontologist of New York, is coming more distinctly into view, and will probably altogether remove one of the imagined necessities of a great antiquity of man. It may prove also to be applicable to language as well as to physical characters.

I have given above only a few examples out of many which may be adduced that the results of natural science as applied to man, however they may at first seem to conflict with the truth of God, will ultimately come into harmony with it.

One object in referring to these subjects here has been to invite the attention of Christians to certain errors in the treatment of such subjects, which I observe to be prevalent, and which I think every Christian man of science must sincerely deprecate.

The first is the hasty reception of broad popular statements of leading scientists as if they were received and proved conclusions. Nearly every new scientific fact and principle is at first only imperfectly understood and partially misapplied, and statements much too unguarded are often made by enthusiastic votaries of particular specialities.

The second is the resting content with the shallow assertion that the Bible need not be in harmony with Nature. The Bible is not a text-book of Science, nor are spiritual truths always directly reconcilable at first with natural truths. But the Bible, as a Book of God, cannot outrage Nature, and there are necessary harmonies between the natural and the spiritual. Weak admissions that the Bible accommodates itself to errors as to Nature may save the theologian the trouble of inquiry, and may be welcomed by men of science as setting them free from dogmatic trammels; but the earnest votary of science who is not a Christian despises those who make them, and regards their doctrine as worthless.

A third is the connection of ancient superstitions or modern ecclesiastical expediencies with God's Word. Science is in its nature hostile to superstition, and to hypocritical expediency * * * *

I believe that much of the antagonism of men of science is really excited by accessions which are not of God, but the growth of human device in darker ages of the world. I would not ask the Christian to accommodate his creed to any requirements of the science or literature of our day. That would be an equally fatal error. What I ask is that the scriptural truth may be presented unmixed with extraneous matters, not of the Bible, but of man.

Lastly, the Christian must not despise as unworthy of attention the current scientific doctrines on such subjects. If the missionary thinks it necessary to study the beliefs of the rudest tribes, that he may better teach

them the truth, surely we must not ignore the latest results of the intellectual work of the most cultivated men, which in any case is sure to influence the mind of the time, and which, properly treated, must yield positive results for the cause of God.

The scientific infidel is not always a wrong-doer to be put down. He is often a very darkened soul, struggling for light, and sometimes driven back from it by the follies and inconsistencies of Christians. The lamentable and growing separation between those who study God's works and those who believe in His word is not all of it the fault of the scientist. The theologian will be held responsible for so much of it as may result from his adulterating the water of life with unwholesome earthly elements.
