

ART. II.—THE SUPERNATURAL, AS SEEN IN TWO THEORIES OF NATURE.

“All knowledge results from the establishment of relations between phenomena.”
—J. B. Stallo, *Concepts and Theories of Modern Physics*, p. xiv.

BY nature we mean the material universe as a whole, in boundless space.

By the supernatural we understand that Eternal Power, represented by nature and all its phenomena, visible and invisible, past, present, and to come.

I. VIEW THE EXISTENCE OR ORIGIN AND CONTINUANCE OF NATURE APART FROM THE SUPERNATURAL.

Looking at nature, a physicist, ignoring the supernatural, reasons thus:—A ruined temple may be taken as an example of the transitoriness of nature and of the human race. Time casts them down, there is no lasting glory, nor any continuing greatness. Nature is wholly mechanical, without any self-conscious mind other than that of man, and he is meanly great and darkly wise. There is no supreme, intellectual, emotional, moral will resident in a Divine Person to be found anywhere; whose lifetime is eternity; whose home is infinitude; whose works are for ever. There is no Divine Providence, no all-embracing determining purpose.

Epicurus explained long ago that innumerable atoms, falling through immeasurable space during innumerable ages, by various collisions and adhesions came into those conditions out of which by natural forces alone resulted the worlds as we now see them.

This view is in part sustained by modern scientific statements as to nature. Thus: Before the true theory of the universe can be constructed all the processes of nature must be reduced to a substratum and to motions which are homogeneous. That is, all the qualities of matter and all the varieties of motion, such as gravity, cohesion or chemical affinity, heat, light, electricity, magnetism, etc., must be separated, so that matter is reduced to mere mass, and all motions or forces are fined down to the first; out of which mass and primary force or motion the universe and all things living and unliving came as by a sort of natural selection, without any purposive or intelligent selection. Life came not from pre-existent life, but from a power not living, yet in peculiar motion, and thought is a sort of effervescence in the brain as is iridescence the property of soap bubbles when they are exposed to light.

Man also, viewed apart from the supernatural, scrambled into being, ascending from the lowest form and force of living sub-

stance, as evolutionists profess to explain. There was no fore-seeing purpose, no guiding aim in the development of his limbs, his senses, his faculties of body and mind. Whatever we may think of wisdom, of beauty, of natural law, of that fitness of things to things whence we derive our art, our science, our conception of a purpose beyond our own, there is no such purpose, apart from our own, no real wisdom fashioning forms of beauty, and no mind establishing law. There is no Master Will and no Truth to satisfy our expectation of more life and fuller in other and more beautiful worlds.

Whatsoever is, if we take the mechanical view, came by chance. Things having been infinitely tried, varied would be the better word, during infinity, the present mixed condition of universal change, masked by apparent uniformity, and the existing state of universal passing away and the accompanying not less universal renewal in fresh forms, came into being and remain till now. We cannot say much more. The present condition of things, taking our mechanical view, has not been from everlasting, and it sprang from a state of which we possess no knowledge, and in a way wholly unknown. As to the future, we observe signs in nature, specially the diffusion of forces, which indicate that the existing worlds are not to last for ever.

A serious man is amazed at the awful result of such reflections. He cannot regard with favour the thought that all power, all life, all wisdom, all truth, are without any essence of reality; are as a light to be quenched in darkness, to pass away as the baseless fabric of a dream. Probably gleams of another sort will light up the chambers of his brain; thus, as to this chance, this fate the same as chance, if all things as they are and life as it is came by it, things the same and life the same, or nearly so, may come again. If nature came from some precedent not nature, and is departing into another state not nature, it seems certain that the supernatural preceded and will end all, and as we cannot think that that supernatural, or the Eternal Power, has ever at any time ceased to be, we must own it to be that which embraceth all and will embrace all. The mechanical theory is a part of the supernatural.

There is something more. Any man who reasons agnostically, or, by a theory of positivism, declares that he knows only, and cannot know of anything besides, matter and force, must stand aside that others may teach who say they do know. With our mind, by which we know, to deny the truth or power of that by which we know, or to question the existence of a greater mind, or to say we either know so much, or little, that nothing more can be known as to the being of a greater

intelligence, is really to say we know while confessing utter ignorance. Rather must we take this as certain: all knowledge reveals a greater sphere of which we are capable of gaining more knowledge; and human ignorance, however dense, is not the greatest; hence, sink low as we may, there is a greater depth; rise, high as we can, there are vaster summits all around. What we are in our present state is encircled by something exceeding all, excelling all, Eternal Power.

On further reflection, such a man will endeavour to advance from the precise and that of little area to vast and all-embracing principles. Thus: the action of universal forces through the space of a cubic inch of atmospheric air, or in and by the smallest particle of matter, we cannot either fully state or think whether by arithmetic or mathematics. The universe enclosing that inch of space and particle of matter may be regarded as practically unlimited, both in extent and variety. The possibility of such a universe having come together and continued by chance could not be expressed by the multiplication of that space's and atom's complexity by any calculable possibles or impossibles of the universe. To those incalculable possibles and impossibles would have to be added, as chance was added to chance, all other chances that might come from the further unknown, that might come from the illimitable space and time lying beyond the present universe. All idea of chance explaining the mechanical, organic, mental, moral, and voluntary adaptations and combinations of the universe, must be laid aside. These are the particular scientific reasons: 1. There is in the existing material world a universal tendency to the dissipation of all mechanical energy. 2. Restoration of that energy by inanimate material processes cannot take place without more than an equivalent dissipation, and is therefore mechanically impossible. 3. Within a finite past time the earth was, and within a finite future will be, unfit for organic occupation, unless operations, impossible under present laws, are performed. An infinite design, a supernatural purpose, an all-controlling will, are the only adequate explanation of existing things.

II. VIEW NATURE AS EXPLAINED BY THE SUPERNATURAL.

Most scientific men take as sufficiently proved that all physical action is mechanical. They hold that the stars, planets, satellites, comets, and meteors, were not always as they are now, conglomerated in those bodies, but that the substances of which they are formed were uniformly diffused through space. In this diffusion, or dispersion, matter was not matter

with its present properties, but an attenuated, greatly diffused continuous mass, without force of any kind, a so-called primitive homogeneous mass.

Now, anyone who honestly thinks will see that this primitive mass must be either at rest or in uniform motion; and this rest or uniform motion could be changed in no other way than by impulses or attractions from without. Consequently, the theory of the universe having automatically arisen from some sort of attenuated, structureless mass, in accordance with the present physical or dynamical laws, when as yet there were no such laws, is fundamentally absurd. The external power entering and moving this mass could be no other than that Eternal, the Supernatural, the Lord God.

There is the further assumption generally prevalent among physicists and chemists: the molecular or atomic constitution of all material things, and that these atoms are the smallest portions of substance, so hard as to resist all the forces of the universe, and of such force that everyone in its degree acts on that whole universe. By aggregation of these atoms into molecules, and the molecules into bodies, inorganic and organic, are all things made.

Three propositions are agreed to :

1. Atoms are simple, unalterable, indestructible, and physically indivisible.
2. All matter consists of these atoms, and they stand apart from one another as the stars stand apart, separated by interstices.
3. These atoms are of fixed specific weights, and the sum-total of their weights, in the different chemical elements, corresponds to, or is the equivalent of, their combination.

All this shows that the atomic theory is hypothetical; for if, as modern science aims at proving, the complex arises from the simple, the primary state of matter would not be the solid, but the gas. Solidity is not the simplest but the most complicated form of material consistency; and to assume solidity as made up of unalterable, absolutely independent objective realities of almost infinitesimal minuteness, possessing infinite force, or so far infinite as to resist all other forces in the universe, is too incredible for our reason to accept. Besides, so far as science goes, any physical thing standing complete in itself, able to exist alone, perfectly independent, is impossible. All known things are relative. Physical existence means action and reaction, and action imports change. The only unchangeable, indestructible, absolute, is that power whom we call "God," the Eternal, the Infinite, the Almighty, the In All, the Above all, the Supernatural. You cannot explain an atom apart from Him.

III. ANOTHER VIEW OF THE EXISTENCE OF THINGS.

We have said things are relative. Take the statement as emphatic. Whatever our senses discern in the world is phenomenal, is apparent merely. We only know things by their qualitative and quantitative conditions, called determinations. Their essence, what they are in themselves and apart from our experience, we know not. There is no material thing that is either its own support or its own measure. There is no form that is so of itself. Quantitatively, qualitatively, there is perpetual change, arranging, and re-arranging, an unceasing flow of mutations. Things are large or small relatively, are hard or soft comparatively, hot or cold proportionately. There is nothing physically real which is not related to the supernatural or absolute. Even time and space and motion are only known to us relatively. Their relations are discerned by our intellect having sensible experience of them. Whatever is, exists only on an ever-receding background, and on an ever-progressing future stage; both lead to infinitude. All parts that we know belong to some whole, and every finite whole is part of one comprehending all. Thus, common-sense applied to science shows that everything belongs to that which is wholly incomprehensible, and is lost in height and depth, length and breadth. Everything is the meeting-point of two eternities, a particular contained in the universal, having all its being by and in the Eternal God—the Supernatural. By Him things tend from disorder to order, from chaos to cosmos; becoming a magnificence, a wonderfulness, that at last attains a finite perfection even as God is an infinite Perfection.

We now extend our thought for a little space to man. His art and science are gathered from the science and art in the universe—a science and art so beyond his own that he never fully knows nor equals any, even the smallest part of it. Seneca said long ago that nature is “a certain Divine manifested purpose in the world.” Our own experience confirms the saying. We observe the stars as they pass by, and measure them; we read history, learn of ancient Egypt’s civilization, with the millions of men thereto belonging; we think of Hebrews, Chaldeans, Persians, Greeks, Romans; we look at the great and good of all nations; we mark the hateful wicked who are without love and piety; and find that no nation ever thought that sorrows righteously endured were for nothing, and that painful virtues were an utter loss. They felt an infinite desire concerning the infinite duty, the infinite right which they discerned in the world, and no nation ever wholly lost that desire. They said: “We are so much of a fleshly body that we must eat and drink, buy and sell, walk and build; but we are also of a spirit that rises above

them. Wind and twist circumstances and times as we may, we look for and trust in a wisdom and love and holiness greater than our own." This ancient faith awoke high sentiment, working into fervent desire for purity, and then waxed into invincible efforts to know God's life in their soul. It was spiritual as distinguished from the natural, in a material sense. It pierced the mask or guise of things, and sought, and thought it found, that God, the Great, the Holy, the Supernatural, who, making and abiding in nature, is the Creator of all, the Giver of every law, and without whom nothing was, or is, or can be.

Our twofold view of material nature and the whole history of man affirms that the fountain of all is the Supernatural.

JOSEPH WILLIAM REYNOLDS.



ART. III.—A CHURCH CRUSADE, SOCIAL AND SPIRITUAL.

"O, be some other name!

What's in a name? That which we call a rose,
By any other name would smell as sweet."

SINCE the first representation of "Romeo and Juliet," men have been asking each other the question, "What's in a name?" and the inquiry has been as frequently and variably answered, perhaps, as it has been made. When applied, however, to the organization which is the subject of this article, there are but few people who will not grant that the patient, pointed, persevering work of the Church Army, had it been called by another name, would long since have won for that body a place amongst the wealthiest and most acceptable of our Church of England societies. Here is a case, not of a number of men of wealth and reputation assembling together in a London office, intent on the formation of a new society which should execute some special theory of their own, but of a few men, rich only in faith and energy, each earnestly and aggressively working in his own parish in different parts of the country, each with the double conviction that his work has been given to him of God, and that the National Church, which has been rightly called the "Church of the people," has both the power and the will to labour in this cause as no other body can labour. They do not claim for the Church in which it is their privilege to labour, any privilege but that of service, nor any precedence, except that of claiming the post of danger. The union of these isolated individuals under their inevitable and indefatigable leader, the Rev. W. Carlile; an occasional word of counsel and encouragement from one or other of their