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# THE TRUTH

Series I.

SEPTEMBER, 1902

No. 11

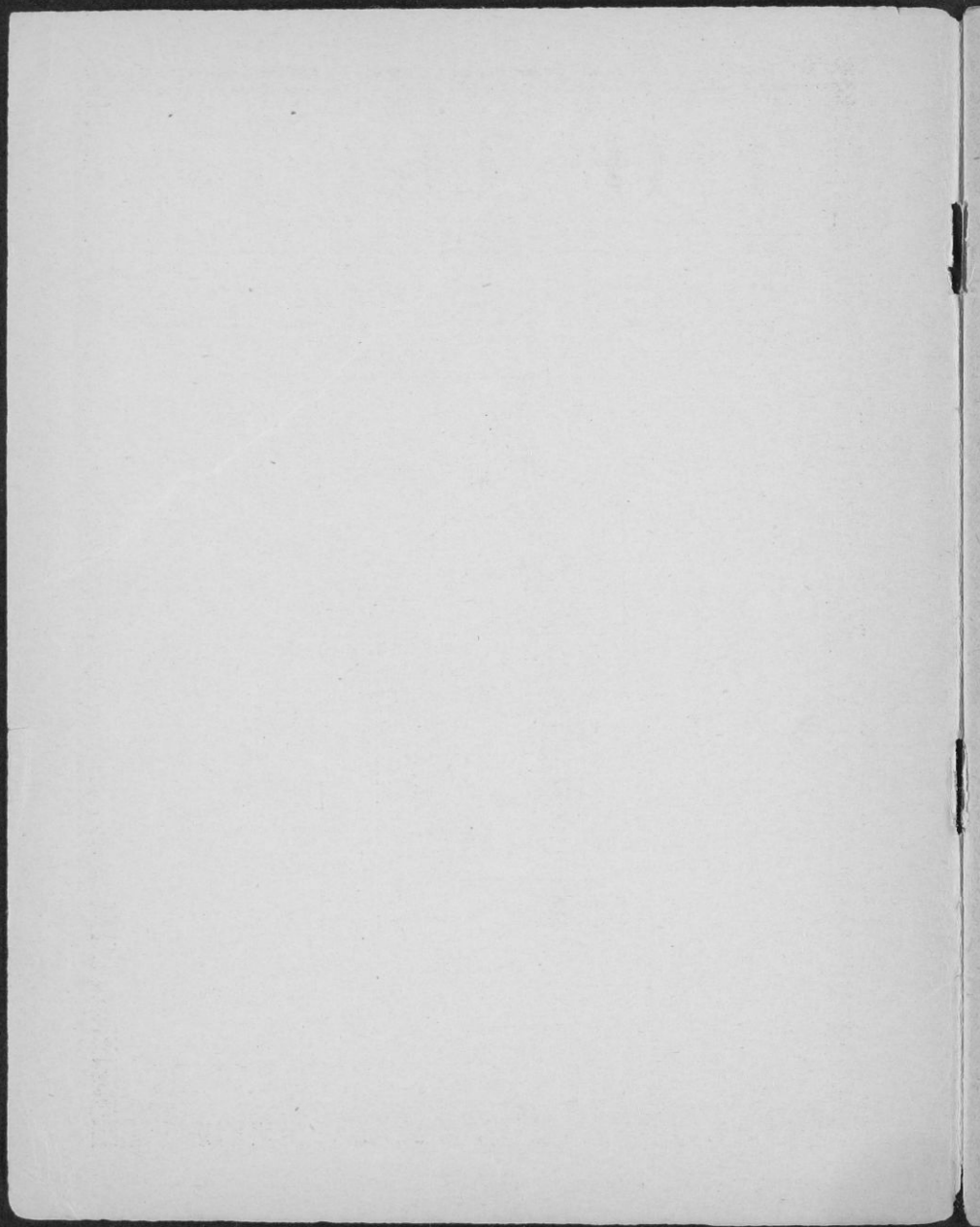
## GOD EXISTS

By R. F. CLARKE

*For first 2 issues  
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# THE TRUTH

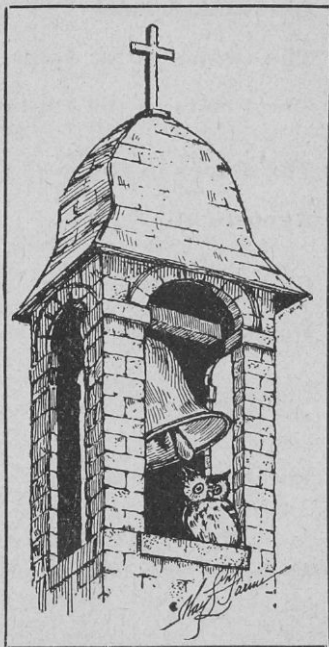
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# THE EXISTENCE OF GOD.

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[Two friends, an Agnostic and a Christian, are conversing calmly on the subject of belief in a personal God. We join them and overhear the gist of their talk.]

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"I am sure," said Bright, "I don't want to set my face against the existence of God. I want to believe; I wish I could believe. Put before me any reasonable proof and see if I am not willing to allow it its full force."

"I will do my best," said Saville. "But first I must remind you that there are two different processes by which the intellect becomes convinced of the existence of God. The one is that which develops itself instinctively in the minds of the young. The process by which they arrive at their belief is a complex one; a number of different influences combine to produce it. I am not now concerned with

the details of it, or the various elements which contribute to its formation. I am simply dealing with the fact. Somehow there grows up in the mind of children the notion of a Supreme Being external to themselves, on whom they and all else depend, in whom are united all possible perfections, and who has an absolute right to their obedience. In other words, there grows up within them the notion of a God, often very indistinct and confused, but still always sufficiently defined to render them personally responsible to Him. Even in the most degraded savage these influences are at work, and without any external instruction the light that shines in the heart of every one born into the world gives sufficient data to enable him to arrive at the idea of a Great Spirit who rewards and punishes. This is the first process by which the existence of God is arrived at. Do you allow of its reality?"

"Yes, I think I do, but it seems to me valueless as an argument for Theism, any more than any other childish notion which wider experience and more exact thought gradually sets aside."

#### VALUE OF INSTINCT. *v.l.*

"I do not use it as an argument, except indirectly; I do not say that it is a process of formal logic which takes place in the childish mind; but you

must allow that somehow or other it is connatural to children, and seems to come almost of itself, so much so that a denial of God on childish lips jars even on the Atheist, who as a rule has no wish that his children should imitate his example, at all events during their early years."

"That may be because the idea of God is useful as a moral lever to the unformed intelligence; but it does not follow that it has any reality corresponding to it, any more than the black man up the chimney who is to carry off the naughty child that disobeys the nurse."

"Yes, and the nurse is justly condemned by every prudent mother for the mischievous bugbear she invents, whereas all prudent men recognize the beneficial influence of the belief in a God on the budding intelligence and pliant will of those whose habits are yet unformed. But I do not press this argument. I merely notice it as I pass on to those which derive their value not from their moral usefulness or their power to persuade, but from their own inherent logical force. Again, I would remind you that though they are conclusive arguments, yet they do not force the intellect under pain of direct self-contradiction."

"My dear Saville, I am sure I don't want to be forced, I only want to be convinced."

"Very good; then I will begin with an argument which has often been the object of fierce attack

from modern scientists, and which I allow has been sometimes urged with imprudent exaggeration by well-meaning theologians. I mean the argument from Design. It may be stated as follows: The order existing in the world, the universal prevalence of Law, the adaptation of means to ends clearly prove the world to have been framed by a Being external to it, who is possessed of the highest wisdom and knowledge and power. Such a Being must therefore have existed before the world was made. It is this Being whom we call

#### DEFECTS IN CREATION. *l.c.*

"Forgive me for interrupting you at the outset," said Bright, "but do you really mean to say that the world bears witness to the highest wisdom on the part of the Being who framed it? Do you mean to tell me that the adaptability of means to ends is throughout the universe so perfect as to testify to an absolute perfection of the wisdom of its Author? If so, facts are all against you. Nothing in the world is perfect. Some sceptic has said that the human eye, which theologians are so fond of pointing to as an almighty piece of perfect mechanism, is but a clumsy bit of workmanship at best, and would be returned to any respectable mechanician as destitute of all sorts of appliances required for a



perfect instrument of sight, and I think this is true. Look, too, at all the waste there is in the world, all the failures—I mean in the material order—all the feeble contrivances which do not produce the effect for which they were designed, all the beings who come into existence only to perish, all the flowers which waste their sweetness on the air, all the living creatures unprovided with the means necessary to preserve their life, all the countless objects which by their countless imperfections seem to protest against being accounted the workmanship of a perfect being. I do not deny that there is evidence, irrefragable evidence in the world around us of which we should say, if we were speaking of the works of men, that it testifies to a designer of high intelligence. But this is very different from saying that it testifies to a designer of absolute and perfect wisdom and omnipotent power, all whose works must be perfect like Himself.”

“My dear Bright, your objection is a perfectly sound one if it be urged against the direct proof of the perfection of God from the perfection of the world around. The world is, I allow, imperfect in a thousand points. Nay, I go so far with you as to say that nothing in it is perfect. There is nothing which might not be improved upon if we look upon the immediate end for which it exists. A better organ of vision might be designed than the eye, and a better organ of hearing than the ear. Leib-

nitz' idea that the world is about as perfect as it can be is an absurdity. The world is full of imperfections in the physical order. There seems to us to be a great deal of waste and a great many failures. But this does not in the least make against my argument. Nay, it goes to prove it. For you allow that if there is a God, He is a God of infinite wisdom and power."

"Certainly, else He would not be God." "And that He has at His disposal unlimited perfections with which He can adorn His works?" "Of course He has." "And that whatever perfections He bestows there are always further perfections which He might bestow and does not?" "Yes, I suppose it must be so." "Well, then, what else is this but allowing that the works of a being of Infinite Perfection are necessarily imperfect?"

"Yes, that is quite true, but it does not altogether answer my objection. It accounts, I allow, for what I should call negative imperfections, but not for positive imperfections. I mean it does not account for the failure of many a being in the world to fulfill the end for which it was intended. The graceful flower is growing up to its perfection, when lo and behold the nipping frost or biting wind passes over it, and it dies untimely. The delicate mechanism of the eye finds no sufficient protection against external influences which destroy its sight. The fleetness of the young gazelle does not save it from

the lion or the wolf. The rain is often insufficient to nourish the thirsty plants or to supply the wants of the living creatures upon the earth. Do not all these failures point to a Designer of limited and imperfect capacity?"

THE DIVINE PLAN. *— l c*

"No, they do not," answered Saville; "they are not failures at all as regards the ultimate end for which all things exist. I allow that they seem to us to be failures, and are failures in respect of their proximate and immediate end, but this is very different from saying that they are failures with regard to some higher and more important end. When the poor sheep sees her plump little lambs torn from her ere they are full grown, would she not say that their existence was a failure? When she herself is robbed of her woolly fleece and stands shivering in the cold east wind, would she not say that the wool that was being carried off in the baskets had failed of the end for which it was made? She cannot understand the higher end that her lambs and her fleece are to subserve. So if there exists a God, removed as He is far more from us than we above the beasts of the field, can we expect to know all His designs and to see how those little incidents

which seem to us mistakes are really a perfect fulfillment of the Divine plan?"

"There you are falling back on mystery. I allow that if there is a God, all that you say is a solution of the difficulty; but I am urging my objection against your proof. I do not deny that those apparent imperfections may be really subordinate to some higher perfections that they subserve, but I insist that with these apparent failures before you, you cannot derive from the world around the proof of a perfect and all-wise and all-powerful Maker of it."

"Yes, Bright, you are quite right. I fully concede that the argument from design proves no more than this—that the world around us is the work of a Being of high intelligence and great power. I do not prove the fact of creation from it, nor do I prove the omnipotence of the Creator. All that I insist upon is that the marks of design are so unmistakable, that no intelligent man can believe that it could have come into being without an intelligent designer."

"I am inclined to think this," answered Bright, "but you know the answer of the modern scientists. They say that this argument is worth nothing, because it proceeds from a false analogy. The intelligent designer *from* whom you argue is a human being whose intelligence consists in adapting existing materials and existing laws to the end he has in

view, whereas the Designer *to* whom you argue is supposed to have no existing materials and no laws to bind Him."

"Yes, that is perfectly true. The wisdom of God consists in establishing the laws and erecting the materials which they govern. But surely this is a higher proof of wisdom than the mere employment of pre-existing laws and materials."

"No, they do not allow this. They say, that the materials were eternal force and eternal matter, and that the laws grew up themselves out of the various combinations of matter and force which presented themselves from time to time under new relations and fresh circumstances."

#### GROWTH OF LAWS. *l.c.*

"My dear Bright, you must be aware that here our good friends are talking nonsense. What do they mean by saying that new laws grew up? A new set of circumstances does not evolve a new law unless the law be somehow already present. The fact is that these worthy experimentalists under a cloud of words read in the law into the circumstances, and then point out in what a wonderful way the circumstances have developed the law."

"Yes, I allow that their arguments are very feeble in their process of law manufacture. But I do

not see why, in the course of billions of ages, the orderly arrangement of the world should not have presented itself by the mere law of fortuitous combinations, and have persisted by virtue of its superiority to all the combinations which had preceded it?"

"That is rather an old argument," answered Saville. "In the course of ages the letters of the alphabet tossed together at random would produce the *Iliad*—so the various atoms or molecules or forces would produce fair mother earth. But those who argue thus forget to tell us why this fortuitous combination should be persistent any more than any of those which preceded it."

"Why, because of its superiority, by the law of the survival of the fittest." "But why is it superior and more fit to endure?" "I imagine because of its symmetry and order." "Why, in saying this they are granting the whole Theist argument! They are admitting unconsciously that when those evolutions first began there was a primary law existing somewhere or other—the law of order, of symmetry, and of means to ends. Whence came this law if not from the intelligence of a Lawgiver? If not, why should this fortuitous combination, which was superior to all that preceded it, hold its own against some subsequent change which once more introduced hopeless and utter confusion. It is the old story, Mill and Bain and all the lot profess to argue

from experience, pure and simple, whereas when you come to analyze their experience it means experience *plus* such assumptions as under a show of fair seeming words they introduce secretly into their system. Is not this true?"

"I believe it is: but let us come back to your proof of a God. Unless I mistake you, you say that the world must be made by an Intelligent Being because the laws which govern it can only have sprung of Intelligence."

"Yes, and I say something more than this. I say that it may have been made by a being of Perfect Intelligence, or, to speak more correctly, of Infinite Wisdom, and that the apparent imperfections of the world are no obstacle to this."

"But all this does not prove the existence of God."

"No, it does not, and it is one of the exaggerations to which I alluded that men urge the argument from Design as in itself conclusive. It is conclusive so far as it proves the existence of an Intelligent Being outside the world who *arranged* it. But to prove that He *created* it, that He is self-caused, that He is infinite, you must turn to another line of argument."

"What is that?"

## THE FIRST CAUSE.

“There are several equally forcible. Out of them I will choose one which I think simple and telling. The argument I allude to proceeds as follows: Everywhere around us we perceive effects following from causes and causes producing effects. All the causes which fall within the range of our experience are at the same time both causes and effects. While they themselves produce some effect, they are also in their turn effects of some cause. They are called subordinate or dependent causes. There is a long series of them; each member of the series is the effect of the preceding member and the cause of the member which follows it. Every cause of which we have any knowledge has this double character. But our reason tells us that this string of causes and effects must be limited at both ends. We see the limit at one end in the ultimate effect present to us. There is no doubt about that, and we cannot help a conviction that there must be a limit, too, at the other end, and that we cannot go on from one cause to another *in infinitum*.”

“I do not quite see that. Why should there not be an infinite series stretching away into all eternity?”

“Even if there were an infinite series, the difficulty would not be solved, for as every member of



the series is a subordinate or dependent cause, the whole series would have the same character. A number of things, each of which is essentially dependent in its character, cannot become independent by their being added together." . . .

"Why not? A number of sticks, none of which can stand upright, can do so perfectly well when there is a bundle of them."

"I am afraid your comparison will not help you. Your sticks are not essentially prone to fall. If any of them is straight enough and thick enough, it will stand perfectly well by itself, whereas all causes known to us are essentially unable to produce themselves, and therefore are dependent on a cause outside of themselves for their production. In order that the series should stand by itself and be independent of anything outside of itself, one member of it at least must be perfectly independent and self-produced. Such a cause would not be a subordinate cause at all, and would therefore have no place in such a series of causes as we are speaking of."

"I think I see that, but what is your conclusion?"

"Why, that outside the long series of dependent subordinate causes which falls within the range of our experience (whether such a series could be infinite does not matter to our argument), outside of this, I say, there must be a cause which is neither subordinate nor dependent, but in every possible

aspect independent and the primary cause of all the rest—in other words, the First Cause, or God.”

“Are you not getting on a little too fast? If all the causes within the range of our experience are subordinate and dependent, and have, so far as we know, a beginning in time, experience is in contradiction with the existence of any independent and primary cause, or at all events declares our incapacity to assert it as a fact, inasmuch as it is altogether beyond our ken.”

“I am glad you reminded me of the objection. It is a good instance of the arguments of the so-called school of experience. My argument was this: ‘All causes which fall within the range of our experience are dependent. But it is a contradiction in terms to talk of dependent causes unless they have something to depend upon. Therefore, there must be in existence some cause on which all dependent causes depend and which itself depends on none.’ The experimentalists answer that in making this inference we are going beyond experience, and that it is therefore an unwarranted assumption. If this is so, all argument is at an end, for they, by thus limiting our knowledge to the facts of experience, are taking for granted the impossibility of all knowledge except of that which falls immediately within the range of sense. I think they would scarcely go so far as this; in fact, every conclusion they draw is a virtual denial of it.”

## IS THE FIRST CAUSE GOD? -l.c

"Yes, that is true; but now I have another difficulty. Why do you assume that this First Cause is identical with God? Why should it not be an impersonal, eternal force which has developed itself under various forms and phases? Modern physicists tell us that even matter is but another form of force. Why not all else?"

"I have been a little premature, I admit, in speaking of the First Cause as God. I therefore will merely assume as proved that all things are the product of some one First Cause, which is itself uncaused but is the cause of all the rest."

"Yes, you have proved that to my satisfaction."

"Now, I take you back to experience. Whenever we compare an effect with its cause, we find that the cause comprises actually or virtually all the perfections contained in the effect. This is not only a fact of universal experience, but it is a law based on the very nature of things. Every part of an effect as such is by the meaning of the word itself *effectual* or produced by its cause. To deny this is once more a contradiction in terms. I know that Mill and the Experimental school deny this. Your friend whom you quoted as an able critic of Theism has a passage I should like you to hear, and Mill another equally conclusive. The first of these passages is as follows:

“First we may notice the argument which is well and tersely presented by Locke, thus: ‘Whatsoever is first of all things must necessarily contain in it, and actually have, at least, all the perfections that can ever after exist; nor can it ever give to another any perfection that it hath not actually in itself, or at least in a higher degree; it necessarily follows that the first eternal being cannot be matter.’ Now, as this presentation is strictly formal, I shall meet it first with a formal reply, and this reply consists in a direct contradiction. It is simply untrue that ‘whatsoever is first of all things must necessarily contain in it, and actually have, at least all the perfections that can ever after exist;’ or that ‘it can never give to another any perfection that it hath not actually in itself.’ In a sense, no doubt, a cause contains all that is contained in its effects, the latter contents being potentially present in the former. But to say that a cause already contains actually all that its effects may afterwards so contain, is a statement which logic and common sense alike condemn as absurd.”

“Here, if you like, is a good instance of word-juggling. Notice he omits all notice of the all-important words, *or at least in a higher degree*. And then he throws dust in our eyes by the word *potentially*, which, if it means anything at all, means exactly the same as the words he overlooks. Then, having thus misrepresented his author, and jug-

gled in a long word in a vague and indeterminate sense, he knocks us down with a charge of making a statement which logic and common sense alike condemn as absurd.

### ALL PERFECTIONS IN GOD. -l.c

“Now, Locke is perfectly correct here, if he means by a higher degree a higher order in the universe. Every cause contains all the perfection of the effect, either actually or in this higher form. *Nemo dat quod non habet*. No cause can convey to its effect what it does not itself possess. But it may possess—often does possess—the perfection of the effect in some higher and nobler form. The efficient cause of the painting is the painter’s mind, working through his skilful hand; as present on the canvas it lacks many of the perfections of the idea which he has conceived and elaborated. Not only are the emotions, virtues, desires represented by him in the picture an imperfect realization of his conception, but the spiritual thought comes out in material form, the mental picture takes a tangible and perishable shape. The perfections of the picture are the effect contained in the ideal, not *actually* but *virtually*, and in a higher degree. It is in this way that the perfections of all subordinate causes, that is, of all things which exist, are contained in the First

Cause. There is not and cannot be anything worthy of our admiration in all things around us which is not present in Him who is the Cause of all. In God there are summed up all the glories, virtues, perfections, of all created things—only in an infinitely higher and more glorious form. He contains all these *virtually*, or to use the scholastic term, *eminenter*. How could the First Cause have imparted them to the effects of which He is the Cause, unless He possessed them Himself? He possesses all the varied beauties of the material universe, not under their gross material form, but under one which comprises all that is beautiful and attractive in them, and banishes all their shortcomings and imperfections and defects. Look at those clouds bathed in the golden light of the setting sun. Look at the many-dimpled ocean at our feet. Glorious and beautiful as they are, their beauty is but like a speck of dust compared with a noble mountain range, if it is placed side by side with the corresponding beauty of God."

"I don't quite see," remarked Bright, "how an Invisible, Immaterial Being can comprise these material beauties. Surely, His Beauty would differ in kind from the beauty that catches our eye or delights our ear."

"Yes, it does differ in kind, but at the same time comprises it all. His cannot, indeed, be a material beauty, but the materiality is a defect, not an excel-

lence. In God it is purged of that defect, and thus its beauty is raised to a higher order. Even now, material beings as we are, it is not the gross matter that we admire. What is it conveys to us the pleasure that we experience as we watch the scene before us? It is the rays of light reflected from cloud and sea and striking upon the eye. Surely, it is not difficult to conceive that the same effects will be produced in us when we are face to face with Him who is the Source of all Light and all Beauty, and that His Divine Beauty will not only infinitely surpass but also include all those beauties which are at present tied down to matter, as it were, by an iron chain."

— b.c

#### HOW CAUSE CONTAINS EFFECT.

"Yes, I think I see what you mean. But I still feel the force of the difficulty respecting cause and effect. I am not prepared to admit that a cause contains, either actually or virtually, all the perfection of its effect. Mill puts this very well, as it seems to me. He is discussing whether it is necessary that mind should be produced by mind. He says:

"Apart from experience, and arguing on what is called reason, that is, on supposed self-evidence, the notion seems to be, that no causes can give rise to products of a more precious or elevated kind than

themselves. But this is at variance with the known analogies of nature. How vastly nobler and more precious, for instance, are the higher vegetables and animals than the soil and manure out of which, and by the properties of which, they are raised up! The tendency of all recent speculation is towards the opinion that the development of inferior orders of existence into superior, the substitution of greater elaboration and higher organization for lower, is the general rule of nature. Whether it is or not, there are at least in nature a multitude of facts bearing that character, and this is sufficient for the argument."

"Now, is not this true? Look at the delicate and graceful form and rich glowing colours of a plant, which springs of an ugly little seed, nourished by certain external influences none of which has in it any of the glories of the living plant. Here are perfections in the effect which certainly are not to be found in any of the producing causes. There is, moreover, the well-established doctrine of the survival of the fittest and the law of natural selection, which here upset the old landmarks, and among them this time-honored doctrine of cause and effect."

"I am glad you have mentioned this objection of Mill. It is the very one which I was myself going to bring forward. I should not like to say that is a dishonest objection, but at all events it is a very



shallow one. That little seed comprises within itself all that is required to enable it to develop the varied and graceful forms of the living plant. I do not say that all is already there in miniature, or that the process is a purely material one. But if you take into account, not only the material elements, but also the principle of life contained in it, the immaterial element which enables the seed to assimilate the materials from without, to utilize them and transform them into its own substance, you have present in the growing plant nothing which did not already exist radically or germinally in the seed which produced it. And as to the colours, good Mr. Mill forgets that the sun pours down upon it the brilliancy of its light, and that without that light it will be a pale, sickly thing, born soon to perish. As to the noble animals which are raised up out of soil and manure, they exist only in Mr. Mill's prolific fancy!"

## EVOLUTION.

"You have said nothing about the development of higher forms from lower."

"No, and I cannot enter on so wide a question. I would only lay down three principles which I do not think any Evolutionist will deny: 1. That there is no trace whatever of any production of life out

of non-life in the world around. 2. That there is no certain proof of any new faculty having come into existence, but only of the perfecting of those which had previously a rudimentary existence. 3. That, although natural selection and the survival of the fittest will explain a great deal, it leaves unsoluble mysteries behind it. Now, Theism leaves no unsoluble mysteries behind it. It does not deny the law of evolution or the principles which regulate it, but it keeps it in bounds, and is on its guard against exaggeration or unwarrantable deductions from it. It lays down the principle that evolution can put into the created world nothing that was not there already, virtually waiting to be developed in due time. Now, I want to bring you back to my argument. It is this: All causes cannot be subordinate—there must be one to which all else subserve. You are with me so far.”

“Yes,” said Bright, slowly. “But I do not see how you have upset the theory that all things are a development of Primeval Force.”

“No, I have not, if you allow the meaning of Force to be the Power of a Personal God acting according to His goodwill. But if you mean by Force, blind, mechanical, material Force, such a theory is opposed to the law of cause and effect. You are at one with me in asserting that nothing exists in the effect which is not already contained in some way in the cause.”

"Yes, that seems to me a true principle."

"Well, if that is the case, God, the First Cause, must contain all the perfections of all His creatures—all their beauty, all their glory, all their magnificence, all their intelligence. He has created beings capable of holiness, and therefore He must be essentially and perfectly Holy; capable of happiness, and therefore He must dwell in a realm of unapproachable Happiness. He has created personal beings, and therefore He, too, must be a Personal Being."

"Are you not proceeding rather too fast? Why should I not go on to say that He has created material beings, and therefore He, too, must be material?" "Why, for the very simple reason that materiality is an imperfection." "But is not personality also something limited and imperfect? My experience of *persons* is of individuals whose nature is, according to your own showing, limited and dependent."

PERSONALITY. — eic

"Yes, but not in virtue of their personality. The limitation comes not from your being a person, but from your being a created person. Personality is defined as the subsistence of a rational nature as an individual being, and this definition is applicable to God as well as to man, only for rational we must

substitute intellectual. God is a person just as much as you are, only His Personality, like all His other attributes, belongs to a higher order than yours, from the mere fact that He is the First Cause of all, Himself uncaused; that on Him all things depend while He is independent of all; that the perfections immediately known to us are the perfections of created things, while the Perfections of God are the Perfections of the Creator. But the various objections that we have started have perhaps a little obscured the general drift of my argument, which is this: It is impossible that all the causes existing in the universe should be without exception subordinate and dependent causes; there must be, from the very nature of things, one which is primary and independent—the First Cause and Source of all the rest. As every cause contains either actually or virtually the perfections of the rest, this First Cause will contain the perfection of all subordinate causes, and will be supreme above them all.”

“You have something more to show, my dear Saville, before you prove this First Cause to be God. You must show that it is not only supreme, but infinite.”

“I can do that without much difficulty. I suppose you mean by an Infinite Being one that has no limits, real or possible?” “Of course I do.” “All limits must be outside the thing limited, must they not?” “Yes, they must.” “And without these ex-

ternal limits limitation is impossible?" "I suppose so." "Now, tell me, can the First Cause have any limits?" "Why not?"

"Why, for the very reason that it is the First Cause, and existed previously to all else. There was nothing outside of it to limit it. From all eternity God was without any possible limitation, and therefore Infinite."

"Saville, you seem to me to be running into a fallacy. I allow that before Creation the First Cause had no *actual* limits, but I deny that it had no *possible* limits. In point of fact, Creation brought into existence other things beside God, and these, as existing outside of Him, would be limits of His Infinity."

"I fancy I detect your friend Mr. Herbert Spencer there. Your objection is one of the supposed antinomies or contradictions in the First Cause which he brings forward in excuse of his professed agnosticism. It is a plausible objection, I allow, but based on ignorance, as all such objections are. It assumes what is utterly false, that things belonging to one order of being can form a limit to those belonging to a different order."

"I do not quite catch your meaning."

"I mean that the limited and the limiting must have some point of contact, some community of nature, else the one cannot act upon the other. If, when we sit down to dinner, I were to refuse to

eat or drink anything on the ground that I was already so full of the arguments we have been discussing, that there was no room for anything more, what should you think of the reason for my abstinence?"

"I should regard you as guilty of a rather feeble pleasantry."

"Very feeble, indeed; but scarcely more feeble than Mr. Herbert Spencer's plea that God cannot be Infinite because created things limit His Infinity. Just as arguments belong to the immaterial order, having no point of contact with the material food we eat, and therefore the one cannot form a limit to the other, in the same way the Creator belongs to a different order of being from the creatures He has made, and therefore the finite nature of creatures cannot form a limit to the Infinite nature of their Creator."

"That seems to me a satisfactory answer to the objection. If I understand you aright, His creatures can no more limit the Being of God than a crowd packed into a room would limit the number of angels who could be present there."

"You have given a capital illustration of what I mean. But if in the Infinite God are thus united all the perfections of His creatures, if all else is subordinate and dependent, if He is the First Cause, supreme above all, the Creator of all in virtue of whose fiat they first came into being, and in virtue

of whose sustaining power they continue to exist, there are certain necessary consequences which follow."

"What are these consequences?"

### OUR DEPENDENCE.

"Why, it follows that on this Supreme Being you depend not only for your existence, but for every breath you draw and every movement you make; that in virtue of your absolute dependence you owe Him absolute homage and obedience; that His will must be your law; that you acknowledge and rejoice in your dependence on Him; that as He is your first beginning so He is your last end; that the aim and object of your life is to praise Him, serve Him, and show Him reverence, and by so doing to become like to Him so far as the creature can be like to his Creator, to be perfect as your Father in Heaven is perfect. It follows, too, that all happiness is to be found in likeness to Him, and that the supreme felicity of which we are capable is to be made like to Him, for we shall see Him as He is."

"Yes," said Bright, thoughtfully, "I think all this follows logically from the existence of a First Cause. But I am surprised that I have heard nothing from you of the argument from the universal consent of

mankind, or from the moral law which conscience proclaims. I confess I have been strengthened in my scepticism by reading and hearing these put forward as conclusive arguments when they seemed to me nothing of the sort."

"I would not say that," answered Saville. "I believe these arguments are in themselves good, but as instruments of carrying conviction to an inquirer I confess I have not any great confidence in them. They admit of such easy and such plausible evasions. At the same time they are confirmatory arguments, and if only time permitted I think I could put them in a way that would make the metaphysical arguments I have urged come home to you more, and appeal to you with more force as concrete realities. I will try and do so at some future day."

"I hope you will," said Bright, "but I have had enough for the present. Just let me run over your two arguments, to make sure that I have caught your point. The first was that all the world around us gives clear evidence of its having been designed by an Intelligent Being. You do not bring forward the argument as proving the absolute perfection of His intelligence, inasmuch as the world is full of imperfections, which are, however, a necessary element even in the work of an absolutely Perfect Being, inasmuch as He always has room to add fresh perfections to His own work. But you



say that the universe at least manifests a high degree of wisdom and power in Him who established the laws which govern it, for those could not have sprung up of themselves, or be due to various combinations of force and matter occurring fortuitously, but must be the work of an Intelligent Being.

"Your second argument was that all causes known to us are at the same time causes and effects, but that this cannot be the case with every existing cause, else there would be no first member in the series. There must be a Primary Cause, and this Primary Cause contains in itself all the perfections of subordinate causes, including intellect, will, personality, and is therefore a Supreme, Intelligent, Personal God, who has created all things, and for whose pleasure they were and are created."

"Why, Bright," said Saville, "there is not much of the sceptic about the way you have put my arguments. But may I add one further consequence—I do not say of the fact, but of the possibility of the existence of a Supreme First Cause?" "Certainly."

"Why, simply this, that *if* the First Cause exists, He must be the source of all light, material and intellectual, and therefore, if you wish to see clearly, you will do well to ask of Him that you may see your way out of the perplexing mists of scepticism."

Bright laughed. "That is asking me to assume as a fact the very conclusion that you have been

trying to prove. Yes," he added, "indeed I will—in spite of my old rebellion and waywardness. God knows I desire to believe, and put my neck under the yoke before it is too late. You must not expect me to turn round all in a moment, but I will carefully consider all that you have said, and you at least will, I am sure, pray for me that I may see my way clearly to the light."



