

The very last, published in February of this year, gives two Coptic documents containing perhaps the oldest existing Christian wills. They were found at Thebes and date from Cent. vii. They illustrate the Church organization of that day. *Philologus*, vol. xliii., the *Revue Archéologique* for 1884, vol. ii. p. 101, and the *Denkschriften* of the Vienna Academy, vol. xxxiii. may also be profitably consulted.

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"NATURAL LAW IN THE SPIRITUAL WORLD."

A DEFENCE.

SECOND PAPER.

III. THE most important law which Mr. Drummond brings forward in illustration of his general principle is what he calls the Law of Biogenesis—that life can only come from life: *omne vivum ex vivo*. In Science this doctrine is according to Huxley "victorious along the whole line" in opposition to the theory of Spontaneous Generation; or, to use Mr. Drummond's impressive language, "the passage from the mineral world to the plant or animal world is hermetically sealed on the mineral side; only by the bending down into this dead world of some living form can the dead atoms be gifted with the properties of vitality; without this preliminary contact with Life they remain fixed in the inorganic sphere for ever." In precisely the same way, he holds, the natural man is dead to spiritual things, and can only be made alive by the condescending touch of Him who said, "I am the life."

"The passage from the Natural World to the Spiritual World is hermetically sealed on the natural side. No organic change, no modification of environment, no mental energy, no moral effort, no evolution of character, no progress of civilisation can endow any single human

soul with the attribute of Spiritual Life. The spiritual world is guarded from the world next in order beneath it by a law of biogenesis—'except a man be born again . . . except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.'

He was quite aware that in taking up this position he was likely to incur opposition and ridicule. For much more than two hundred years, he says, there has been raging a controversy in the religious world on this subject:—

"Taking its stand upon the initial statement of the Author of the Spiritual Life, one small school, in the face of derision and opposition, has persistently maintained the doctrine of Biogenesis. Another, larger, and with greater pretension to philosophic form, has defended Spontaneous Generation. . . . A thousand modern pulpits every seventh day are preaching the doctrine of Spontaneous Generation: and much of the most serious and cultured writing of the day devotes itself to earnest preaching of this impossible doctrine."

He has not failed to meet with opposition in these quarters or in others where it might have been less expected. Some of the opponents have been too impatient to be fair, and have failed to give a correct statement of his position. He has often been represented as maintaining that the natural man is as remote from the life spiritual as a stone.¹ No doubt he has stated his position

¹ Since the above was written, it has been illustrated almost *ad absurdum* in an article in the *Contemporary Review* for March, by Mr. R. A. Watson. According to this reviewer, Mr. Drummond teaches that "man is a mineral"; that "to the carnal man, God, in the most literal sense, is not"; that "each individual is as dead as a stone"; that "the natural man has no soul"; that he is "as incapable of righteousness as a flint." What a bold, bad man Mr. Drummond must be! Having set up this hideous scarecrow, Mr. Watson throws himself upon it and tears it limb from limb with noble rage.

The whole tone of Mr. Watson's review is a curious illustration of the suggestion made in the beginning of this article, that a certain amount of popular success acts on some critics like a red flag, betraying them unawares into an asperity which is scarcely distinguishable from personal animosity. Take a single instance. "The Free Church," says Mr. Watson, "in a hurry of rapture for what it seems to regard as a new revelation, has made the prophet a professor." The facts are these: Mr. Drummond was Lecturer on Natural Science in Glasgow Free Church College for years before his book appeared; a generous friend of the College offered to confer on the chair a handsome en-

very strongly, but he has never made any such wild assertion. What he has said is that the natural man is downed, provided it were raised to professorial rank; this also took place before the publication of "Natural Law in the Spiritual World"; there was strong opposition in the General Assembly to the acceptance of this offer, though Mr. Drummond's book had come out in the meantime, and it was well known that, if the professorship should be constituted, he would receive the appointment; no doubt his reputation helped to overcome the opposition, and, when the chair was raised to the professional status, its occupant was raised in it. This commonplace procedure is transmuted in Mr. Watson's fancy into a hurry of rapture to make the prophet a professor. This is the level of accuracy on which the article commences, and it keeps on it throughout.

But Mr. Drummond is scarcely the fool that anyone would be who taught such nonsense. The natural man, according to his teaching, has a soul, he has an intellect furnished with intelligence, he has a moral nature with solemn responsibilities, he has a certain knowledge of God and susceptibility to His influence. Only there belongs to his nature a possibility of rising, through the grace of Christ, to a knowledge and enjoyment of God so peculiar that to attain it is to pass from death unto life; and the heaviest responsibility of his life is the choice whether this possibility shall be realised or not. Strange to say, however, those in whom it is realised, have always insisted on attributing their happy state not to their own choice, but to the sovereign grace of God; and Calvinism is merely the scientific equivalent of this pious conviction. Mr. Drummond has not indeed cleared up the mystery which hangs over the co-existence of man's responsibility and God's grace; but, as the greatest minds of eighteen Christian centuries have confessed their inability to explain it, perhaps he ought not to be severely blamed.

Mr. Watson has made one valuable criticism. Speaking of Biogenesis, he has pointed out that, if the process in the spiritual world corresponded in all respects with that in the natural world, the spiritual man would be able to communicate spiritual life to natural men. But, instead of calmly investigating how far this affects Mr. Drummond's theory, he is so eager in the work of destruction, that he loses the thread in a moment, and goes off into error after error. "Biogenesis and reproduction are one," he says. Are they? He has merely the form of the word to support him; scientific usage is completely against him; in spite of its positive structure, "biogenesis" is in the universal language of science a purely negative idea; it does not mean that living organisms have the power of reproduction, but only that no living organism is produced without antecedent life. Again, he says that, according to Mr. Drummond, "the Spirit of God lifts the dead matter of the natural man into spiritual life. Now this may be quite true, but it is not biogenesis; on the contrary, it is creationism." Mr. Watson makes it appear to be creationism by omitting an essential moment in the process, on which Mr. Drummond constantly insists—the union of the soul, in its new birth, with Christ. The Son of God became man to be the Head of a new humanity, and those who enter His kingdom are made partakers of His life. This is the antecedent life, of the same kind, from which the life of the regenerate is derived. They are, indeed, new-created, but a creation which takes place in this way is something very different from what is meant in science by "creationism."

as remote from the life spiritual as a stone is from the life natural. This is a very different statement. Of course by a stone he means inorganic matter in any form. But inorganic matter is by no means destitute of susceptibilities and affinities for the life natural. When the seed is cast into the spring furrow, the winnowed earth is waiting to be caught up into contact with the living organism. When a biologist has the component elements of protoplasm arranged beneath the lens of his microscope, they seem so near to the verge of life that he feels as if the slightest touch might make them start from death to life, and looks down at their continued deadness with the same wondering impatience with which a Christian minister may sometimes watch a man who is on the very threshold of the spiritual kingdom but fails to enter it.

Mr. Drummond has no need, therefore, to ignore any of the susceptibilities or affinities of the natural man for spiritual influence. In fact he has described them with unrivalled truth and pathos :

"The protoplasm in man has a something in addition to its instincts or its habits. It has a capacity for God. In this capacity for God lies its receptivity; it is the very protoplasm that was necessary. The chamber is not only ready to receive the new life, but the Guest is expected, and, till He comes, is missed. Till then the soul longs and yearns, wastes and pines, waving its tentacles piteously in the empty air, feeling after God, if so be that it may find Him. It is now agreed as a mere question of anthropology that the universal language of the human soul has always been, 'I perish with hunger.' This is what fits it for Christ. There is a grandeur in this cry from the depths which makes its very unhappiness sublime."

It may be argued that these susceptibilities to Divine impressions, and the responsibility for exercising them which their existence involves, are inconsistent with the absolute sovereignty in regeneration which Mr. Drummond's theory ascribes to God. But this objection tells not only against Mr. Drummond's theology, but against all theology ;

for there are a score of points at which theology has to confess its inability to reconcile its own statements as to the Divine efficiency on the one hand and human responsibility on the other. In the passage of the soul from the life natural to the life spiritual there is a double process; at all events to our thinking it presents two sides. There is the work of God, which is called Regeneration, and there is the experience of man, which is called Conversion. It has always been difficult to do justice at the same time to both of these sides of the same thing. When the act of God is described, it seems to make the different stages of the human experience unnecessary; and when the process in the soul is described, it is impossible to say precisely where the Divine act comes in. This is not a difficulty which is peculiar to any school of theology; it is only a phase of the larger difficulty of reconciling the exercise of the Divine will with the freedom of the human will. The charges of fatalism and of destroying human responsibility which have been brought against Mr. Drummond are merely the stock arguments made against every form of theology which recognises a real Divine intervention at any stage of salvation.¹

¹ Mr. Drummond's ignoring of Baptismal Regeneration has been adverted to by Mr. J. J. Murphy in the review already quoted, and is of course an error in the eyes of the very able critic who has reviewed the book in the *Church Quarterly Review*. Mr. Murphy seems to think that Mr. Drummond's views are adverse to the hopes of those who die in infancy. But one of the many objections of Calvinists to the doctrine of Baptismal Regeneration is the view it seems to compel its adherents to take of the fate of the great majority of this class—the unbaptized. Mr. Murphy uses "regeneration" and "conversion" as synonymous terms; but they ought to be carefully distinguished; and the more regeneration, rather than conversion, is dwelt upon as the one thing needful, the more easy is it to maintain a rational faith in the salvation of all who die in infancy; for regeneration is an act of the Divine efficiency, which is always available, whereas conversion is the work of human efficiency, which does not seem to be available in the case of infants. It may be remarked in passing, that the salvation of all who die in infancy is an article of the faith of the most representative Calvinists at the present day.

To trained theologians, acquainted with the history of thought, there ought to be no difficulty in determining what is the precise question at issue here, or what are the possible alternatives; for the subject has been clarified by innumerable controversies between opposing schools of thought. The question is not whether the spiritual has its basis in the natural; for in the chapter on Conformity to Type—one of the best in the volume, though it has been little noticed—Mr. Drummond has explained with the utmost clearness how the natural powers reappear in the higher sphere as the organs of the spiritual life; and in this sense all men may be said to have a natural capacity for the higher life. Nor is the question whether the natural man is susceptible of impressions from the spiritual region. But it is, whether in the natural man there is the germ or potency of spiritual life, requiring only favourable conditions and the influence of God's ordinary providence in the means of grace to develop it into actuality; or whether in every case of regeneration there is an original intervention of God to give the soul a deadlift over a chasm which it has not in itself the power to surmount. In maintaining the latter of these alternatives, Mr. Drummond has behind him the whole weight of theological testimony, Augustinian, Reformation, Puritan, and Evangelical, for this has been the cardinal doctrine of every one of these systems.

It is the doctrine of the Bible, which with almost endless iteration speaks of the natural man as dead, and of the change to the life of the spirit as a new birth, a new creation, a passing from death unto life. It may be said that these are metaphors. But the Bible is not a book which uses extreme language to describe moderate experiences; its spiritual facts are not less but more real than their natural symbols; and when it thus piles up the strongest metaphors expressive of change, the most probable infer-

ence is that the change is greater, and not less, than any of the changes from which the figurative language is borrowed. It would have been easy to use metaphors of a different kind. Those who believe that regeneration is not a change of this radical nature are wont to describe it as the germination of a latent seed which only requires to be loosened from its integuments in order to grow freely, or the unveiling of the consciousness of Christ or Divine humanity, which is concealed in the natural man like the sun in a mist. But the current comparisons of Scripture are in marked contrast to these; and the reason of this is because they are employed to express a different conception of the subject.

No new influence of the present day is more powerful in theology than the young science of Biblical Theology, whose work is to give a severely objective rendering of the views of the several leading writers of Scripture. It is lending a marvellous support to the Augustinian and Puritan construction of Christianity; for it is showing that, whether this construction be true or not, it is at least that which belonged to St. Peter, St. Paul, and St. John. As you read one of the handbooks of this science, you seem to be perusing the pages of some Puritan divine. And at no point is it more confirmatory of the Evangelical scheme than in reference to regeneration. Weiss, for instance, perhaps the best exponent of the science, holds that Paul makes "the spirit," that is, the element of the human constitution in which the spiritual life resides, to belong only to the regenerate—a mode of expressing the change more extreme than that of any modern exponents of Evangelicalism, who all make regeneration a change in the already existing elements of human nature. Even if this be incorrect, it is in the general line of St. Paul's statements on this subject. This is the alleged doctrine of St. Paul; and St. John is on this point, if possible, even

more decisive: "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit."

But Mr. Drummond has not merely repeated the doctrine of a school, though he has frankly taken his place in that "small school which, in the face of derision and opposition, has persistently maintained the doctrine of Biogenesis." He has lent the doctrine a new credential; for, starting with this doctrine of Biogenesis, he has thought out the whole of Christian experience on this line, and then, laying this alongside of the revelation of truth made in science, has shown the two to be in remarkable accord. In the first place, it is true, his argument is directed to those who are in doubt of Divine revelation altogether, but indirectly it tells with almost equal force against a construction of the contents of Christianity which starts with minimising the significance of regeneration.

IV. Strong exception has been taken to the omission of certain prominent doctrines of revelation from the list of those to which Mr. Drummond has furnished from science a new demonstration. It has been specially charged against him that, whilst dwelling largely on Regeneration, he has passed over the Atonement.

To this it might be enough to reply, that in so small a book it was impossible to mention everything, and the author does not pretend to give more than a few specimens of his method. But there is a much more effective answer. Little note has been taken of Mr. Drummond's statement, repeated again and again in every part of the volume, that his method applies only to a portion of theology, and not to the whole of it. Which portion this is cannot be doubtful to any careful reader. It is that which belongs to the experience of the individual and lies under human observation. The remoter elements of theology, such, for example, as the relations to one another of the persons of the Trinity,

or the connection of the Divine and human natures in the person of our Lord, lie entirely beyond the field of demonstration of this new apologetic, and must be investigated in the ampler field of Scripture. Now the Atonement is a doctrine which belongs to this remoter region, and cannot be illustrated by the new method; the grounds and conditions on which God will pardon sin are not elements of human experience, but lie in the recesses of the Divine mind, and must be made known in revelation.

This is a distinction which was drawn by our Lord Himself in connection with these two doctrines of Regeneration and the Atonement. After speaking to Nicodemus about the former doctrine, He said to him, "If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe if I tell you of heavenly things." And then He proceeded to mention the Atonement as one of "the heavenly things": "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up." He classed Regeneration among "earthly things," because it is a portion of human experience and is accessible to human observation; but he indicated that Christianity had also its "heavenly things," which are more difficult of belief, because they are inaccessible to human investigation. Dr. Chalmers, who himself suffered not a little from critics whose "fondness for the orthodoxy of what relates to a sinner's acceptance, carried to such a degree of favouritism as to withdraw attention from what relates to a sinner's sanctification, diffused," as he said, "a mist over the whole field of revelation," remarked of these two very doctrines: "The doctrine of our acceptance, by faith in the merits and propitiation of Christ, is worthy of many a treatise, and many are the precious treatises upon it which have been offered to the world; but the doctrine of regeneration, by the Spirit of Christ, equally demands the homage of a separate lucubration—which may proceed on

the truth of the former, and by the incidental recognition of it, when it comes naturally in the way of the author's attention, marks the soundness and settlement of his mind thereupon, more decisively than by the dogmatic and ostentatious and often misplaced asseverations of an ultra orthodoxy."¹

If it has not come naturally in Mr. Drummond's way, for the reason already given, to make such a recognition of the Atonement as Chalmers recommended, he has certainly given no occasion to the jealousy of orthodoxy to pry into the extent of his creed. His work is honourably distinguished among apologetic writings by the amount of vital Christian doctrine which it contains. Many of the most noted apologetic works have conducted the inquirer only to the boundary of Christian doctrine, and left him there. The conception of religion they have given has been so cold and unspiritual, that they have conferred a very limited and doubtful good even on those whom they have been able to convince. But the conception of Christianity set forth by Mr. Drummond is full of spirituality and heart, and he does not desert the inquirer till he has placed him in the very midst of the most impressive experiences of religion.

V. This book has been accused of teaching doctrines which it does not teach.

(1) The charge of teaching the eternity of matter has been made on the strength of these words on p. 297: "*Ex nihilo nihil*—nothing can be made out of nothing; matter is uncreatable and indestructible; Nature and man can only form and transform." Although this supposed heresy is dilated upon by the pamphleteers with a great profusion of indignant capital letters, we should not have alluded to it if their charge had not been repeated by Canon Hoare in the *Churchman*. Of course what Mr. Drummond is

¹ Introductory Essay to *À Kempis' Imitation of Christ*.

referring to is the fact that in the processes of nature going on at present there is no creation of matter. This is evident from the whole context, and is made perfectly clear by the very next sentence which follows the above extract: "Hence, when a new animal is made, no new clay is made." In no portion of his book has the author given the slightest indication of any leaning to this Platonic heresy.

(2) Canon Hoare, whilst appreciating the value of the book, thinks it pregnant with danger because it teaches Evolution and its author is an Evolutionist. This warning has been echoed in many quarters.

But when any one is branded as an Evolutionist, it is desirable to make sure what the name means. Evolution has at least four meanings. There is an evolution, in which all believe, of the germs of life through the various stages of growth to the fulness of the stature of the perfect plant or animal. Secondly, no school of theology has discovered danger in allowing that there may, by natural selection or otherwise, be a differentiation of varieties within the various species of plants and animals; and this also is evolution. Thirdly, the origin of species is ascribed to evolution; this is irreconcilable with a literal interpretation of the first chapter of Genesis, but is considered a harmless doctrine by many theologians who do not interpret this chapter literally. Fourthly, if Evolutionist is used as a name of theological reproach, it ought only to be applied to those who hold that there has been an uninterrupted progress—without the intervention of the creative Hand—from matter up to the highest forms of life. In this sense Mr. Drummond is of course not an Evolutionist; for the burden of his book is that both the organic and the spiritual worlds are hermetically sealed underneath. Nor does his book prove him to be an Evolutionist even in the third sense; for, numerous and bold as his illustrations of evolution are, the cases to which he commits himself will

be found to be only variations within species. He uses very freely the language of evolutionary literature, and may perhaps make use of the doctrine of Evolution as a working hypothesis; but he has not given ground for accusing him of more than this. At the crucial points his language is carefully guarded:—

"If among the recent revelations of Nature," he says, "there is one thing more significant for religion than another, it is the majestic spectacle of the rise of kingdoms towards scarcer, yet nobler forms, and simpler yet Diviner ends. Of the early stage, the first development of the earth from the nebulous matrix of space, Science speaks with reserve. The second, the evolution of each individual from the simple protoplasmic cell to the formed adult, is proved. The still wider evolution not of solitary individuals, but of all the individuals within each province—in the vegetal world from the unicellular cryptogam to the highest phanerogam, in the animal world from the amorphous amœba to Man—is at least suspected, the gradual rise of types being, at all events, a fact."

This is the most deliberate statement on the subject in the book, and the utmost he says of the evolutionary theory of the origin of species is that it is "at least suspected." When he calls the Evolution Theory elsewhere "the greatest of modern scientific doctrines," this is only a statement of the notorious fact that Evolution is the working hypothesis with which science is at present doing its work.

(3) Mr. Drummond has been very freely charged with teaching, by implication, the doctrine of Conditional Immortality. In his chapter on Eternal Life, which does not appear to us one of the clearest or most convincing in the book, he has given a new demonstration of immortality. Making skilful use of a definition proceeding from Mr. Herbert Spencer of the conditions under which the natural life might be everlasting, he shows that these conditions are fulfilled by the spiritual life of the regenerate. Stated briefly, the argument is, that the life spiritual must be

eternal because the regenerate man is in a union which cannot be interrupted with the Eternal God.

But, it has been inferred, as the unregenerate will not fulfil these conditions of eternal life, they cannot exist throughout eternity. As well might it be argued that they cannot exist at present, because they are destitute of spiritual life. They exist at present, though in Mr. Drummond's sense they do not live; and in Mr. Drummond's argument there is no reason why they may not exist through all eternity, though of course they will not live then any more than they do now. There may be very good reasons, either in the will of God or the nature of the soul, why all human beings who begin to exist should exist for ever. With this Mr. Drummond's doctrine of eternal life has nothing to do, and therefore he has passed it by.

Whether this book is or not a *κτῆμα εἰς αἰεί*, destined to take its place among the great apologetic works which are the permanent instructors of mankind, the present writer will not undertake to say. Prophecy about the fate of books is as hazardous as prophecy about the destinies of men.

Meantime, however, Providence has surely assigned it a responsible enough mission. Hundreds of the religious teachers of Britain and America have gained from it fresh forms in which to present vital truth, and some have received from it a mental bent towards studies which will permanently enrich their ministry. It has helped to deliver multitudes who have not the opportunity of studying either science or theology deeply, from the vague doubt that science has discredited all religion, which is one of the worst dangers of this age. And surely its primary object of convincing students of science that, in passing from their ordinary fields of investigation into the field of religious

experience, they are not leaving a scene of order, law, and beauty for one of hopelessness and chaos, but, on the contrary, are about to see the same reign of law in a higher order of things, cannot remain altogether unfulfilled.¹ Marvellous it is how Christianity always at length absorbs into itself the fruits of human progress. One by one it encounters in its course the births of time—systems of philosophy, social doctrines, political revolutions. At the first meeting it often eyes them with suspicion, and they return its hostility. There may be lengthened conflict; but, if the new phenomenon be a genuine product of nature, Christianity always at length finds out its worth, and, bending round it and absorbing all that is good in it, passes on, leaving the controversies and falsehoods which have beset the stage of discussion like shreds of wreckage on the margin of its course. Undoubtedly science is the great new birth of time in our day. There have been suspicion and conflict enough between it and Christianity. But the end will be as before. Christianity will absorb this new truth and enrich itself with new demonstrations and illustrations derived from it. And science, too, will reach its own

¹ The critic in the *Cambridge Review* already mentioned, speaks as if men of science had passed Mr. Drummond's work by without notice. This, however, is a mere haphazard assertion. We refer him, for example, to *Knowledge* of September 26th, 1884, if he wishes to be convinced of his mistake. "Amid the mass of declamation, abuse, frothy rhetoric, perversion of science, distortion of Scripture, ascription of moral obliquity to opponents, and assumption of infallibility on the part of the disputants, which has recently," says this scientific periodical, "been rained upon us in the shape of (so-called) 'Reconciliations,' it is perfectly delightful to turn to the calm, judicial, scholarly, and pre-eminently tolerant work of Professor Drummond now before us. . . . His obviously great personal familiarity with biological science enables him to derive some of the most telling illustrations from the more recondite phenomena of the development of life; and there is something admirable in the ability with which he shows the absolute parallelism of the laws regulating that development with the fundamental principles of Christianity. . . . That the book will make numerous converts from the ranks of a mere stupid atheism it would be too much to expect. That, however, it will remove some of the doubts, and strengthen and comfort thousands of religious men whose faith has been sorely strained by honest philosophical misgivings, it seems impossible to question."

true destiny and its highest honour when, like a gem in the finest setting, it hangs as a resplendent jewel on the fair form of Christianity.

EXEGETICAL NOTES FROM SERMONS.¹

THE TRANSFIGURATION OF THE BODY.

Phil. iii. 20, 21.—The verb “to transfigure” means “to change the figure” or “fashion,” as to transform means “to change the form” or proper shape. This distinction, too subtle to be always observed, rather applies in usage to the simple nouns “Form” and “Figure,” “Form” denoting the permanent and visible outline of shape which may characterize this or that being and implying that under that exterior lurks a corresponding invisible nature—whereas Figure or Fashion indicates something changeable, shifting, impalpable, accidental, which may be assumed or discarded, such as demeanour, appearance, expression, behaviour, air.

Hence the Greek Fathers in proof of Christ’s divinity used to quote that famous text from this epistle, “Who being in the form of God thought it not a grasp, or *catch*, to be equal to God,” arguing that he who had God’s proper form had God’s proper nature. And it is not improbable that St. Paul with special design uses the term “transfigure” here, his thoughts recurring to that memorable scene in our Lord’s life, I mean the Transfiguration. That bright exception of glory to the dreary uniformity of His humiliation was probably a fact familiar to the Apostle’s mind. The evangelists, it is true, in their account of that miracle use the expression “He was transformed before them,” but their description of it is better repre-

¹ Canon Evans has kindly allowed the Editor to select various exegetical notes from his sermons preached in Durham Cathedral.