

The End
of the
Creation.

THE MOTIVE AND END OF THE CREATION.

Supposing the Scriptural doctrine of creation established against Pantheism, Dualism, and Materialism, and as the free act of an Infinite Spirit, it remains to ask concerning the purpose of God in the production of finite nature. As soon as we are disencumbered of the pantheistic and materialistic notion of an immanent necessity of all things being as they are, and separate the finite from the Infinite, we are compelled by the constitution of our nature to ask the Why of creaturely existence. We must seek and cannot rest till we find a cause of all things before they are, and a reason of all things when they are. The question of the final cause is as urgent in the human spirit as the question of the originating cause. The latter is easily answered, and we have been satisfied as to that. But the former, the final cause of all things, is not so easily answered. It might be reserved for the doctrine of Providence, to which it strictly belongs. But it cannot be altogether omitted here. To the humble reader of Scripture nothing seems more obvious than at once to answer: The universe was brought into being for the display of the Divine glory in the diffusion of His communicative goodness. But, simple as this solution seems, each branch of it is burdened with difficulties, and the whole must be supplemented by another clause: according to a design the issues of which are to human reason now, and possibly may be for ever, unfathomable.

Manifestation of
Divine
Glory.

1. No reverent mind can doubt that the manifestation of the Divine glory is a worthy end of all things. But it must be remembered that the Scriptures, our only guide, do not make this the only end: they speak of the glory of God as being proclaimed, and of all creatures as brought into being for His pleasure, and for Himself; but they do not, in express terms, assert that the final cause of creaturely existence is the display of the Divine attributes. We can hardly sever from such a thought the idea of a necessary manifestation: His glory must be revealed, and ought not to be made subject even in appearance to the law of design and final causes. And, to speak with reverence, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion, that, if the manifestation of Deity is the final end of creation, creation must be made eternal. But the free determina-

tion of a personal Spirit to bring a universe into being must have some place in its design for that love which neither in God nor in man seeks only its own things. Hence the true heart of all catholic theology has added the second clause : in the diffusion of His communicative goodness.

2. On the other hand, while a motive of creation was undoubtedly the communicative goodness of God, which brought numberless beings into existence to rejoice in them and make them blessed, the mind cannot rest satisfied in this alone; for the world was created in the foreknowledge of its evil. Men who make Divine benevolence the supreme motive in the creation are tempted to reduce the evil of sin by making this, as Leibnitz did, the best possible world, on the whole, for the ultimate diffusion of happiness. This is termed OPTIMISM, and is harmonised with Christianity by assuming that the great Restoration in Christ will make the evil subserve an infinitely greater good. Moreover, those who insist that, the nature of God being love, the creation of objects of that love was a necessity in the Divine Being Himself, forget that in the Infinite essence love has its own interior satisfaction eternally in the intercommunion of the Three Persons.

Not only
for
Diffusion
of Good-
ness.

Optimism.

3. The only sufficient answer, therefore, is that the ultimate final cause of creation is unfathomable. The supreme design is a secret not yet unveiled. When our Lord said, in reply to a question which closely bordered on the origin of evil, *that the works of God should be made manifest*, He suggested the display of all God's perfections, including His love, but put His answer in such a form as to shut out any further human inquiry. The Creator has given being to a finite universe for the display of all His perfections, for the glory of His name. But we are limited to our own portion of it. To us the universe is our own world ; and we know that creation and redemption are bound up in one. He Who created mankind was the Same Who redeemed the race ; He Who redeemed it created it for redemption. And we believe and are sure, though the mystery is unfathomable, that God's name will be glorified for ever in the issue of redemption, under the sovereign ascendancy of love. So, with regard to the wider universe of creation generally, we must repose in the assurance that it is the sphere of the manifestation of Divine perfections, under the sovereign

Ultimate
Design
Un-
fathom-
able.
John ix. 3

ascendency of His goodness, but with an ulterior end transcending all finite thought. For the rest, this subject links Creation with Providence, and will return upon us.