



### On Creation.

"The agitation of thought is the beginning of wisdom."  
"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth."

**P**RIOR to the great beginning,  
When there was no heaven or earth,  
When there was no starlight, sunlight—  
When creation had no birth,  
When in black and boundless nothing,  
Breathless, lifeless, round him fell,  
What occurred to wake his slumbers?  
What was there to break his spell?

Breathless, cheerless, all-pervading,  
Starless, worldless, boundless night,  
Was the Nothing the beginning  
Out of which sprang worlds of light?  
Out of which were made the heavens.  
Countless worlds remote and near,  
And all living, moving creatures  
In the depths of sea or air.

Yet we know not what aroused Him  
To begin the mighty plan  
Of creation in its vastness,  
Forming lastly sinful man.  
Why did He not leave great nothing  
In its harmless, silent space,  
Rather than make man so sinful  
As to damn the human race?

But 'tis said that man was sinless  
Until tempted, when he fell—  
Tempted by a subtle serpent,  
Crawling from the depths of hell?  
Pure and spotless as the lily,  
In its early opening bloom,  
Until tempted by the Devil  
To the shades of sin and gloom.

When that black and boundless Nothing,  
Harmless, lifeless, round Him fell,  
Why did God create the Devil?  
Or conceive an endless hell?  
If creation sent forth evil,  
Or an evil comes of good,  
Then where is the point dividing  
Satan's works from works of God?

When there was no sunlight, moonlight;  
When there was no heaven or hell;  
When there was no place for sinning,  
Or for sinful man to dwell,  
Why was silence ever broken?  
Why was man to weakness born?  
Why were devils made to tempt him,  
And then leave him there to mourn?

Vast and searching are these questions;  
Piercing, probing to the core,  
Peering back beyond creation  
To great Nothing, nothing more.  
Vast, though simple, is the question,  
Piercing, probing to the core—  
Is it true there once was nothing,  
Nothing, nothing, nothing more?  
—[J. A. Stewart.

### The Standard of Morality.

BY R. C. CAVE.

**A**MID the conflicting doctrines of the world—amid the discordant cries of "Lo! here" and "Lo! there," lies the Kingdom of Heaven—thousands of honest-hearted men are asking: "What is the truth? Where is the right? To what standard of morality must we conform?" In answer to this question, Christian theologians and creeds teach that God, through miraculously inspired men, has given us a divine code of morals for the regulation of our conduct at all times, and under all circumstances. It is claimed that the will of a personal God, as it is revealed in the Bible, is "the only

ultimate standard of right and wrong"; that the Bible is "the only star by which the bark of man can navigate the sea of life and gain the coast of bliss securely"; that this book contains "Heaven's will, Heaven's code of laws entire to man"; that this book "defines the bounds of vice and virtue and of life and death"; and that, without this supernatural revelation, we would be compelled to grope our way through life without any standard of morality by which to measure and regulate our conduct.

But this teaching of the theologians and creeds of Christendom is contradicted by all human history. The facts of human experience show that man does not derive his ideas of right and wrong—his standard of morality—from any supernatural revelation. We do not believe that a personal God inspired men to write the sacred books of those whom we call heathen. On the contrary, all of Jewish or Christian faith declare that the heathen world always has been, and still is, without a supernatural revelation of the divine will. Yet that heathen world is not without moral law to govern its conduct. The Buddhist, without a supernatural revelation, has somehow got hold of the idea that man ought to "overcome anger by love, evil by good, the greedy by liberality, the liar by truth"; and that it is wrong to kill, to steal, to commit adultery, to lie, or to get drunk. The disciple of Confucius, with no miraculously given revelation to enlighten him, has somehow learned that a man ought not to treat others as he would not be treated by them, and that the highest virtue is love to all men. He who looks to the Koran for moral guidance learns therefrom that no man can "be a true believer until he loves for his brother what he loves for himself." All these, whom we concede to be without a supernatural revelation of the divine will, have their ideas of right and wrong—their standards of morality—which compares most favorably with our own. And if those whom we depreciatingly call heathen have wrought out a code of morals for themselves without the aid of any miraculously given revelation, surely we have been able to do as much.

And the facts show that we have done as much—that we, like our heathen brethren, have wrought out our own standard of morality. Notwithstanding all our talk about the Bible as a revelation of the di-

vine will, graciously and supernaturally given to guide us through life, we do not practically accept the moral standard which the Bible gives. Men search the Bible from cover to cover to find texts that will prove their theological dogmas and sanction their ceremonial observances, but they have outgrown the Bible standard of morals. No intelligent man of our day claims that the so-called supernatural revelation given to the children of Israel, which told them, when they were about to leave Egypt, to borrow and carry off the gold and silver jewels of their Egyptian neighbors; which required the husband to kill the wife of his bosom if she failed to agree with him in religious faith, and should say: "Let us go and serve other gods"; which, whatever may be said to the contrary, sanctioned polygamy, concubinage and slavery; which commanded the most cruel wars of conquest and extermination, and authorized the distribution of captured maidens among the soldiers as part of the legitimate spoils of war—no intelligent man of today claims that this so-called supernatural revelation of the divine will is to be accepted as a moral guide for us. The most orthodox theologian of today will tell you that you must not live in harmony with God's will as it is revealed in the Old Testament, that you must not borrow your neighbor's jewels with the intention of never returning them, and kill your wife if she does not agree with you in religious faith, and indulge in the luxury of as many wives and concubines as your fancy may suggest and your wealth support. Without fear of contradiction, I may say that the so-called supernatural revelation of right and wrong given in the Old Testament scriptures is not the standard of morality for us.

And when we come to the New Testament, written closer to our time and from a standpoint nearer our own, we still find much from which our more fully developed moral consciousness compels us to dissent. For example, we no longer accept the New Testament doctrine that "the powers that be are ordained of God," and must be submitted to as ministers of God; but by rebelling against the tyrannical powers that were, we have established the great American Republic, founded on the idea that the will of the people is the supreme law before which all powers that be must humbly bow. We no longer hold to the New Testament doc-

trine that it is the wife's duty to obey her husband in all things, and have come to recognize the fact that the wife has rights of which even a husband cannot deprive her. We no longer accept the New Testament doctrine in regard to slavery, but have declared that there is a "higher law" which demands that all men shall be free. We have outgrown many of the commandments of the New Testament, just as the men who wrote the New Testament had outgrown many of the commandments of the Old Testament. Whatever may be said to the contrary, the facts show that men have not been permanently governed by the ethics of any so-called supernatural revelation of the divine will, but have wrought out a standard of morality for themselves.

And what is that standard? It is not an authoritative code of laws telling us the precise thing we ought to do at all times and under all circumstances. We have, and can have, no such standard as that. In the nature of things, such a standard is impossible, for the right in conduct depends upon ever-varying conditions, and is, therefore, variable itself. What is right for me may not be right for you, and what is right for us both, under a given set of circumstances, might be very wrong under an altogether different set of circumstances. No forecast set of rules can meet all the conditions of human life. Since man is a progressive being, the requirements of different individuals, races and ages cannot be the same; and hence a law suited to meet the needs of one man, one people, or one time may altogether fail to meet the demands of another man, another people, or another time. The ever unfolding and enlarging moral consciousness of mankind must inevitably outgrow the law adapted to any one stage of its development, just as a child outgrows the garments suited to its infancy; and it is, therefore, as reasonable to expect the long dresses of the babe to fit the man as it is to expect that any code of laws, human or divine, can be authoritative for all time. There is for us no moral finality, either in belief or in conduct. As some one has well said: "A creed that is anything more than a milestone is a blunder. As we find animals on the road, so is man, and ever must be. We must get accustomed to the truth, that the mind, with ever-widening experi-

Concluded on 5th page.