

The Biblical Understanding of Man's Origin, Nature and Destiny

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I. HOW THE MYTH-MAKER ARRIVES AT HIS VIEW OF ORIGINS

A myth is a story in which the activity of personal beings—whether gods, angels, demons or men, or animals thought of as persons—forms the basis of explaining some practice, belief, institution or natural phenomenon. The origin of myths is typically unknown, for such stories spring up spontaneously in primitive cultures, whether in ancient or modern times, and all such cultures seem to have myths of one kind or another. Thus there are various stories of how the world came into existence, including, for instance, the Sky-woman of the Wyandot Indians, the Mother Goddess of the Australian aborigines, the laying of an egg by the Bird Nyx of the Greeks, the shaggy dwarf P'an Ku of the Chinese who worked as a craftsman in making the world, the Pramaeval Purusha of the Brahmans and Jains, the churning of the sea of the Vishnu Purana, the Egyptian elevation of Nut the sky by Shu the atmosphere, and the Babylonian epic of creation. Since the last mentioned has more culture affinity to the Biblical story of creation than any other, we choose it for analysis.

The Babylonian epic of creation, also called *Enuma elis* after the opening words of the series of seven tablets discovered in 1873 by George Smith, is in brief as follows: The god Apsu (fresh waters) and the goddess Tiamat (marine waters and chaos) begat heaven and earth and a race of great gods, including the triad which was of special interest to the Babylonians, Anu, Bel and Ea. When many of the younger generation of gods became obstreperous, the parents Apsu and Tiamat, together with an elder son Mumma, took counsel as to how they might liquidate the undesirables. The result was a war in which Ea, the leader of the younger group, vanquished all his foes except Tiamat, who now chose a son, Kingu, to be her consort and gave him the Tables of Destiny. The younger gods were dismayed at this and took counsel. It was decided that Ea's son Marduk should be their champion, so they set the 'destiny' of Marduk to conquer Tiamat. A terrific battle ensued. Marduk made a net to ensnare

Tiamat, then he sent winds to stir her up. Finally he met her in single combat and slew her. With his sword he split her in two pieces. One piece he stretched out as the earth, her various veins and bones becoming the various parts of the earth, and the other he stretched out above to be the sky-dome. He made the moon to mark the principal time units in Babylon. Having also killed Kingu, Marduk called upon his father Ea's creative power, so Ea made man from the blood of Kingu. In commemoration of this great victory, the gods toiled for a whole year in building Esagila, the temple tower of Marduk in Babylon, and Marduk was honoured by being recognized as the chief god of Babylon and the head of the pantheon.

The experimental basis of this story is not difficult to discern. Tiamat is the chaotic element in the universe. Marduk is the champion of order. The world is an orderly place because Marduk established order by his power in defeating his enemies. The raging of the sea (marine waters) perhaps continues as the slow pulse of a subdued Tiamat, but she is kept in her place by Marduk's power. The myth also explains why Marduk was considered the chief god of the pantheon by the Babylonians.

The myth-maker—using this term for convenience while recognizing that it is characteristic of a myth that the author is unknown—evidently made his myth to explain an existing state of affairs. It was common knowledge that law and order is established by conquerors. Therefore it was a logical inference that the law and order of the world must have been established and maintained by the one in power, that is, by Marduk, for who could rival the great god of Babylon? The myth-maker's method of inference may be analysed as follows:

(1) He took for granted the reality of the material world of his observation. The sun rose in the east and set in the west over the flat plain, and the sacred terraced pyramids reached up toward heaven. From the summits of the latter the planets could be seen in their rising and followed through their devious courses through the zodiacal belt. The chequered pattern of habitations and fields stretched out beneath as the broad expanse of the earth. The heavens arched above, ruled by day by the sun as it made its journey up to the zenith and then down to its western point of disappearance. The myth-maker lived in the same world of primary experience in which mankind has always lived. Any myth he might arrive at would be an explanation of this world of primary experience.

(2) The myth-maker had what may be called a canon of logic. He assumed that the changes that take place in the world are caused by personal agents. At this point he was very different from the modern scientist, who assumes that explanations must be in the form of impersonal causation. Because of this difference, the myth-maker would be dismissed by the scientist as superstitious, but from his own point of view, he was quite logical. Personal causation is a more fundamental concept than impersonal

causation because it is associated with the experience of the self itself. In our modern day of scientific advance, since the realm of impersonal causation has become the special domain of scientific investigation, the realm of personal causation has been left to the philosopher and theologian. Nevertheless, our basic comprehension of change is our own consciousness of causing change by an act of our will. I move something, therefore I know movement. 'I', the personal self, am the cause of change. Thus the myth-maker was quite logical. Taking personal causation for granted, his problem was to decide which of many personal causes—whether god, demon or man—was the best explanation for any particular phenomenon.

(3) The myth-maker also had a tradition about the existence of races of divine beings whose influences extended to the earth and man. The divine beings with whom he was more particularly concerned had each his own character. Tiamat was wild and raging by nature. Ea and Marduk upheld order. Thus anything disorderly in life might be attributed logically to Tiamat and the opposite to Ea and Marduk. This type of tradition is also found in popular Hinduism. I recall particularly an animated conversation in a third-class railway compartment some years ago. The chief speaker had been abroad and seen new lands and peoples. He dwelt long on the differences between Europeans and Americans, whom many of his hearers thought to be the same, and then climaxed his exposition by saying that the Europeans were Shaiivites and the Americans were Vaishnavites. There was a certain logic to his reasoning. He fitted his new knowledge of Europeans and Americans into the popular tradition about the character of Indian gods. Human qualities of character were explained by personal causation from divine beings.

Although the tradition of knowledge of the myth-maker is very different from that of the scientist, the two are somewhat alike in their desire to explain the phenomena of the world. In fact, the myth-maker could be called a primitive scientist because of his spirit of rational inquiry. But he is so 'out of date' that the scientist would scarcely admit any relationship. In brief, the impersonal tradition of the scientist is good for its own purpose, but the poet and artist still revel, at least in metaphor, in the tradition of myth. Thus Wordsworth says:

Little we see in Nature that is ours ;

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It moves us not—Great God! I'd rather be
A Pagan sucked in a creed outworn ;
So might I, standing on this pleasant lea,
Have glimpses that would make me less forlorn ;
Have sight of Proteus rising from the sea,
Or hear old Triton blow his wreathed horn.

II. HOW THE BIBLICAL WRITER ARRIVED AT HIS VIEW OF ORIGINS

Ideas about creation are found in various parts of the Bible. It is commonly accepted that Genesis 1:1-2:4 belongs to the Priestly documentary source of the Pentateuch, dating from about 490 B.C., and that the account of the creation of man and his fall (Genesis 2:5 onward) is from an earlier source dating from 950-850 B.C., attributed to either the Jahvist or to a 'Southern' (Edomite) source. Psalm 104:1-9 expresses ideas about creation similar to but not altogether like Genesis 1. Job 38:6-11 refers to the events at creation. The sole agency of Yahweh in creation is emphasized in Isaiah II (40:12, 25; 45:6, 7). For our purposes it will be sufficient to take Genesis 1:1-2:4 as expressive of the Biblical view of creation, even though all the ideas found in other passages are not included.

The first verse of Genesis is usually understood to be a title, although some would take it as referring to a creation before the entry of a chaotic power into the world. Creation as referring to the present order of things begins with the second verse, where we read that the earth was without form and void (i.e. chaotic) and that darkness was upon the face of the 'deep' (Hebrew *Tehom*, akin to the Babylonian word *Tiamat*, associated with the marine waters and chaos). The Spirit of God moved or 'was brooding over' the waters, the word used suggesting the brooding as of a bird over its eggs (cf. the Greek *Nyx* at creation). God said, 'Let there be light', and there was light. He saw that the light was good. He separated the light from the darkness, calling them Day and Night. This was the work accomplished on the first day. Similarly, at the command of God, various aspects of the world are created in an orderly scheme in which the three regions of habitation—the region of light, the region of the waters and the space between (sky and atmosphere), and the region of the land—are established in the first three days, and the inhabitants of these regions—the heavenly luminaries, animals of the water and atmosphere, and land animals and man—are created in the succeeding three days. On the seventh day God rested after all his work of creation and hallowed it as a day of rest. Special attention is given to Man's creation on the sixth day. God created man in his own image, male and female. He blessed them, commanded them to multiply and subdue the earth, and gave them dominion over all other creatures.

The Biblical writer could make statements about the beginning of time only by inference from what he accepted as sure knowledge within his own experience. If his view of creation is different from that of others, the reason is to be found in the different data with which he dealt or with a difference in his canon of reasoning. So we now turn to an analysis of his method.

(1) The Biblical writer accepted the physical world about him as the real world in which he lived. Like his contemporaries, and like man in every age, he accepted the earth as *terra firma*

beneath his feet. For him the sun, moon and stars rose regularly from the eastern horizon and set in the west, the sun ruling by day and the moon by night (Genesis 1:16). Each new day was heralded by the dawning light which brought visibility everywhere and awakened living creatures to stir from their sleep. Then came the majestic sun itself with the summons to the work of the day. Moved by the glory and wonder of the world about him, we may think of him as lifting his heart to the Creator of all, praising him and reflecting on the mystery of the divine plan. Thus the Biblical writer lived in the same world of primary experience in which man always lives, whether he be myth-maker, scientist, philosopher or theologian.

(2) The Biblical writer was a man of his times and therefore took for granted certain traditional ideas about the nature of the physical world. He seems to assume, for instance, that the sky-dome is something sufficiently solid to support waters above (Genesis 1:7). This is in keeping with the idea that the 'windows' of heaven are opened when rain pours down on the earth (Genesis 7:11) and that there are storehouses for snow and hail which serve as arsenals when the earth is to be bombarded with divine judgment (Job 38:22, 23). The idea of the creation of an orderly world by victory in conflict with opposing forces, as expressed in Psalm 104:7-9, is reminiscent of the procedure of Marduk in vanquishing Tiamat, as is also the idea of stretching out the heaven like a tent (Psalm 104:2). Similar ideas of a champion deity vanquishing the hostile monsters are found in Job (e.g. 25: 12, 13). These are paralleled by even a fuller list of monsters in the Ugaritic poems (e.g. the boastful review of Anat's victories in Baal, V, iii, 50-62).

We do not know to what extent the writer of Genesis 1 considered such current ideas as metaphorical or true. Probably he accepted some of them as true, while others were metaphorical for him. We think that the word *tehom* in Genesis 1:1 for the chaotic deep had lost its mythological associations for him. It was a vivid traditional word for the chaotic deep rather than the domain of an active Tiamat, as in the Babylonian myth. Yet the idea of a chaotic deep out of which the divine Creator established order and separate existences is part of the tradition pattern of ideas of the ancient Near East. The writers of Psalm 104 and of the Book of Job seem to accept with a greater sense of reality the idea of creation by conflict and victory. Yet it is difficult to say when the language of myth passes over into the language of traditional poetic metaphor. It is sufficient for our purpose to recognize the fact that the Biblical writer was a man of his own times culturally and therefore took for granted certain current ideas about the physical world which we do not take for granted today.

(3) The Biblical writer's canon of logic accepted the validity of personal causation as an explanation of physical phenomena. At this point he was like the myth-maker. Both would have agreed that the physical world came into existence by divine

activity, which is one kind of personal causation. But they would have disagreed sharply as to which gods were involved, whether Marduk and his allies or the God of Israel alone. Both the myth-maker and the Biblical writer were very different from the modern scientist in this aspect of their inquiry. While the scientist rules out personal causation from his method of gaining truth, admitting only impersonal causation, the others take it for granted. A theistic philosopher would take sides with the Biblical writer and the myth-maker in this matter as against the scientist. At least he would insist that the scientist recognize the artificial limitation in his method of inquiry.

(4) The Biblical writer took another thing for granted which affected his description of the beginnings. He assumed that the only personal or ultimate cause at work in forming the world was the One known within the history of his people, Yahweh, God of Israel. As a God who was known by his free acts within the history of Israel, Yahweh was different from all other gods. Other gods were somehow bound together with the fortunes of their peoples, leading them in victories and perishing with them in defeat. But Yahweh was above all nations. He was bound with Israel only because he himself took the initiative in choosing Israel and making a covenant with him. He did not hesitate almost to destroy his own people when they broke his covenant. When in mercy he gave them another chance, it was for his own name's sake rather than for any merit in them. His righteous acts and judgments attested him to be the true God. Within the covenant his character was known to Israel, so he was not only the true God but the known God—known because he had revealed himself. He was thus known to have power to accomplish his will without limit and without rival; he was known as altogether holy and righteous, as altogether good in his purposes, and as being faithful to his covenant. The covenant was both a standard for man's conduct and a basis of access to and fellowship with God. The writer of Genesis 1 accepted as fact that the true, eternal God has thus revealed himself. This knowledge of God was part of the data—the most important part—upon which the writer's reasoning would work as he tried to penetrate the mystery of the beginnings of the world.

At this point the Biblical writer was different from both the myth-maker and the modern scientist. The myth-maker's reasoned inferences had to be made from the data of primary experience of the physical world, plus traditional notions about families and clans of divine beings, but he had no knowledge of such a God as Israel had. The modern scientist makes his reasoned inferences from the data of primary experience of the physical world, greatly widened by systematic observation with power instruments, plus his traditional discipline of impersonal causation. He also does not take into account the knowledge of God as revealed in the Bible. Only the Biblical writer accepts the self-revelation of

this God as a datum of his inquiry. So, apart from the inevitable circumstance that the Biblical writer was a man of his own century, as we are of ours, the essential difference between him and the modern scientist lies in what he took as data and what the scientist takes as data. According to the data will be the resulting inferences about the unknown beginnings. If the historical revelation of God is not admitted as a datum, then the inferences about the beginnings will never be rid of the shackles of impersonal causation, no matter how many millenniums backward the story may be pushed. On the other hand, if the historical revelation of God is admitted as a datum, the inferences about the beginnings will necessarily end in the creative act of a personal God. The things of the physical world will not be viewed as things in themselves—impersonal, self-existing—but as created things. However little or much we may understand about them, we shall view them as the handiwork of a Creator. Then, as the study of a piece of handicraft can tell us a little about the craftsman, the study of the physical world will tell us a little about the Creator—provided we have admitted the historical revelation as a datum.

III. DOCTRINAL INFERENCES FROM THE HISTORICAL REVELATION

We have come to the point where we can say that the doctrine of creation is an inference from the knowledge of God as given in the history of Israel. As Christians we also hold that the revelation of God to Israel came to its climax and eternally normative expression in the person of Jesus Christ. The old covenant with Israel and the new covenant in Christ have their differences, but the two are essentially one because both are the acts of the same eternal God. Therefore, for the Christian, the doctrine of creation can be inferred from the known fact of Christ with even greater clarity than it could be inferred from the old covenant known to the writer of Genesis 1. We can also infer from our knowledge of Christ what God's purpose was in creating the world and man. Being the same God, he had the same purpose in creation as we see in Christ, who lived and died in order to restore man to the fellowship of the Father.

This brings us to the doctrine of the nature of man. What is man's place in creation? A standard book of zoology, reviewing the various kinds of animal life, comes to a climax by describing the horse rather than man, because the physical structure of a horse is more specialized than the physical structure of man. The author is consistent with his purpose of moving from the simpler, unspecialized forms of life to the more complex and more specialized. If our knowledge were limited to the approach of this book, we would conclude that the goal of creation is the development of horses. We would also say that man is by nature and essentially an animal, more developed than other animals in some way and less developed in others. This is how the scientific

approach and method works out, its data being only the objectively observable. Furthermore, since the scientific method admits only impersonal causation, the nature of man tends to be viewed as the resultant of impersonal forces. The 'soul' becomes an unnecessary concept because it is a kind of personal cause.

If, however, the historical revelation of God in Christ be admitted as a datum, then the inference follows that God made man with the same purpose as we see in Christ. That is, God made man for a holy fellowship with himself, for Christ came to restore man to such a fellowship. Since the revelation of God in Christ has no place for animals in this fellowship, and since Christ did not give his life on the cross to save animals, we infer that God planned a special status for man from the beginning. We gather up our thoughts along these lines by saying that man was created to be a child of God.

'And God saw everything that he had made, and, behold, it was very good' (Genesis 1:31). It must have been so, because the work of a good God (revealed as good in his historical revelation) is necessarily good. Man must also have been good when God created him; that is, man must have been without sin. This is a logical inference from the datum of the historical revelation. The God who revealed himself in Jesus Christ could not, in the beginning, have made man anything but good, capable of fellowship with himself. Thus the nature of man as originally sinless is inferred from the knowledge of God in Christ. The same could be inferred, although with less clarity, from the knowledge of God in the old covenant. Here is the logical basis of the story of the Garden of Eden. However much the details may reflect interesting ideas of ancient times, the fundamental concept is timeless, provided the datum of God's historic revelation be accepted.

The historical revelation of God shows how, again and again, God condemned man for his sin in transgressing the covenant. The ongoing of God's purpose was due only to his boundless mercy, which came to a climax in the giving of his only begotten Son on the cross for the salvation of mankind. The necessity for such a tragedy and remedy is understandable only on the acceptance of the parallel truth that all mankind is under sin. Much in our natural experience supports this proposition, but the conviction that it is really so is awakened fully only in the presence of the Cross. When did this sinful state of man begin? The sin of 'all mankind' has both horizontal and vertical reference—it includes past generations as well as the living. How far back must we go before we come to a sinless man? Our minds can stop nowhere until we go back to the beginning of the human race, that is, to the first man, whoever he was. But, as we saw, the first man must have been created without sin by the good God who made everything good. Therefore the first man must have fallen from his innocent state by departing from what God had intended him to be, that is, by disobeying God.

Thus the doctrine of the fall of man in the beginning is an inference from the redemptive side of God's historical revelation. The details of how that fall took place will probably always have to be clothed in the language of metaphor, but that there *was* a fall becomes as certain as revelation from which it is inferred.

The Biblical understanding of the destiny of man is similarly an inference from God's historical revelation to Israel and more especially through Christ. Whatever positive ideas there are about the future life in the Old Testament are grounded in the positive knowledge of God's character as revealed in the covenant. The only way in which man could participate in God's promise of making 'an everlasting covenant, even the sure mercies of David' (Isa. 55:3) was that he himself should live on in some sense into the everlasting. But in Christ the doctrine of man's destiny becomes clear and glorious. Accepting the fact of Christ's resurrection from the dead, including his physical body, Paul infers that those who believe in Christ will be raised: 'If there is no resurrection of the dead, neither hath Christ been raised' (1 Cor. 15:13). Thus the doctrine of the resurrection of the body is an inference from the resurrection of Christ. If we accept the one, we can accept the other. The destiny of man is thus to be raised from the dead and to live with God for ever in his eternal kingdom. Man's physical body is in some way to have a part in this future destiny, even as Christ's physical body was raised from the tomb and taken up to heaven at the Ascension. How the physical body of Christ could thus be transmuted into a body with spiritual powers transcends our comprehension, but the fact that it happened is part of our data. On the other hand, if we do not admit the revelation of God in Christ as a datum for making our reasoned inferences, as is the case with the scientific method, we have no ground for believing in the resurrection of the dead nor perhaps for any kind of continued existence.

IV. THE MODERN MAN'S APPRECIATION OF THE BIBLICAL VIEW OF ORIGINS

The analysis given above of the methods by which the scientist, the myth-maker and the Biblical writer arrived at their pictures of the beginnings furnishes us with a basis for relating the Biblical account to the mind of modern man. It will be noticed that the first item in each analysis was the same. That is, the world of our primary experience is the same for man in every age. It is easy to overlook this fact in our scientific point of view. We read about the Copernican theory of the solar system and suppose forthwith that the older Ptolemaic theory of the movements of the planets was practically without value, until it comes to us as a wholesome surprise that the ancient Babylonians were able to plot the movements of the heavenly bodies so

accurately that they could predict eclipses. Reading in our textbooks that the world is round and not flat, and that the earth moves and not the sun, we overlook the fact that even modern astronomers and navigators continue to take their bearings from the 'horizon' of a flat world. Before a telescope can be swung into place it must be adjusted with measurements that correspond to the Ptolemaic earth-centred system rather than according to the Copernican. It is a tragic comment on the bookishness of our education if we suppose that we cannot appreciate the stars without a telescope or understand their motions without transporting ourselves by abstract thought into a sun-centred system. All of us still actually live in the same world as that of the Biblical writer. Our appreciation of that world begins where his began, in seeing it as it is, apart from explanations about it.

(1) In relating the Biblical account of creation to the modern mind, we think that the first step should be to recover our natural, untutored attitude toward the world about us. This does not mean that we despise scientific knowledge, but only that we should have a true perspective of our experience, appreciating what is the 'given' in our experience and then relating the given to explanations about it. If we do this, we shall feel ourselves on common ground with the Biblical writer, within the same world. With this in mind I once climbed to the top of a small hill before dawn to see how God would create a new day before my eyes. I was struck, even thrilled, by what seemed to me a remarkable correspondence between the order of creation as given in Genesis 1 and the actual order by which the world took shape before me. First was, of course, the light of dawn; then the resolving of misty areas here and there on the landscape, with higher clouds above—as it were, a second set in the drama. As the light of dawn became brighter, patches of woods, green open spaces and ponds of water took shape—a third act. Now the majestic sun peeped over the edge of the horizon and moved rapidly upward as its light seemed to transform the world. The birds had already begun to fly here and there. They were the first creatures to awake. I also recalled that, at a lake at a similar time, the fishes started jumping at gnats and flies before most creatures were astir. Last of all I saw cows and buffaloes moving out to graze and men stirring forth to begin their day's work. After all this wonderful display of the beginning of a new day, what could be more appropriate than to praise God for his works of creation?

The correspondence of my experience to the account of Genesis 1 was not exact (to be exact the birds should have stirred after the sunrise instead of before; a few cattle were also out of order), but it was sufficiently close to enable me to feel that I was one with the Biblical writer in appreciating the world in which God had placed us both, even though we were far removed from each other in time.

(2) We should recognize that all of us, whether in the age

of the Biblical writer or in the twentieth century, know only in part and await fuller knowledge of many things. The Biblical writer, as a man of his day, shared common ideas about various natural phenomena. If we smile at his notion that there was a reservoir of water above the sky-dome, let us remember that we do not have any final scientific theory about the origin of many things, and that scientific theories are constantly subject to modification in the light of new facts. For instance, to explain the origin of the solar system there is the nebular hypothesis, associated with the name of Laplace, the planetesimal hypothesis propounded by Chamberlin and Moulton, and the theory of tidal friction advanced by G. H. Darwin, and there are more recent ideas. There have been several theories of organic evolution. The people of the next century may consider all of these theories as outdated. We are as much people of our own age as the Biblical writer was of his. We should not expect him to be up to date in the scientific aspects of his description of creation, for we ourselves shall not be accounted up to date for very long.

(3) We should supplement our science with philosophy in regard to the postulates of the scientific method. As we have seen, the scientific method limits itself to impersonal causation. If we habituate ourselves only to the scientific discipline of thinking, we shall run the risk of becoming blind to the limitation. Philosophy, which sets itself to the task of viewing experience as a whole in a rational way, will help us to retain our perspective. Then we shall realize that personal causation is more fundamental in our experience than impersonal causation. It will follow that the Biblical writer—and, shall we say, the myth-maker also in this respect—was not wrong when he attributed the formation of the world and man to a divine Creator. He actually saw life in its wholeness more truly than is possible from the scientific point of view.

(4) We should ponder the unusual nature of the Biblical writer's knowledge of God, which, even more than his observation of the physical world, was his fundamental datum for making inferences about the beginning. As compared with all other human histories and literatures, the records of Israel have a fundamentally different point of reference. The point of reference is the activity of a divine Being who stands outside the human process, yet acts upon it and in it to accomplish his purposes. Here God comes to man. In this confrontation man has a positive knowledge of God. The writer of Genesis I had this knowledge and made his inferences from it. In order to appreciate his creation story aright, we should also accept the same positive knowledge of God—which was given to us as eternally normative in Christ—and make it the central datum in our inferences about the unknown, whether at the beginning of time or at the end. Thus Jesus Christ, the eternal Word made flesh in time and space, is also the 'Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end'

(Rev. 21:6), for the unknown beginning and the unknown end are both inferred from him as the known Fact within time.

Footnotes :

1. G. R. Driver, *Canaanite Myths and Legends*. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1956, p. 87.
2. R. W. Hegner, *College Zoology*. New York: Macmillan, 1915.

Suggested Reading : The following articles in the *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*: Cosmogony and Cosmology (pertinent parts); Creation, by J. Strachan; and Science, by J. Arthur Thomson.

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Jesus was a real man, subject to the conditions and limitations of humanity, with a human will that had to make its continual choices in face of life's temptations, and thus His goodness must be quite realistically regarded as a human achievement. But goodness in a human life, even in small proportions, is never simply a human achievement. To regard it as such would be pure Pelagianism. And no New Testament thinker could think of Jesus in Pelagian terms. All goodness in a human life is wrought by God. That is the other side, and somehow that side comes first, without destroying the human. And therefore the goodness of Jesus can ultimately be described only as the human side of a divine reality, which, so to say, was divine before it was human.

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