

HENRY WOOD



THE SYMPHONY
OF LIFE

THE NEW THOUGHT ARCHIVES

The Symphony Of Life

A Series Of Constructive Sketches And Interpretations

Henry Wood

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The Symphony Of Life

Preface.

Although the general purpose of this book is unitary, in the broad sense, its various studies and interpretations are quite unlike. They touch upon different aspects of life, and their mutual relation is mainly below the surface. The particular order in which they receive attention is therefore of no consequence. A few of them, subject to considerable revision, have appeared in various magazines.

The underlying motif of the author is constructive and not iconoclastic. It is by the positive light of Truth that the shades of error are to be dissipated. There is a deep spiritual hunger among men, the nature of which is often not clearly discerned, and this is the real cause of a universal restlessness. This craving cannot be satisfied upon the plane where the search is most generally made. The higher nature must receive proper sustenance, and failing in that, no physical, intellectual or ethical redundancy can make good such a radical incompleteness. There is a general though mainly a blind quest for the normal divine counterpart which alone can round out the vital necessities of the human constitution. Such a demand is a positive prophecy of supply.

At the beginning of the twentieth century a general evolutionary reconciliation of the higher order is apparent. Everything there is has some fitting place and legitimate office. In the great scheme of the Whole, each church, sect, system and institution, however imperfect, which is striving to uplift men contains the most good for its own particular section of the human family, and its very existence is a witness of such adaptation. As rapidly as its utility is outgrown, in the natural order it will be replaced by one more fitting, and this may be without any overt antagonism or criticism. If one finds his normal hunger more fully met in some new institution, that which previously has been regnant will drop away of itself, and no one need try to strip it away.

That which is truly liberal will not denounce that which is conservative, nor even that which is "narrow." The higher evolution silently relegates everything to its "own place," arbitrary outside judgments to the contrary notwithstanding. Simply bear aloft the truth, or your highest ideal of it, and let it deal with error as the rising

sun deals with darkness. If the shadows are to be sternly fought let the light do the work. Its spontaneous weapons are more effective than those of human forging, be they never so well fashioned.

The authority of the inner Light — which is God in the human soul — may gently replace dictation from without. Truth is impersonal and a mirror-like subjective response to its presentation is the final test of genuineness for every man. The writer of these pages will welcome the application of this touchstone to his own utterances.

I. From The Pre-Adamic To The Human.

A Study in the Higher Evolution.

So he drove out the man ; and he planted at the east of the garden of Eden the Cherubim, and the flame of a sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life. Genesis iii. 24.

THERE is more of philosophy, evolution and even science in the Bible than we often recognize, but they underlie the letter, and are usually set forth in the terms of symbolism. As a literature, also, it is of great interest, and is cosmopolitan in the widest sense. Beneath the surface of its flowing stream of historic circumstance and event, its delineation of personal character and racial institutions, its varying religious rituals, there lie embedded a rich substratum of eternal and universal laws and basic truth. Its inherent wealth receives more profound appreciation now than was accorded at any time in the past.

While it has been widely studied and revered, and technically translated into many tongues and dialects, it is

only under modern conditions, and in the sunshine of late research that its profounder beauty and significance are brought to light.

While few still regard the account of the Creation, the Garden of Eden, and the expulsion of man therefrom, as literal history, perhaps a considerable majority have gone to the other extreme, and count it all as only a kind of misty tradition or primitive folk-lore, of no especial significance. But it is vastly more. While we should avoid reading anything into the text that is not inherent, it remains that esoteric, metaphysical and psychological teachings crop out in profusion. It is true that the authors of Sacred Writ were not scientists or philosophers in the modern sense, and it is probable that they did not technically apprehend the lower and higher evolution.

If, as was formerly supposed, Moses wrote the Pentateuch, except the last eight verses, which give an account of his death, how could he, even metaphorically, teach any truth which was positively unknown at that time? He knew nothing of the X-ray, the phonograph or the solar spectrum, but yet he manifests a perception of certain grand universal principles which must have been acquired without books or instruments. He probably knew little of geology or astronomy, as sciences, but yet his representative account of creative development, through symbolism, receives the virtual sanction of the most advanced science of to-day.

But though the Book of Genesis shadows forth in allegory and metaphor the general truths of cosmology in substantial accord with modern research, this relation is comparatively secondary and correspondential. The great drama upon which the writer or writers of this account lift the curtain, is really a living soul-picture. Upon the surface the narrative appears objective and historic, but in action

and motif it is psychical, spiritual and subjective. Its story is written not only in the race, but it is virtually repeated in every individual unit. It takes all men to make Man. A very able philosophical writer recently suggested that if Tolstoi and Gladstone could have been rolled in one, what a wonderful man the combination would have made ! But even then there would have remained some angles and crevices. It would require the universal combination to make the composite ideal. Says Browning : —

" Progress is the law of life : man is not Man as yet."

The radical difference between the account of the creation of man in the 1st chapter of Genesis, and the forming of Adam in the 2nd chapter, is very significant. In the first account we read, "And God said. Let us make man in our own image, after our likeness." This seems to represent both archetypal and ideal man. It is a picture of the potential ; yet in a certain abstract sense, it was complete in the beginning. That was God's image. In the second account, which deals with expressive and objective personification, it is stated that, "the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground." It is evident that prevailing systems have mistakenly taken the material manifestation for the reality itself. This having been made a starting-point, the error has been installed by implication through the whole historic superstructure. The creation from the dust represents the materialistic idea that man has had of himself. Though really " a living soul," to his own consciousness he was, and now is, a material being. But the imperishable image and likeness of God ever remain back of all degrees of outward personality which imperfectly represent it. Adam is the first and lowest in order among the humanized expressions. He stands for a state of consciousness. He has left the climax of instinct behind and taken one step, which is an infantile degree in the domain

of reason. Successive steps or characters will continue until the last Person will discover his full identity with the divine ideal, and this will be at-one-ment. Sins are the mistakes which are incidental and educative during the progressive states of consciousness. Their penalties are corrective. Salvation is thinking in accord with spiritual perception, instead of with and in conformity to material sense. The reign of disorder and physical dissolution will continue among all personalities which have not fully outgrown the Adamic point of view. The continual "missing of the mark," which is due to immaturity, will steadily diminish with the unfoldment of the spiritual or Christly ideal.

Material man cannot translate a soul philosophy unless it be expressed in sensuous terms, or rather it remains an insoluble riddle until his inner vision is, at least, partially opened. The story of Eden is an intuitive outline of inherent laws and principles which are beyond time, space or locality. It is a sketch of the march of animal man across a boundary into the kingdom of humanity.

The whole Sacred Word, from Genesis to Revelation, is a moral and spiritual mirror, and in that fact lies its unfolding and inspiring power. Its law, poetry and prophecy, its graphic history of persons, tribes and races, its warm, picturesque allegory, parable and metaphor, its lights, shadows, warnings and ideals, its ethics, gospels and epistles, and its long narration of experiences and events ; all primarily symbolize and picture forth forces which live and move in every human soul. Objectively, it is a great current of collective and complex activity, in which there pass before us, kaleidoscopic views of patriarchal and pastoral life, slavery and freedom, institutes of priestly orders and sacrifices, the government of judgeship, the reign of kingship, the wisdom of seer and the warning of prophet, captivity and tragedy, conquest and defeat,

Messianic expectancy and fulfillment, but in a profound sense all these are taking place in every one of us. It is only in the subjective realm that they become warm and vital. Within, they are like the invigorating and illuminating rays of the sun, while without, as mere historic narrative, they but superficially stir us upon the plane of the intellect.

Independent of any theory of special inspiration, or that the illumination of Biblical authorship was unique or exclusive in its kind, it is yet evident that the sacred writers attained an eminence in moral and spiritual perception which made them tower as mountains among the surrounding foothills. It was their internal power to inspire in high measure that gave their writings a place in the sacred canon. Inspiration involves the spiritual altitude of the individual, regardless of time or race. He who looks from a mountain summit sees a vast area spread out before him, and relation and perspective are clearly discerned. He is a seer.

Instinct and inspiration, though manifested upon very different planes, have a striking resemblance in directness and exactitude. The Biblical authors antedate the great modern development of intellect. In the evolutionary order, they were nearer the period when instinct and insight relatively were more dominant. They dwelt in a native and unsophisticated border-land of God and nature, which now is but dimly understood. In an essential way their spontaneous and lofty curriculum was beyond the range of that of any modern university. Our intellectual pride and complex civilization have dimmed our eyes to the clearness of their simple perception and penetration. They have a scattered line of succession in the prophetic souls that have appeared all through the ages. It is, and always has been possible for intuitive souls to see without eyes and hear without ears, and such penetration and openness to the Unseen, is as orderly in its proper field as the boasted

scientific methods of the present day. But the future ideal will include both.

It is of but incidental importance whether Genesis, or the Pentateuch, were of Mosaic or other authorship. The particular human channel is immaterial, but the vision upon which the account is based was a rare one. It involved a positive divine intimacy and receptivity. Whether amid the primitive solitude of Patriarchal life, or within a modern environment of intellectual activity, that soul which habitually lifts itself into conscious contact with the Oversoul gradually develops a faculty for a clear sight of the moral order, latent in all, but having little modern appreciation or exercise.

The Bible is the available record of the inspirations — the word meaning breathed into — of a scattered galaxy of great open minds. But their accounts of these divine interviews are colored in outward expression by temperament and environment. If Isaiah had lived in the nineteenth century, doubtless his message would have been similar to that of Emerson, and the poetic hymns of the Psalmist might have been not unlike those of Whittier or Browning. The prosaic and exoteric trend of Occidental thought has literalized and often almost congealed the warm and poetic flow of Biblical phraseology thereby rendering it superficially inharmonious. When cast in rigid materialistic form, its native sparkle and beauty vanish. But the higher criticism together with the light of evolution, the new cosmology, and recent psychology and philosophy, are all restorative and not destructive forces. New beauty, unity and vitality are evident in remarkable degree. We have a grander and more profound revelation than any past generation could have conceived, because instead of breaking in from without, it is now recognized as the divine quality and voice, in and through man, making itself

audible in his soul. The Book of Genesis, therefore, is an intuitive statement of the laws and principles of human unfoldment, with an epitome of cosmic correspondences. Before considering more specifically the evolutionary significance of the Edenic expulsion and the "Flaming Sword," it may not be amiss to further generalize regarding their context and setting. Hebrew scholars inform us, that that language has very little tense significance. Its verb-forms denote state or condition, rather than time or succession. This knowledge, in itself, should lead us to rise from the rigid limits of form and phenomenon to the inner spirit and its hidden exuberance of divine life and law. If the consciousness of the reader of Scripture be centered dominantly upon the material and objective domain, he finds, and is only capable of finding what is literal and formal, but the developed soul discovers the key and penetrates within. What the Book is, depends entirely upon what one is receptive to. In the deepest sense, the Biblical personalities and events symbolize inner moral qualities, principles and spiritual states.

The great ladder of psychical and spiritual evolution that spans the human scale, has its foot in the Adamic consciousness, and its summit or ideal in that of the Christ. Every member of the race is struggling upward .at some intermediate point. Through every experience of slipping, or falling back, we are to gain some additional skill in climbing and in avoiding pitfalls. We all begin in the Adamic stage of development. Every babe is an innocent little Adam. The first universal error is to count the seen and sensuous as the intrinsic and real. That is the "original sin." To learn that the material form is only the outward expression or articulation of the spiritual and veritable self, is the object of all human experience. One would suppose that this vital truth could be easily and quickly made familiar, but it seems to be the work of a life-time to lodge

it securely in the human consciousness. Man is made in the image of God. As God is Spirit, the seen form cannot be that image, but Adam, dweller in a sensuous paradise, mistakes the shadow for the substance. But the spiritual self is latent within him, and the purpose of existence upon this plane is to awaken it into actualized manifestation.

As told in Biblical similitude, the unfoldment of humanity begins with the Garden of Eden. Pre-Adamic man was not really Man, but represented the grand climax of the animal kingdom. His instinct was exact, but the spiritual, and even the rational faculty was yet latent. He was irresponsible, sensuous and innocent. He was unmoral, for he was incapable of being either moral or immoral. Imagine the type ! What a grand animal ! Physically, how perfect ! What keen senses ! What herculean strength ! How symmetrical the form ! Here was the full ripeness of one great evolutionary subdivision, and the boundary was now reached and to be crossed. Instinct had made no mistakes, and knew of none. How beautiful the .Garden, with its crystal rivers, its perfect climate, and its interminable succession of perfected fruits and flowers ! Nothing that any one of the senses or appetites could desire was wanting. Summon the imagination, and behold the most indescribable wealth of color, form and perfume, in relation with a superlative keenness of capacity for enraptured fascination. Such was the Edenic paradise.

But one eventful day the God-voice in the expanding Adamic soul became audible. The line had been reached. Rationality was born. Infantile stumbling reason now took the helm and mistakes at once began. What a contrast with former unerring instinct ! What a fall it seemed to be ! The threatening shadow of a new principle — a moral law — hung over man, and unrest and discontent began. The beautiful Eden was gone forever, but though " the fall " was

a rise, it did not seem so, and even today the opposite belief has not entirely passed. A great residuum of animalism was carried over, but perfect contentment in it had been lost. But what amazing possibilities were dawning for the future ! This is a picture, not of historic events, but of universal and evolutionary human experience !

Note a few other symbolic features of the great transition. Adam and Eve represent the intellectual and the spiritual, the rational and the intuitive, the masculine and feminine elements in the human soul. The outward expression of these principles, in distinctive sex, is but superficial and incidental. Adam came first in order. The rational faculty being the lower came earlier into manifestation. " First the natural and afterward the spiritual." How true the order of the narrative to the course of evolutionary unfoldment ! The proper equilibrium between rational and spiritual perception constitutes the normal human unit. The ideal union between these fundamental factors, with the spiritual element leading, must take place before the Christ can be begotten and brought forth in human consciousness. When the soul invites the overshadowing of the divine Spirit, the son or likeness of God will make his advent in outward expression.

Adam gave names to things after the sensuous impressions which they produced upon him. The tree of the knowledge of good and evil was set in the midst of the Garden, and the inner Voice, for the first time audible, told man that the penalty for partaking of its fruit would be death ; that is, to his type.

" For in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." Not physical dissolution, which already prevailed, but death to native ignorant innocence, to contentment and

sensuous satisfaction. The ceasation of animal man, pure and simple, was at hand.

One kind of a soul was lost, with the discovery, as of gods, of another. It was a veritable exchange of worlds. The knowledge of good and evil was a new accomplishment. To know good and evil is to gain knowledge by contrast, to discriminate between things which are transient and relative, and those which are positive and absolute. A little later in the narrative, Cain and Abel personify the lower and higher consciousness. In human experience these are in constant repetition, the manifestation of Cain coming first in the natural order. The barbarian of to-day, wherever found, is in the state personified by Cain. But this person is more than an animal and cannot get back into Edenic contentment. He is a stammering learner in the primary class of the school of humanity.

Sin is an experience which comes from ignorance. Redemption is learning to choose the higher instead of the lower. The thorns and thistles, the struggle and pain, the strife and upheaval are incidental to the conflict between the lower and higher consciousness during the education of the spiritual man. Some of the tremendous battle scenes which are pictured in Milton's Paradise Lost, fitly illustrate the contentions which rage in the soul. What amazing charges and retreats, and what signal victories and defeats ! How many times the ground is fought over !

To gain physical strength, one must constantly exercise, which means to overcome some degree of physical resistance. There is a corresponding utility in moral and spiritual obstacles in the higher realm. The temptation and fasting of Jesus for forty days in the wilderness symbolically represents a period of great soul growth, through overcoming. To conquer those subtle antagonistic

forces which are typified by the devil, is to gain strength. Every one must meet, and finally vanquish his own adversary. As shown in the epic poem of Job, he is a normal and necessary character in human development. As the Adam soul goes down in the conflict, the spiritual self becomes dominant, and this brings about an at-one-ment between the conscious ego and the spiritual selfhood. Later in the Pentateuch, Egypt represents the sense consciousness and Moses symbolizes spiritual perception.

Adam is always mistaken in his conclusions, but all moral freedom and voluntary growth of character require that he must find out his errors through experience, for a compelled righting, from without, would make him a dependent automaton. The divine element in man is his Redeemer, or subjective Christ. It is the leaven which must leaven the whole lump. The incarnation—from being merely one finished historic act — becomes the most fundamental and universal principle in the human economy.

We may now take up specifically the symbolism immediately connected with the account of the expulsion and Flaming Sword. It is wonderfully interesting to observe the intimate correspondence between its teaching and that of the highest modern psychological and spiritual philosophy. The ripeness and climax of animalism had come in the Garden, and instinct was about to become subordinate to the rational faculty. In its own time and place the animal nature had been normal and good, but now in its decadence, its inherent deficiency would become manifest, through contrast. How weak, helpless and ignorant the human infant seems to-day, when compared with a trained, docile, Arabian horse, yet how superior in potentiality, in rank, in quality, in divinity ! When primeval man became human, there was introduced such a divine capacity and such unbounded ideals, that their very

immensity caused untold restlessness and dissatisfaction. There was kindled an insatiate desire for knowledge which never was to be entirely satisfied. It was a great hunger with but a morsel of available food in sight. As the new faculty unfolded, it positively forced man out of the Garden. What a contrast between former contentment and present unrest ! Awakened souls are having some similar experiences upon a higher plane today. Our ideals make us impatient with actual attainment.

Man cries out, " O, let me get back into Edenic bliss and contentment, and be rid of these new longings and this unrest. Before his exit from Eden, he seemed only good in his own eyes. Afterwards he knows good and evil by contrast, and even the good seems very imperfect. He turns his face backward toward the Garden-gate, and there flashes before him the terrible Flaming Sword, which turns every way. He may still submerge himself in animalism but he cannot again be an animal. The Sword is tempered with penalty and also with negative spiritual potency. In the new domain these will finally prove educative and stimulating, but he is yet in the dim twilight of that understanding. He has fallen from the exactitude or instinct and the mistakes of the yet crude rational faculty leave him floundering among thorns and thistles. He is unaware that his dissatisfaction is really a hunger for the divine. Go back he cannot, and to go forward means sweat and sorrow. Although he is entering an infinitely higher kingdom, to him it is a " fall " and so it is easy to account for the great tradition. Although another paradise, transcendently more beautiful and pure is potential, and in waiting, it is so far in advance that his dull sense-perception can hardly catch a glimpse of it. He has looked down so long that he is seemingly incapable of looking up.

The trend of the whole cosmos and all that it contains is forward. Pre-Adamic man might animalize himself as he would, but to do so after his rational incarnation as Adam, was to "kick against the pricks." So the animal cannot go back to the vegetal, nor the vegetal to the mineral, nor the mineral to the elemental. A great law cuts off retreat over every evolutionary boundary. The Flaming Sword is everywhere to the rearward. There may be temporary degeneracy, and even what scientists call "a reversion to type," but these are but eddies in the great stream which ever sweeps forward.

Eden is no more for human kind. What a grand demonstration of the divine order, dignity and design! How mistaken the former belief that Eden was a holy and spiritual paradise, and that "the fall" was an historic calamity that must be repaired and the old paradise regained ! The sooner these errors are recognized, the better for humanity, for their rectification is an important factor in evolution itself.

The more deeply we study the human constitution, though it seem paradoxical, the more we see the utility, and even the beneficence of dissatisfaction and obstacle. The rough ground must be tilled and cultivated. Otherwise no strong moral fiber could be grown and no God-like character wrought out. The narrative not only symbolizes the experience of the race, but foreshadows, in degree, that which takes place in every human unit. We must try, not merely to get rid of the thorns and thistles, but to transform them. We are on the highway from a material to a spiritual consciousness. The Flaming Sword is behind, and it is the divine love and goodness which keep it in its place. It would be easier for a man to go back to childhood, or for the blossom again to wrap itself in the bud, than for

one to parry the sword, and scale the walls of the Garden. But even were it possible, the beauty would have dissolved.

The sense of moral incompleteness, as well as the force of spiritual ideals now urges man onward. Thus the positive and negative poles of his nature are both wrought upon to compass his salvation. The Flaming Sword being set up in every soul, becomes a universal guaranty of progress. Eden is now but a sensuous illusive dream. But even yet, it often seems so attractive that we unconsciously start backward, only to find ourselves plunged into a tangle of kindly thorns which guard us from our seeming selves. The beguilement of the serpent is ever repeated, but each time we gain a little more wisdom. All life is progressive life, because it is barred behind. Thus the law of spiritual evolution is the foundation of religion. "The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner."

To stand still in the midst of the universal onward drift is to fight against God, and his orderly law. The friction of such resistance will finally smooth off all excrescences and compel conformity. To remain the same is impossible. Tomorrow will never be like to-day, for the soul can never call a halt. Forces are set in motion which finally will kindle their correspondence within. Their work in cutting away useless material is like that of the sculptor. Only in that way can the beautiful statue be released.

Friends ! We live in a better universe than we ever have imagined. We often have repeated with our lips, " God is Love," but never have practically believed it.

In its essence, evolution is the flow and expansion of life. Darwin and his contemporaries had eyes only for its material and outward expression. The great succession of organic forms upon which they centered their attention