

Chapter 2

The Beginning of Things Necessarily Miraculous

“THE PRESENT aim will be to rehearse the miraculous occurrences testified, with the object of illustrating the nature of them, and their necessity for accomplishing the end in view.” In carrying out the plan sketched in these words at the close of the last chapter, we might begin with the first chapter of Genesis. Here we have marvel enough of the miraculous order. “God said, ‘Let there be light,’ and there was light,” and so with other things: His word produced the result. It is not foreign to the subject to realise in passing that such must have been the beginning of things.

It is the scientific fashion to believe that things have “evolved” themselves. But this is a mere speculation. That is, it is a guess suggested by certain facts on the surface of things that look in that direction, but which are capable of another explanation. It is a guess inconsistent with other facts: a guess hazarded by one or two clever men, and taken up and re-echoed by thousands of mediocrities: a guess, however, rejected by men of equal scientific eminence to the originators of it, and refused by a large section of the scientific community. As a guess it is not like most scientific conclusions—demonstrated truth; it is a mere theory in the air that has rapidly become popular because of its tendency to liberate from the obligations associated with the Scriptures. It is a guess effectually demolished when the resurrection of Christ is established, for with the resurrection of Christ comes the proof of his divinity and the consequent establishment of Moses and the prophets endorsed by him.

But even evolution itself cannot dispense with such a beginning of things as is exhibited in the Mosaic narrative. For what is evolution? It is the gradual development of things from latent power. The power for a thing to be (or its “potentiality,” as scientific writers say) must exist before the thing itself can come. For example, the potentiality of any plant exists in its seed; the potentiality of ice exists in water; the potentiality of the various orders of living things exists in their respective seeds. Without this antecedent power to exist, they would not come. Now, carry the process of evolution backwards far enough, we are bound to come to a time when there was no earth, no sun, no stars; when the universe was an undeveloped potentiality. (The hypothesis of evolution involves this.) Very well, imagining ourselves in such a time, what should we have to look at, so to speak? In a sense, of course, there would be nothing to see, for nothing concrete existed to be seen; but the force or power now incorporate in the splendid frame of the universe must have existed. There must have been an all-space-filling ocean of invisible power or energy out of which heaven and earth came by “evolution.” Now, in this ocean there must have existed the potentiality of heaven and earth; for if the power of them to come did not exist there, how came they? Yes, says the evolutionist, their potentiality did exist; that is what we contend for. Very well, but look at this, how came the potentiality to stir itself? Select any time for the start you like (any number of millions of years), it was at rest before then? Yes. Now for how long a time was it at rest? It matters not if you say a year (which of course would be absurd) or a

million years (which would only be a little less absurd), or measureless time—time without beginning (which must have been the fact). Here is the problem you have to face: how came the potentiality to stir when it did stir, and why was it quiescent in the antecedent eternity? Must not something have come upon the scene at the moment of the stirring which was not before at work? Must not an impulse have begun to move which was not moving before? Must not the previously sleeping “force” have begun to vibrate with a formative stimulus not previously experienced? How came the antecedent “force,” however slowly, to incorporate itself in the beautiful forms of the universe, which had no previous existence? Something like the Mosaic start took place even on your hypothesis; a fiat, a stimulus, a volition not before active, gave things a start in the direction of their present form, even if they have been evolved in the Darwinian sense. The slowness does not make the process any easier to understand. If the Mosaic start in a quick way is inconceivable, so is the Darwinian; they are both equally out of the range of the human intellect. There are two great differences between them in favour of the Mosaic. First, the Darwinian hypothesis is a guess, while the Mosaic narrative is a matter of testimony commended to our faith by many powerful evidences; secondly, the Mosaic view gives us a cause adequate to the effect produced, namely, an all-wise, all-powerful Intelligence, possessing in himself the focalised power of the universe, and capable of imparting that initiative to creative power that is required for the explanation of what we see, while the Darwinian theory gives us eternal force without will or wisdom to do a thing which required both in their supremest form.

God has made heaven and earth by His power. This is the simple proposition to which the profoundest of philosophy leads. Nothing deeper or at the same time more satisfactory, as an account of the beginning of things, will ever be written than the words of [Genesis 1](#): “And God said, ‘Let there be light,’ and there was light.” The child and the philosopher meet here on common ground. The only difference is, that the philosopher has been out on the field of exploration to which the child’s curiosity will by-and-by lead him, and has returned with the discovery that things in general are larger and more inscrutable than the child has any idea of.

The only practical difficulty in the way of accepting the Mosaic narrative is the assumption that it teaches that the work of creation began 6,000 years ago. Close study will show that there is no real foundation for this assumption, and that all that the Bible teaches us is that the earth was put in order and the Adamic race appeared on the scene 6,000 years ago. The pre-existence of the earth and of races upon it, is not only compatible with the Mosaic narrative, but is recognised in the opening chapter. Before the six days’ work began, it shows us, chap. 1, verse [2](#), “darkness on the face of the deep;” the earth without order, and void. The very first incident described is the movement of the spirit of God “on the face of the waters” (same verse), from which it follows the earth and the waters existed before the re-organising work of 6,000 years ago began. How long it had existed in that state there is nothing to show; but there is room for any length of time the evidences of geology may claim. Consequently, there is none of the practical and insuperable difficulty which most people suppose to be in the way of receiving the Mosaic account of creation. The earth had a history before the six days’ work, as further evident from the words addressed to Adam: “Be fruitful and multiply, and *replenish* the earth.” The nature of that history is not disclosed to us in the Scriptures, and geology cannot tell us. Both the Bible and geology show it was a history marked by convulsion and ending in catastrophe. The Bible shows us the recovery from that state by the six days’ work ending in the appearance of Adam on the scene. The Bible and geology are sufficiently in agreement to make the acceptance of both possible, but even if there were hopeless divergence between them, we must remember

that geology is too incomplete and changeable a science (changeable, that is, in the inferences that men draw from the facts observed; changeable also in the aspect in which facts present themselves to various students and at different times), to come into competition with the attested authority of the Scriptures of Moses, the prophets and the apostles.

The beginning of miracle upon earth, then, we doubtless contemplate in the formation of Adam from the dust and the attendant works of repair and re-order. There is no difficulty in the reception of this miracle that is not equally experienced in any theory in which human intellect may prefer to take refuge. This is the conclusion reached by the line of reflection we have roughly sketched. Whatever the nature of the beginning, and to however remote a point it may be deferred, it is enveloped in mystery inscrutable. Here is the fact, that man—wonderful man with all his weakness and baseness—is here; and there is the other fact that go far enough back, and he was not upon earth. Between these two points of time his appearance takes place; and whenever and however that appearance took place, a marvel occurred for which no explanation can be found in the antecedent eternity, apart from the existence of eternal wisdom and power. This is adapting the argument to modern habits of thought. By whatever name people may please to designate the cause, that cause, combining wisdom and power, is God and nothing else. That we cannot understand God, is no obstacle. Whatever we may call it, we are in the presence of that which cannot be understood. Who can understand eternity? Who can understand “force”? To put away God and give us “force” is not relieving us of any difficulty; it is not giving us anything we can understand better. It is rather increasing our difficulty; for if passive, mindless force can produce a creation like that which we see around us, bearing the stamp of matchless wisdom, both in its general form and its minutest arrangements, then is force a more wonderful God than the God of Israel; for the God of Israel declares to us He has made all these things by His power and His wisdom, while scientific Atheism would give us a God possessed of neither—a blind God—a sleeping God—a God that slept for ages and then woke up without a cause and proceeded to “evolve” at a rate of progress suggestive of wonderful sloth in the first case.

Adam must have appeared at once, and at the time Moses informs us he appeared; for if he appeared by slow development from a lower life, or by spontaneous development in a complete form, the fact would demand three things that experience does not realise. 1. There ought to be no lower forms of life now: for if creation “evolves” by mechanical impulse without discernment, discrimination, or design, her “developments” should march abreast, and there ought to be no monkeys, no dogs, no “primordial germs”—nothing but men. 2. If to this it is objected that surrounding circumstances exercise a “natural selection,” and prevent development in certain cases, then, as there are all sorts of circumstances, there ought to be all sorts of stages of development, and we ought to have some tribes of men with tails, and some with wings, and some with horns, and some with amphibious capabilities like the hippopotamus, and certainly we ought to have speaking animals; instead of which man is man everywhere: there is an unbridgable gap between the lowest human specimen and the highest of the animals in the bulk and distribution and position of the brain. 3. If man appeared on the scene by spontaneous development (most absurd of all the wild suggestions to which atheistic predisposition drives the cleverest of men) he ought to do so now, because nature, on this hypothesis, is unchanged and unchangeable, and ought to present us every now and then with a man whose mother should be the rock or the peat bog, and his father the sun’s rays or some other form of the wonderful “force.”

Finally, the extent of human population upon earth at the present time, considered with reference to known rates of increase, after allowing for the devastations of war and the

depopulations of barbarism, and the flood, involves the conclusion that human generation began at the time represented by Moses. What if there are remains of pre-historic and pre-Adamic races? The conclusion is not weakened. Such facts would only go to show that in the pre-Adamic history, for which there is room in the Mosaic narrative, the prior races, with which we have no connection, played a part, of which all memory and trace have been obliterated by the catastrophe (probably judicial) which plunged the earth into the chaos in which the Mosaic narrative opens for it: after the analogy of the Noachic flood which we shall have to consider by and by.

“The Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul.” This is the all-sufficient explanation of the marvel of man’s advent upon earth—the initial miracle of human his-story. God fashioned him direct from the dust. This is enough. It suits and harmonises all the facts of the case, which cannot be said of any scientific hypothesis. It has the merit of being unburdened by the pretentious jargon of science, and of setting forth all that we can or need to know of the process by which the foundation of the human race was laid in the production of the first man. It has the further merit of being an authoritative piece of information and not speculation, for it comes to, us with the stamp of Christ’s endorsement, and Christ’s case is too far beyond the region of uncertainty to be debatable: In telling us that God made man it clears the resurrection of all the difficulty which some men have professed to see in it; for obviously, God who produced the wonderful mechanism of human life at the beginning, can easily reproduce it when the occasion calls.

The creation of man is not precisely of the order of miracle with which these chapters propose to deal. It is the miracles wrought towards man after his establishment on earth that chiefly claim our attention. Still, it is not without advantage to begin at the very beginning, and fix attention upon himself. We have looked upon him in the moment of his appearance on the scene. We look at him in the first stage of his career. “The Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden, and there he put the man whom he had formed ... to dress it and keep it” ([Gen. 2:8–15](#)). This was before the appearance of Eve. The planting of the garden would be in the nature of a miracle. A clearing or enclosure would be made, and stocked with fruits and flowers, in a readier and easier manner than by shovel and pick. The power that made a man from the same material would find no difficulty in this. It was not a work of superfluity. It was necessary that Adam being alone in the land should have a prepared and suitable place to be in, and what more suitable than an enclosed collection of “every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food” (verse [9](#)). Such surroundings were adapted to the tastes and necessities of a newly-made and solitary man. But another miracle was necessary to complete his situation. “The Lord God said, It is not good that the man should be alone: I will make him an help meet for him ... and the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept; and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof; and the rib, which the Lord God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man.” God could have made woman direct from the ground as he made Adam: but he preferred to extract a portion of Adam’s own framework and use that as a foundation from which to build the woman. We should speak presumptuously if we were to say there were no reasons for this preference. We may not know them all, but it is easy to see that the fact of Eve’s origin (coming to Adam’s knowledge as it did—see verse [23](#)) would give her a place in his sympathy which another origin might have failed to give her: and it is not unnatural to suppose that the employment of a portion of his own being as the basis of his helpmeet would establish an electrical affinity between them, which would tend to the unity which God designed should exist between man and woman as “one-flesh.” There was also an

allegory established which would have been wanting had Eve been independently produced. Paul tells us that Adam was “a figure of him (Christ) who was to come” ([Rom. 5:14](#)). Now, it was in the purpose of God to develop “the bride, the Lamb’s wife” from Christ himself by death (the antitype of Adam’s deep sleep). Consequently, it was fitting that the relation of Eve’s origin to Adam should exhibit the analogy corresponding to this.

Naturalists, of course, scout the whole affair as a fable. But they are precluded from doing so in true reason. They must first get rid of Christ, which is impossible, and of the Bible, which is another impossibility; and of Palestine and the Jews—still further impossibilities. It does not follow that because the lower animals are male and female by common derivation, which does not distinguish one from the other, that therefore it is so in the human species. Though man, in his present condition, is like the animals in nature, and lies down on equal terms with them in the dust, he is far higher than they in his origin, type, and destiny. He is in the image of the Elohim. He is the similitude of the divine form among the myriads of living forms that people the earth: among them, he is the only reflex of the moral and intellectual attributes of the Creator. He is the head of the animal world. Therefore he is not to be classed as a matter of course with the lower creatures as to the laws that govern his appearance upon earth. A dignity and a meaning attach to his origin and his history totally apart from that of the animals. Naturalists reason from below up to man: in truth, the process must be reversed. Man has come down from the position in which he started: and the nature of that position and the reason of that descent cannot be understood without contemplating him from the divine point of view. Reproduction was a foreseen necessity in the purpose of God with the human species: therefore the male and female relation was introduced, but it was done in an interesting, dignified, and sympathetic way. It was an adaptation of a common animal peculiarity to a special and noble creature formed for the glory of God. Woman was formed from a rib extracted from man, and thus was achieved the first miracle after man’s appearance in Creation.