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A table of contents for *The Churchman* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_churchman_os.php

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The Image of God in Man.

BY THE REV. D. G. WHITLEY.

“And God said, Let Us make man in Our image, after Our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in His Own image, in the image of God created He him; male and female created He them.”—
GEN. i. 26, 27.

THESE sublime words set forth the creation of man, and suggest the following leading thoughts :

1. The time of his appearing.
2. The solemnity of his creation.
3. The dignity of his nature.
4. The grandeur of his dominion.¹

Avoiding controversy purposely as much as possible, we shall show that all these points are in perfect harmony with recent scientific discoveries.

As to the time of man's appearing, on this point everyone is agreed that the harmony is complete. Holy Scripture affirms that man was created last of all the creatures, and that with his

¹ I borrow these headings from “The Pulpit Commentary.”

advent on the earth the work of creation closed. Every scientist knows perfectly well that physical science teaches the same thing. The testimony of geology is most emphatic. Science demonstrates that man was the last creature that appeared on the earth, and this conclusion is not in the least invalidated by speculations concerning the antiquity of man. Extreme evolutionists are now discouraging views on the high antiquity of man, because, according to them, they run counter to the principles of evolution! These writers, therefore, would have us believe that the question must be decided, not by the facts of the case, but by the requirements of their theories! We may leave them alone. On the first point, therefore—the time of man's appearing—the harmony between Holy Scripture and modern science is admitted by all to be complete.

The solemnity of his creation is equally clear in the record. Relating to the earlier and lower forms, the simple words are used, "Let the earth bring forth" and "Let the waters bring forth"; but when man is to appear on the earth there is a pause—a break is made in the course of creation, and new phrases altogether are used, as if to signify that an entirely new creature is to be introduced: "And God said, Let Us make man in Our image, after Our likeness." Critical questions need not engage our attention. We need not stop to discuss whether we have here an indication of the Trinity, or an address to an angelic council, or merely the plural of majesty. It suffices to know that the creation of man, ushered in in different language, indicates that, whatever connections may exist between man and the lower animals, there is, when the totality of man's nature is considered, a complete gap between him and the lower animals. Canon Driver, in his Commentary on Genesis, speaking of the way in which the creation of man is described, says: "The creation of man is introduced with solemnity. It is the result of a special deliberation on the part of God, and man is a special expression of the Divine nature."

Now, as to this gap between man and the animals nearest to him, it is not to be sought chiefly in his bodily organization

and constitution. This, indeed, is great, for we may well dwell on his large brain, his upright stature, and the beautiful symmetry of his skull and limbs. The immensity of this gap is admitted by those who hold the theory of evolution. Professor Huxley himself, when speaking of the gap between man and the highest apes, calls it "a great gulf," "a vast intellectual chasm," and "the immeasurable and practically infinite"¹ divergence between man and the highest brutes. The width of this gap, then, is, according to evolutionists, "immeasurable" and "practically infinite." Let us bear in mind also that in the earliest men this gap was equally great. They had brains as large as we have, a stature as upright as ours, and the same perfect symmetry in limbs and skull as we possess. From time to time discoveries have been announced declaring that intermediate links between man and the lower animals have been found. All of these, however, have utterly broken down when examined, and the failure has been complete. The latest—reported from the gravels in the bed of a river in Java—has collapsed in the most ludicrous fashion, although some materialistic writers still continue to talk about it. In the present condition of nature, no intermediate link exists between man and the lower animals, and in the past changes in organic nature on the earth not a single such intermediate link can be discovered. Between man and the other members of creation the gap is not bridged by any creature either in the past or in the present.

We have next to consider the dignity of man's nature, and this is set forth in the phrase, three times repeated, "the image of God." This is the most important phrase in the account of man's creation, and it is used of no creature except man. We have to consider what it means. It is plain that the "image of God" does not refer to anything corporeal, for the "image of God" is the special possession of man, whereas his bodily organization has many resemblances to those animals which are nearest to him. It is plain that "the image of God" consists

¹ "Man's Place in Nature," pp. 95, 96.

of that reason and of those moral faculties which man alone possesses. It may be set forth under three phases: (1) Resemblance; (2) communion; (3) manifestation.

That this is the true idea of "the image of God" is plain from the way in which the phrase is applied to our Blessed Lord, who is, according to St. Paul, "the image of the invisible God." He held communion with His Father, He was "the brightness of His glory," and He manifested the Father's nature and will throughout the whole course of His Incarnation. Man resembles God in the character of his reason, in its inventive faculty, and in its progressive nature. He also resembles God in his moral character and in that development of his works of which I shall speak shortly. However degraded man may be, there is in him the power of improvement, both mental and moral. It is possible to take the lowest races, such as the Australians, the Bushmen, the Veddahs, and the Mincopies, and to show that they all have been intellectually and morally trained in all the ways of modern life, until they are fully equal to civilized man. The Fuegians were held to be the most degraded savages in the world, and Mr. Darwin himself thought that all the missionaries in the world could not do these horrible savages any good. When, however, by the noble efforts of the South American Missionary Society, the Fuegians were taught the arts and sciences of civilized life, and also the truths of the Gospel, Mr. Darwin most candidly admitted his mistake, and declared that he considered that the progress of the Fuegians was the most wonderful thing in the world—more wonderful even than the progress of Japan.

The very earliest men revealed to us by science, who lived in Western Europe with the elephant, the rhinoceros, and the hippopotamus, show also, by the remains that have been discovered of them, that they possessed those reasoning and inventive faculties which display the possession of "the image of God." They had large brains and a fine stature. They were most ingenious in forming beautiful weapons of bone. They wove cloth, and dressed themselves not only in carefully

prepared skins, but also in cloth garments. They had a high admiration for natural beauty, for they carved representations of plants and animals with the greatest skill and faithfulness. They adorned themselves with beads, paint, and trinkets ; they domesticated the dog, the horse, and the reindeer ; and they reverently buried their dead in the hope of immortality. Such were the very earliest men that science has revealed to us, and they show that in those far-distant ages the earliest men were possessors of the image of God.

Of course, it is easy here and there in these ancient deposits to pick out skulls which seem to indicate coarse and brutal natures ; but it has lately been shown that these same skulls have also striking resemblances to those belonging to many cultured and intellectual individuals, so any attempt to show that their possessors were necessarily brutal and degraded is utterly worthless.

It has often been discussed as to whether man entirely lost the image of God by the Fall, and the idea that the image was destroyed by Adam's transgression seems, according to some, to be supported by the statement that Adam "begat a son in his own likeness, after his image."¹ This, however, does not seem to be the case, so far as the totality of the image is concerned. Man is represented in Holy Scripture as still retaining the image of God. Thus, we read : "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed ; for in the image of God made He man"²; and also St. James, speaking of the tongue, says : "Therewith bless we God, even the Father ; and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God."³ The image of God, therefore, still exists in man. It has lost its original purity and innocence, and has been marred and defiled by sin. But the moral and rational nature of man remains, for the image of God retains these characteristics in every man.

On this point—the dignity of man's nature ; *i.e.*, his possession of the image of God, a fact the truth of which is attested by

¹ Gen. v. 3, 4.

² Gen. ix. 6.

³ James iii. 9.

the character of even the lowest savages now living, and by the condition of the earliest men that geology has revealed to us—we have again perfect harmony between Holy Scripture and science.

The last great truth set forth by the Scripture account of the creation of man is the grandeur of his dominion. He was to rule over the beast of the field, the bird of the air, and the fish of the sea. Man is a co-worker with God, and his rule extends over both organic and inorganic nature. He drains the land, removes the forests, and reclaims the country from the sea. He domesticates the animals, covers whole regions with corn, fruit, and vegetables. He explores the earth for minerals, and makes the powers of nature do his bidding. In this way he changes the face of the world, and even alters climates. In the moral world also, as well as the physical, he works with God. He reclaims the fallen. He proclaims salvation to the heathen, and he is a co-worker with God in bringing back the fulness of the image of God to fallen man. Even the lowest savages show this gift of dominion over nature. They domesticate the animals, ensnare and attack wild beasts, and often till the ground, and through the instruction of civilized man they can be brought to exercise this dominion in a higher degree. The earliest men revealed to us by geology exercised this dominion also. They domesticated the horse and the dog. The reindeer also seems to have been brought by them to draw their tiny vehicles and to serve as a beast of burden. From the form also of many of their stone implements, it seems probable that the earliest men were tillers of the field, making the earth yield her increase for their needs. On this last point, therefore, there is a complete harmony between Holy Scripture and scientific discovery.

We have now shown that on all the four great points set forth in the Scripture account of man's creation the harmony between the Bible and science is complete. Statements about the impossibility of reconciling science with Holy Scripture are incorrect, and are only made by those whose knowledge of science is too imperfect to merit serious attention.