

A brief expostulation with Professor Buckland on the unscriptural and illogical nature of his theory of death / by Francis Eagle.

Contributors

Eagle, Francis.
Royal College of Surgeons of England

Publication/Creation

London : Henry Renshaw, 1839.

Persistent URL

<https://wellcomecollection.org/works/y6g3g5wj>

Provider

Royal College of Surgeons

License and attribution

This material has been provided by This material has been provided by The Royal College of Surgeons of England. The original may be consulted at The Royal College of Surgeons of England. where the originals may be consulted. This work has been identified as being free of known restrictions under copyright law, including all related and neighbouring rights and is being made available under the Creative Commons, Public Domain Mark.

You can copy, modify, distribute and perform the work, even for commercial purposes, without asking permission.



Wellcome Collection
183 Euston Road
London NW1 2BE UK
T +44 (0)20 7611 8722
E library@wellcomecollection.org
<https://wellcomecollection.org>





*From the Author to the Rev.
Coll. of Surgs. Lon: A*

2

BRIEF EXPOSTULATION

WITH

PROFESSOR BUCKLAND

ON

THE UNSCRIPTURAL AND ILLOGICAL NATURE

OF HIS

THEORY OF DEATH.

BY

FRANCIS EAGLE.

LONDON:

HENRY RENSHAW, 356, STRAND.

1839.

A

BRIEF EXPOSTULATION,

ETC.

REVEREND SIR,

COMMENCING with the preface, you allude to your disquisition in the Bridgewater Treatise, attempting to prove that the aggregate amount of animal enjoyment is increased, and that of pain diminished, by the institution of death. Whence this extraordinary opinion was derived does not appear; certainly not from scripture, old or new; for no proposition can be more clear than the beautiful doctrine, that but for the fall of man, "death and all the sad variety of woe," had never been introduced into the world; and supposing that only an equal facility for propagating *species* and *kind* existed before as after the fall, then clearly, the aggregate amount of happiness must have been not only equally great, but totally unalloyed. For any logical foundation for the opinion, that the instinct of some animals for devouring each other tends to increase their happiness, I have sought in vain in the above treatise. If you state that the practice is benevolent and merciful, do you not, at the same time, necessarily imply a constant recommendation for the early destruction of the whole animal kingdom, so that by speedily removing successive generations, you should increase the amount of animal enjoyment; in other words,

what is now called unnecessary cruelty and destruction, you recommend (such seems your doctrine) as fulfilling the glorious intentions of the Divine Creator; and throughout the above disquisition, to me, you appear to argue upon the view that death is a blessing, and not a curse.

You proceed, "My present object is briefly to shew that the authority of scripture affords no foundation for supposing the inferior animals to be included in the sentence of death pronounced upon the fall of man, the serpent excepted."

May I beg your attention to the following:—

Gen. chap. iii.
ver. 14. "And the Lord God said unto the serpent, Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life."

What, Sir, is the legitimate construction of this verse, but that *all cattle, and every beast of the field, were cursed, the serpent most so?*

Then, by a strange method of argument, forsaking those passages in Genesis which *really elucidate* the subject, you prefer citing passages from the New Testament, to prove that death is by no inspired writer spoken of as a penal dispensation to any other living creature, excepting Adam and his posterity.

I observe upon this peculiarity, the inconsistency of which must be apparent, that you look for evidence in the New Testament, a testament entirely devoted to the re-election of man, through the Redeemer, and which consequently could not be supposed, *à priori*, to contain any allusion to animals, further than what is contained in your text, Romans, v. chap. 12.

Confessing, however, that the general bearing of this text favours the construction, that but for the sin of the first man, death would not have entered the world, you

object, *first*, that it is opposed to your theory of geology; and, *secondly*, that the opinion would never have been entertained by any one who had carefully consulted the sacred volume on the subject.

To the first objection I reply, that Lord Bacon, in his work on the advancement of knowledge, pronounces our ignorance of human comparative anatomy to be a *great deficient* in natural philosophy; and humbly attempting to follow so great a master, I have endeavoured to shew, that of the comparative philosophy of the *whole* physical world, not only of the human, but also of the animal, vegetable, mineral, and morbid kingdoms, we are in almost total ignorance, and that primitive creation being given with the relative "temperature of the seasons" to find out comparative philosophy, is a grand and mighty problem for human intellect to solve.

Essay on
Phthisis.

That such changes do occur must clearly appear to the merest novice in philosophy; and an illustration of this truth may be offered in the island of Jamaica,—a little world within itself; for Captain Tulloch informs us, that "In the island of Jamaica almost any variety of climate may be procured. At a residence, 4200 feet above the level of the sea, the range of the thermometer is from 55° to 65°; in the winter it falls as low as 44°. *There* the vegetation of the tropics disappears, and is supplanted by that of the temperate regions. The inhabitants are said to enjoy a degree of longevity rarely attained in other countries, and to exhibit that ruddy glow of health which marks the countenance in northern climates, and forms a striking contrast to the pallid, sickly residents of the less elevated districts.

Examples of
comparative
philosophy, —
human, animal,
vegetable, mi-
neral, and mor-
bid.

"The diseases of the tropics, too, seem, like the vegetable productions, to be restricted to certain altitudes and particular degrees of temperature."

Again : if we compare the modern Egyptian with the ancient Egyptian mummies, &c. ; and further, the European, Asiatic, and Egyptian Mahomedan *with each other*, it will clearly appear, that notwithstanding identity of religion, diet, &c., the European has his distinct physical organization, the Asiatic, his distinct physical organization, and the Egyptian, his distinct physical organization ; the latter closely approximating the ancient Egyptian and modern Copt. And hence it will be difficult to avoid the conclusion, that national greatness is *relative*, and not *absolute*, up to a certain point, defined only by the extent of the universe ; that it reposes in *human comparative anatomy*, the cause of which is the "temperature of the seasons." If we require another familiar illustration of *this philosophy*, it is only necessary to read any history of the United States of America, or of the changes which have already taken place in the colony of New South Wales, as manifested in the comparative philosophy of its inhabitants when compared with the inhabitants of Great Britain.

It thus appears that the same causes which produce a particular condition of the animal kingdom also determine a particular *aptitude* or condition of the vegetable and mineral kingdoms.

Hence every zone, nation, and territory has that particular animal, vegetable, and mineral kingdom which is best for its physical wants.

The torrid zone has its comparative world, its animal, vegetable, mineral, and morbid kingdoms. The temperate and frigid, theirs also.

The tropical diet is incompatible with the temperate zones ; the temperate with the frigid. So also of animals, vegetables, diseases, and remedies.

These truths constitute a *part* of comparative philo-

sophy; and ascending higher still, the cause of this comparative philosophy is first and principally the "temperature of the seasons."

And yet, while most authors on geology devote considerable space for the consideration of aqueous and igneous causes which operate changes on the earth's surface; this mighty power, the "temperature of the seasons," the probable *first physical cause of all*, (see "Mosaic Theory of Light,") is almost entirely unnoticed, or treated as an inefficient agent.

To the second objection I offer, not only the 14th verse of the third chapter of Genesis, but also the 16, 17, 18, and 19th of the same chapter:—

16. "Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee."

This same curse is equally extended to female *animals*.

17. "And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it; cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life."

18. "Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field."

19. "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return."

I submit, then, that it thus clearly appears in the 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, and 19th verses, that the human, animal, vegetable, and mineral kingdoms were *all* included in the curse pronounced at the fall of man, and am thus compelled to infer (the very opposite of your deduction) that a careful perusal of scripture can lead to *no other conclusion* than that *all* animals were included in the curse.

Further: you inform us, that "some of the sublime passages in Isaiah which describe the peaceful blessed-

ness and tranquillity of the kingdom of the Messiah are not unfrequently referred to in support of the opinion, that before the fall of man the races of carnivorous beasts may have had instincts and organizations different from those they now possess, and that the lion might literally "have eaten straw like the ox," &c. ; and you favour us with what you think the reasonable opinion of many learned divines, that we are not bound to the literal interpretation of these passages, but may consider them emblematic and figurative, such as "The mountains and the hills shall break forth into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands."

In my "Essay on Consumption" I have endeavoured to trace a faint outline of natural and comparative philosophy, and also to shew, according to my Lord Bacon, that a vast and boundless gulf of ignorance is placed between ourselves and primitive creation; and that in the present condition of our *almost entire ignorance*, it is illogical to deny that the advancement of physical philosophy may not unfold, *how*, in primitive creation, the lion might have eaten straw like the ox, how the wolf might have laid down with the lamb, and how the young child might have put his hand in the cockatrice's den, and all this "with no hurt." And thus, reducing the *number* of primitive animals on the one hand, and *their nature* on the other, they might have all quietly reposed in the *ark*, appointed by God; the calf, the young lion, and the fatling together; *and* a little child might have led them.

In favour of this view, it may be observed, that even where other circumstances (temperature of seasons, &c.) are the same, a remarkable change in the physical condition of an animal is found to follow a corresponding change of diet. Chevreul found, on feeding dogs for a long time on the herbivorous diet, that the excretions of the animals approached the nature of the excretions of the

herbivora, and lost, in the same degree, the peculiar character of the excretions of the *carnivora*; and if the excretions, so also must the blood, whence most of the excretions are derived; and further, if the blood, then in a degree also, *its nature*. In the infancy of this philosophy no man can say the extent of its application; but it is blindly acknowledged in the training of pugilists, and in it is also cradled the history of imperial Rome in the relation of the finding of Romulus and Remus.

Nebuchadnezzar's dream and its fulfilment is not unworthy notice here:—

17. "And let his portion be with beasts in the grass of the earth: Daniel, ch. iv.

18. "Let his heart be changed from man's, and let a beast's heart be given unto him; and let seven times pass over him.

30. "The king spake, and said, Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?

31. "While the word was in the king's mouth, there fell a voice from heaven, saying, O, King Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken, The kingdom is departed from thee.

32. "And they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field: they shall make thee to eat grass as oxen, and seven times shall pass over thee, until thou know that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will.

33. "The same hour was the thing fulfilled upon Nebuchadnezzar, and he was driven from men, and did eat grass as oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, till his hairs were grown like eagle's feathers and his nails like bird's claws."

The history of Peter, the German wild boy, is also to this purpose.

Again, if her most gracious majesty, Queen Victoria, should please to visit that part of the United Kingdom called Scotland, is it not quite possible that the mountains and hills of Old Caledonia, covered by the bonny Scot, would break forth into singing, and all the trees of the field would clap their hands. *Sic parva, magnis*.

Where, then, the necessity for repudiating the literal meaning?

Unquestionably, a difficulty of some magnitude, as connected with the subject of death, here presents itself for solution; for if animals had not suffered death, then comes the question—What constituted the difference between human and animal existence before the fall?

The answer, however, seems clear: the same difference, comparatively, as now obtains in their present fallen condition; for as both *bodies* would then have lived *eternally*, so do they now live only *ephemerally*; and from the *occasional* purity of our thoughts, and the calm satisfaction consequent upon giving such thoughts their action, we may fairly infer, the glory and happiness of an existence which never deviated from *one uniform course* of innocence and goodness: to all which, being the contemplations of the “living soul” breathed into man by his Creator, (as distinct from animal and vegetable creation, see Genesis, ii.,) all animals must necessarily be insensible.

Far, very far, from leading mankind to appreciate too highly human knowledge, true philosophy is constantly accompanied with humility. Of Socrates we read, that his modesty was no less distinguished than his wisdom. He professed “to know only this, that he knew nothing;” meaning by this declaration, which he often repeated, that he had no other intention than to convince his hearers of the narrow limits of the human understanding.

In the same spirit, Newton, when addressed on the subject of his transcendent intellect, calmly replied, that he felt like a little child picking up shells by the great ocean of truth.

Lord Bacon says, “As for the conceit of those who are of opinion, that too much knowledge should incline the mind to atheism, and that the ignorance of the *second*

causes should be, as it were, a midwife to our piety towards the *first*," I would willingly charge these in the language of Job: "*Will you lie for God as one man doth for another to gratify him?*" For certain it is, that God works nothing in nature, according to ordinary course, but by second causes; and if they would have it otherwise believed, it is mere imposture under colour of piety to God, and nothing else but to offer unto the Author of Truth the unclean sacrifice of a lie. But further, it is an assured truth and a conclusion of experience, that a little or superficial taste of *philosophy* may, perchance, incline the mind of man to atheism; but a full draught thereof brings the mind back again to religion. For in the entrance of philosophy, when the second causes, which are next to the senses, do offer themselves to the mind of man, and the mind itself cleaves unto them, an oblivion of the highest cause may creep in; but when a man passeth on further, and beholds the dependency, continuation, and confederacy of causes, and the works of Providence, then, according to the allegory of the poets, he will easily believe, "*that the highest linkes of natures chaine must needs be tyed to the foot of Jupiter's chaire.*"

You speak of a spirit of exclusiveness too generally prevailing amongst mankind on the subject of religion; the phrase is rather obscure; if you would have it understood as a disinclination for truth, and a general greediness (a kind of moral hysteria) for error, I freely agree in the opinion; but if you imply a steadfast adhesion to the still common version of the book of Genesis,—in other words, a preference for Moses and the prophets rather than for the modern doctrines of man and of creation—then I confess myself guilty of this "spirit of exclusiveness," and frankly protest, that I can

discover more philosophy in *one* verse of Moses than in *all* the bulky volumes I have ever read, which teach that the beginning was not the beginning, that it "palters with us in a double sense," or that the human race proceeded not from one Adam, but from half-a-dozen.

Dr. Prichard.

As negative evidence in favour of the Mosaic theory, I must observe, that Moses (whom Lord Bacon calls God's first notary) was skilled in all the learning of the Egyptians, who were so famed for learning that Plato makes an Egyptian priest say even to Solon, "Ye Greeks are but as little children, you have no antiquity of knowledge, nor any knowledge of antiquity."

But, great as was the wisdom of the Egyptians, Solomon excelled in wisdom all the children of the east country and all the wisdom of Egypt; and yet we read of no *succession of creations*; notwithstanding his vast acquaintance and proficiency in natural philosophy, for "he spake of trees from the cedar tree that is in Lebanon, even unto the hyssop that springeth out of the wall."

I do not by these quotations, Sir, intend an appeal to the "argumentum ad verecundiam," at best a very doubtful and indecisive method; but rather to submit humbly for your consideration, whether it be not quite possible that the difficulty (much exaggerated) of reconciling certain phenomena with the Mosaic account of creation may arise entirely from *our comparative ignorance with the wisdom of Moses*. Primitive creation being given, with the relative "temperature of seasons," to find out the comparative philosophy of the whole human, lingual, animal, vegetable, mineral, nay, even morbid kingdoms, in 6000 years, is surely no slight problem to solve, ere we can advance from one creation to another, *if it be so*.

I cannot avoid the temptation here to remark a striking illustration of the truth of Lord Bacon's opinion, that the Bible is pregnant with natural philosophy; for Drs. Stevens, Prater, Prout, and others, have recently shewn, that a deficiency of common salt, and other saline matter, is one of the most fertile sources of disease.

In Leviticus, chap. ii., verse 13, we find the following:—

“And every oblation of thy meat offering shalt thou season with salt; neither shalt thou suffer the salt of the covenant of thy God to be lacking from thy meat offering; with all thine offerings thou shalt offer salt.”

Here, then, is but an isolated verse, and yet I verily believe, that in the neglect of this verse lies the great increase of pulmonary consumption; for experiment has elucidated, that in this disease the blood is almost entirely deficient in common salt. And in the simple observance of this text I have founded my plan for the “General Prevention of Consumption.”

This, however, is only a *single* illustration of an *infinity* of philosophy, physical and psychical, in which the scriptures, old and new, abound; and which constantly teaches, that what is most acceptable to God is most beneficial to man.

Again: if we descend from the inspired writers, What is *known* of the Egyptian mythology? What *explained* of the Greek and Roman mythology? Nay, of the lost learning of our own Druids what now remains, beyond the stern rebuke of modern vanity, in the monuments of Stonehenge, isle of Mona, &c.?

As intimately connected with these remarks, I may add, that some very simple experiments and observations on the nature and properties of light lead me to conclude, not only that our present views on this agent

Cyclops, the companion of Vulcan, was the son of Cœlus and Terra.

are extremely illogical, but that (strange as it may sound to the prejudiced ear) the Mosaic account of its creation, before, and therefore in a measure independent of, the sun, moon, and stars (Genesis i.), must of necessity be the only true view of its origin ; for the *cause* of light is not its true *nature*, any more than the *cause* of a disease is necessarily *the disease* itself, or that a brickbat is a fractured skull. And, in the elucidation of the Mosaic theory of light, I believe, will be found an explanation of its rectilinear nature, and also of the hitherto astounding and inexplicable *facts*, that although heat increases and *colour* deepens as we approach the *equator*, and whitens as we approach the *poles*, still the temperature of the atmosphere is greatest at the surface of the earth, and hail, rain, and snow, which descend from above, and consequently nearest the sun, are not *black*, but *colourless*. And thus steadily advancing, under cover of what I conceive to be, physical philosophy, I shall endeavour to explain the grand problem, that although the earth has been supplied with light and heat for 6000 years, still no diminution of this glorious agent occurs, for constituting a *condition*, rather than a *material substance* ; it will ever descend from its ethereal heaven, until

“ The great globe itself,
And all which it inherits, shall dissolve ;
And, like the baseless fabric of a vision,
Leave not a wreck behind.”

As this theory of light will shortly be laid before the public, I shall not here enlarge upon its nature, and have merely alluded to it with the view of shewing still further how extremely ignorant we are of the philosophy contained in the Bible. I must, however, observe, that a talented correspondent of a weekly paper uses this language :—“ In the Mosaic theory, light is created before

the sun. Here is a palpable alteration of the original text. No sane person ever existed so utterly stupid as to believe anything so absurd. From the most brutal savage to a Newton or La Place all the human race would equally repel such nonsense." And yet I freely aver my belief, that the opinion which supposes that light proceeds *primarily* from the sun, moon, and stars, is a gross *illusion*, by which I mean, a false *induction* from a true and indisputable fact; as, for example, Baron Humboldt, observing that yellow fever did not occur beyond a certain elevation of the earth's surface, concluded that such elevation was the cause of immunity from yellow fever; but elevated height implies diminution of temperature, and this latter is the true cause of immunity from yellow fever.

Finally, if, in the present state of our knowledge, or rather ignorance, certain physical phenomena (but of which I have never heard or read) *appear* irreconcilable with that construction of Genesis which believes the world to have been created only 6000 years, is it a fair logical induction that they are *really so*? Does not intellect vary as much as stature? Are not subjects difficult of comprehension by *one individual* clearly understood by *another*? And is it not the same of generations?

" We think our fathers fools, so wise we grow ;
Our wiser sons, no doubt, will think us so."

Where, then, is the individual so mad as to believe that the present generation has arrived at the "ne plus ultra" of intellectual comprehension?

Alas! the physical world is but typical of the moral, where we daily see

" Atoms and systems into ruin hurl'd,
And now a bubble burst, and now a world"

of Quackery.

Such, Rev. Sir, is the evidence on which, with the highest admiration for your superior talents and learning, as an humble individual in search of Truth, I beg to ask,—Is not your theory of death unscriptural and illogical?

20, *Clarges Street.*



