

CHAPTER II  
THE MIRACLE OF CREATION  
THE MOTIVE OF MANKIND

One of the most interesting disciples of Darwin it was my good fortune to meet, was a man who said he was forced to accept the principle of evolution because he had an infinite belief in the ability of man to raise himself to the highest plane of culture and refinement. Indeed, the biological evolution of man was to him not nearly so interesting as the cultural evolution of man. The history of man was, to him, a story of achievement against fearful odds; and that story was not lessened in value because man had so often revealed a disposition to destroy what he had wrought that was worth preserving.

There was, however, an ever-recurring thought which came to him as to the beginnings of an evolutionary process as it concerned man. He said that, when he regarded the productive possibilities of the earth, it was very difficult for him to understand a creative system that did not include man, for man is the only animal that can deliberately reproduce its own food.

He saw that every animal was not only restricted in its efforts to find and consume its food, but that it was also incapable of making provision against drought, flood, and fire. Animals in their natural state show no capacity to supply any deficiency in the foods they garner. Even the bees and the ants are strictly limited

to natural sources for their honey and their seeds. They reap where they have not sown. They take what they find. But they have no power to produce these things for their harvest. Man, however, has the dual capacity of gathering the fruits which Nature provides and, besides, using these fruits for the purpose of cultivating them. And with this added capacity, he also has another, which is solely his own in the animal kingdom, and that is, of selecting and preparing the soil near his habitation, and inventing and using devices for the protection of the growth of the seed.

Now it is through such reasoning that the mind is conducted to the motive of mankind, which is, to satisfy his desires and needs with least exertion. And in this respect, he differs from all other animals. In a remarkable work, which has not yet been published in this country, I find the first lucid attempt an anthropologist has made, to describe the rise of man above his animal state. This work is by Dr. R. R. Schmidt, and it is translated by Dr. Macalister, the Professor of Celtic Archaeology at University College, Dublin. It is called *The Dawn of the Human Mind, a Study of Paleolithic Man*. Dr. Schmidt says:

“But the forms of external material culture are only the expression of the fashion of the soul within. The flame must be watched, the fire must be fed. This calls imperatively for a concentration of the senses; and the new fundamental impulse of *care* is awakened. Man alone *cares* for the morrow—food, fire, work, undertakings, these join link to link, in a chain which never ends. This is what life demands of man, whose being is now set upon its pedestal; it is the higher tension of self-consciousness, slowly gaining force.”

## PRIMITIVE MAN'S "NOUS"

Unfortunately, there exists no biography of early man. What he had to encounter is not recorded, but it ought to be easy for those who indulge in fancies to imagine what were his tasks and vicissitudes. Our anthropologists have sometimes attempted a reconstruction of the early productive processes, but I do not think they have been successful in impressing the mind of the layman to such an extent that an urge was born of the lesson, to learn from it anything of economic or industrial importance; anything, indeed, that would in some way explain to him its applicability to his own condition.

In histories of civilization, the authors, as a rule, present man as a social and, sometimes, as a political animal. Philosophers for thousands of years have disregarded man as an economic animal. Long before he reached a social stage, or was enmeshed in any political scheme, man was not far removed from the instinctive routine of animal existence. The pet theory that the family is the foundation of the State can only be imagined by looking back on man as a parent. But no one would dream of looking back on the mammoth, the monkey or the mouse, and considering any one of them as likely creatures, because of their parenthood, for forming a State. It is, of course, very hard to imagine our standing with the first man, in the midst of his family, and looking forward to the time when somebody would invent the State for him.

Now this primitive man, without any social aspiration or imaginings of a State, was a creature who was left entirely to his own resources. And, I think that this anarchical notion is worth pursuing because, in the

original scheme, there seems to have been no provision for a political State. Strange as it may seem to so many of our modern philosophers, early man had no one to advise him, no one to provide for him, and no one to restrict his movement. He was left entirely to himself. He was without politician, without police, without social or State aid in any particular. But somewhere in the creature there was secreted an idea which he was to discover, that was more powerful than any he has ever used. I say that this idea was secreted in himself—for him to discover, and that weapon was wit, or, to use the homely phrase, "nous". It differed so vastly from the substitute which is found in other members of the animal kingdom that his wit has gone on developing eon after eon, while the wit of the monkey and the mouse remains just where it was when the business began.

#### EARLY MAN VERSUS THE ANIMAL

What did the discovery of this secret do for the cultural development of man? At first, man could do no more for himself than the other animals could do; indeed, in many practical respects, less. He strove to satisfy his hunger, to rear his young, and to protect himself from the beasts.

Comparing early man, his weakness and helplessness, with the animals of strength and speed, fosters the notion that he must have been gifted with a power which would aid him in overcoming his fearful disadvantages. The amazing thing about it all, when we compare him with the animals, is that he survived. We know that numbers of animals succumbed in the struggle for existence and disappeared from this sphere. Not so with man, who was physically far weaker than many of the specimens that no longer inhabit the earth. The animals

which were a menace to his existence, and which have survived the ordeal of the struggle, were undoubtedly possessed of physical attributes incomparably greater than man's. When we think of their strength, speed, dexterity, vision and scent, we realize that there was something of the miraculous which aided man to overcome them. And the extraordinary point to be observed in this matter is that man has not, in the evolutionary process, developed greater physical prowess, but that, on the contrary, he has in the refining process lost many of the attributes which enabled him to overcome the beast. When he fashioned the tool (which later became the club, then the spear, and, later still, the gun), he was already becoming a less fit person for actual contact without a weapon.

#### THE FIRST TOOL

The relationship of the tool to the hand is clearly demonstrated by Dr. Schmidt. He says:

"This first shaped tool is proportioned to its prototype, the human hand (proportion of length to breadth about 1:2). From a correspondence with the human hand, with its rounded base and the projecting point of the finger, it derives its pointed oval-form. To the hollow palm of the hand corresponds the thickened body of the tool. Here we find ourselves in the presence of a morphological law: the first *shaping*, in handicraft as in art, is based upon the discriminative outlook of man upon his surroundings. Thus the first formed tool, with its complete adaptability to the grasp, is the antitype of the hand and of its efficiency."

But the most notable fact about this creature of creation is that which seems so transparent to me: that

he, himself, really did, without the aid of a psychologist, find the secret which was implanted in him at the beginning. It was nothing acquired; it was inherent within himself, and he, unaided, discovered it. Now no animal ever did that! And what did he do when he discovered it? He invented capital. That was man's first great achievement. And how did it come about? Why, he became discouraged, depending on fickle Nature for his sustenance; he was neither mouse nor monkey. Probably he noticed that the animals round about him strove instinctively to satisfy their desires and needs with the least exertion, but that they could do nothing to mitigate their labor when there was scarcity. He must have seen that so long as he had to depend on natural fruits, his life would be precarious, just as life was for the animals. And this set him to brood; that is, to brood in a positive sense. The brooding wrought a miracle; the idea struck him that he could invent an implement to save his hands: capital.

The relationship of hand to brain is also established by Dr. Schmidt, who explains that the tool-making hand was responsible for much of the development of the brain; and furthermore, that the molding of the intellect was a factor in refining the features of the individual. These are points to be remembered as we proceed with the analysis.

From that moment, man must have realized that it was possible for him to produce his own food, whereupon he fashioned a spud: a digger. Probably he tore a branch from a tree in autumn when the sap had left it and, bruising it upon a stone, he fashioned a point. And with this spud he labored the earth. When he saw the success of this process, and knew something of the value of his discovery, he soon realized that capital

is a most beneficent thing for man, because it is wealth produced by labor used in the production of more wealth.

#### SETTING UP THE FIRST ALTAR

Curiously enough, this creature, set down in a world in which he had to rely entirely upon his own resources, achieved (what would be considered today) the impossible. He passed from stage to stage, for milleniums, perhaps, without the aid of counsellor or policeman. And it might well be said that man is the miracle of creation, for he was not only, as Walt Whitman said, "full of multitudes", but he was full of miracles. Think of the one he wrought in setting up the first altar, long before society, State or church appeared upon the scene.

Looking back, the philosopher cannot see man the individual through any other vistas than those of society, State and church. His biographers have always seemed to think that he was the product of either the medicine man or the tribal chief. No one gives him precedence; no one pays tribute to his original powers. Of course, all this depends on the datum line from which the investigation is made. Having arbitrarily laid down the date, period, or epoch, when evidence will be accepted for the survey, it would, presumably, be unscientific to use the imagination for the purposes of supplying unrecorded evidence. Anyway, for the moment, let us accept the datum line of the investigators and ask ourselves this question: did primitive man invent a medicine man to make an altar for him? That does not seem reasonable! The man who invented a spud without the aid of anyone, who relied entirely upon his own wit to invent a labor-saving appliance, was not the person who would invent a title and a sinecure for a man who was to make an altar for him. If he made the spud, he

could make an altar. So I take it, altars preceded by a long, long time, the coming of the medicine man.

And suppose we accept the evidence that has been gathered regarding spirits of the various obstacles man met, including the spirits of the dead and those spirits of storm, drought, and fire. Is it conceivable that all the comparatively modern theogony would have been invented before man realized that the gratitude which he felt, when he put in his seed and reaped his harvest, should be expressed in some formal way, to a power outside himself, to whom he should show thanks for the abundance he enjoyed? The evidence that has been gathered about the primitive theogony is interesting, and useful, if it is placed in its proper period in the biography of man. But as it is now recorded, it pays no tribute to man's sagacity, when sagacity was to him a necessity every hour of the day.

Primitive altars are themselves satisfactory evidence that no medicine man was on the scene when they were erected, because all early altars reveal the work of a tiller of the soil, and tilling the soil is not one of the tasks of a medicine man.

#### GHOST AND FEAR THEORIES

How the ghost and fear theories, in connection with the rites and worships of primitive peoples, developed into a series of cock-sure assertions, regarding early man's spiritual disposition, is something of a mystery. Nowhere have I found, in works dealing with this matter, the slightest inclination to indulge in some imaginative analysis of the phase in his development, which must have preceded the coming of the ritualist and the ghost-finder. It is not difficult to imagine our early ancestors, so busily occupied with satisfying their

primary urges for the satisfactions of hunger, love and reproduction, that there was little time for them to indulge in other than those elementary fears which were natural to all animals. The driving force of hunger itself was so insistent that the search for food, day in and day out, kept primitive man's mind fully occupied, for it may be imagined that he could undertake no foray without danger. He had to go warily about his business, and preserve himself against the attacks of ferocious animals and reptiles. Such fear as he suffered in this respect could not be stilled by any rite the medicine man could invent. No theology of which we know has provided a god for the purpose of defending man against the beast. Therefore, natural fears, if they may be so called, forced him to think of means of defense, and the occupation of searching for food was made doubly intensive by having to think constantly of how he could preserve himself against attack.

When he reached the agricultural stage of cultivating land and harvesting for the future, he had learned that the tool he had fashioned to assist him in his work, could be used, also, as a weapon. Therefore, it seems to me, it was not until he became a husbandman, that the medicine man appeared upon the scene. I can imagine a member of his family—a dreamer—watching the hard-working cultivator, and wondering how it was possible to get a share of his toil and live at ease. Examining all the pretexts that might have been put forward by the dreamer for creating a sinecure for himself, I find that there is only one that could have had any weight at all with the producer of food, and that one is the menace of unseen enemies who would threaten his welfare. It was necessary, therefore, for the dreamer to let his imagination loose upon natural accidents, all

within the experience of the husbandman, such as drought, flood, blight, disease, and death. Hence, the spirits of these natural accidents, which probably made the rude beginnings of a theogony, became the bogies which the dreamer conjured up, when he desired to share the produce of the laborer. Possibly this dreamer was the first of the long line of the family of Cagliostro. Anyway, if my analysis will bear examination, it must be admitted that an advanced stage of thought had been reached by that time, and the peopling of the neighborhood by spirits was certainly not the work of the father of a family, who was busy from morning till night producing the necessaries of existence. All that is the work of a schemer—a person who has not only leisure, but the intellectual equipment of a dramatist, also.

The theory of the ghost origin of religion has always seemed to me to be afflicted with an anaemic plausibility. It had no background worth speaking of, and the data on which it was formulated was not so ancient as it appeared. It was taken from an arbitrary datum line selected by those who fathered the notion. But there is something that has been overlooked in this matter and it is the point I tried to make above: of the cultivator's inspiration, which moved him to the first religious observance, and that was thanksgiving for favors received. It required no dreamer, no matter what his genius, to note the daily miracle of germination and growth. And, according to all classics, the workers of the soil realized that the sun, the earth, and the seed, were blessings which came with the regularity of the seasons. Yet, it must have been long before he anthropomorphized these elements. When we realize that the earliest sculptures which deify the sun, the earth, the seed, are

only a few thousand years old, and man's history is now thrown back something like half a million years, it makes us wonder what he was doing before he reached the stage of making a carving upon stone or wood. Therefore, it is not difficult to imagine that when the dreamer came upon the scene, the altar had been set up, and the husbandman had turned to artistic pursuits, and fashioned, in his own image, the figures which we now find upon the early monuments; and these figures gave the dreamer his ideas of adding to the theogony much to his own advantage.

#### EARLY RELIGION

Dr. Schmidt shows clearly that the magic which came forth from the individual soul of early man preceded, by long periods, the magic that was practiced by the priests. Schmidt says:

“From the depths of the primeval soul there rises the world of myth, the illimitable ‘knowledge by revelation’ possessed by mankind. As years passed in their thousands, and the experiences which they brought were contemplated, the foundations of accepted forms of belief were laid, which expressed a creative conception of the Divine. The mythologies of antiquity, and of the northern peoples along with them, are echoed, even in our modern life. In ‘heathenish’ popular customs, in the ‘superstitions’ of our folk, the spiritual adventures of prehistoric times, the imagery of primitive insight, are living still; a divine inheritance even yet charged with the eternal forces of Magic.”

It is not to be assumed that magic had any other purpose than a purely practical one before the priest came upon the scene with his troop of good and evil

spirits, and all the paraphernalia that was necessary to present them melodramatically to the folk.

Man's first religion was a priestless one. Further discovery by the anthropologist and the archaeologist will undoubtedly present the history of early man in quite a new light. Already his beginnings are receding further and further into the background of obscurity. In his introduction to *Modern Mythology*, Andrew Lang says:

"The history of mythology is the history of rash, premature and exclusive theories. We are only beginning to learn caution. Even the prevalent anthropological theory of the ghost origin of religion might, I think, be advanced with caution (as Mr. Jevons argues on other grounds) till we know a little more about ghosts and a great deal more about psychology. We are too apt to argue as if the psychological condition of the earliest men were exactly like our own; while we are just beginning to learn, from Professor William James, that about even our own psychological condition we are only now realizing our exhaustive ignorance. How often we men have thought certain problems settled for good! How often we have been compelled humbly to return to our studies! Philological comparative mythology seemed securely seated for a generation. Her throne is tottering!"

That was written forty years ago.

#### THE DATUM LINE

It is almost unnecessary to point out the reason for selecting a datum line for the starting point of the investigations of an anthropologist. He proceeds as a scientist, concerned chiefly with tangible evidence but, in recent years, the evidence has been gathered so widely and so richly that he has been forced by the

very wealth of material he has discovered to shift his starting point back, and back again, until now, because of the evidence found in the excavations in northeastern China, the datum line carries us back some five hundred thousand years. Dr. Herrlee Glessner Creel, in his instructive book called *The Birth of China*, says:

“Speaking in the most general terms, we can divide late Neolithic culture in north China into three types. The first has comparatively little to distinguish it from that basic type of Neolithic civilization which spread itself, so widely and so mysteriously, over most of the known world, including America as well as Eurasia. *The men of this civilization hunted and fished, but they were primarily agriculturists.* They raised millet, and possibly, other grains and vegetables. They made meal, grinding it on ‘mealing-stones.’ The pig and the dog are the only domestic animals which they knew in the earlier period; large numbers of both were raised for their meat. Like Neolithic men everywhere they made tools and weapons, chiefly knives and axes, of stone which they ground to a smooth surface and polished. They used the bow and arrow, wove baskets and cloth, and sewed with bone needles. They made a great deal of pottery. In the earlier period most of it was of rather poor quality and greyish in colour; designs, sometimes of no little beauty, were often pressed into the wet clay.”

I emphasize in the above quotation his sentence, in italics (which are mine) because it seems to imply a datum line, and again the anthropologists are dealing with concrete evidence of a culture made by man. Rarely do we find a suggestion of a stage in man’s development before that of hunting or fishing. Very often, indeed, in the books published thirty or forty years ago, one received the impression that man began

either as a hunter or a fisher. Now I have always thought that there must have been a long stage of development which preceded that of hunting and fishing. A hunter without weapons does not seem reasonable to me. I can, however, imagine a fisher providing himself with food without the aid of a dart, a line, or a hook. Entirely apart from the enjoyment of shellfish, which he could gather in the rivers and on the shores, almost at will, I can easily fancy that he would find, in isolated pools, quite a number of fish which he could catch, by a process of draining. Perhaps evidence will be found later on, that man practiced the vocation of the fisher long before he reached the stage when he could make a weapon for hunting purposes. But Dr. Creel states that the first types in the Neolithic culture in north China were men who were primarily agriculturists. And this to me seems quite plausible for the following reasons.

#### EARLY MAN AS AN AGRICULTURIST

It is hard to imagine, at the dawn of man's intelligence, his taking so arduous and risky an adventure as hunting, to provide himself with food. The simplest line of procedure for him would surely be concerned with cultivating cereals and fruits. It is true he might have been a trapper at a very early stage, that is, soon after the dawn of intelligence. It is not unreasonable to imagine that he could fashion a trap for snaring wild animals, but only as an adjunct to the cultivation of seeds. To admit this does not in any way conflict with the primary business of the cultivation of the land. The anthropologist is now satisfied that at a very early stage, the pig and the dog were domesticated for the purpose of providing meat for him.

Therefore, agriculture seems to have appealed to him as the simplest and easiest manner of providing

himself against want. It may be that when the idea came to him of gathering seeds and planting them, he prepared the earth for them by turning it over with his hands and, no doubt, the pain and exertion of such a process must have forced his intelligence to find some easier way of doing this, namely, with the aid of an implement. Hence, the spud—probably the first piece of capital he used. Anyway, it may be accepted from the evidence that has been gathered so far, that man was first an agriculturist.

It may very well be that man was from the first fitted for agriculture, and that the primary industry should be his regular vocation. Perhaps one of the reasons for the present chaos is that man has departed from his original vocation and become, to a great extent, a maker of and a dweller in cities. At any rate, it must appear to the thoughtful that the further man has departed from agriculture, his natural vocation, and the further he has developed manufacturing, the greater has become his desire for luxury, and the business of making a living for the millions has become harder and harder.

All the legend and myth, with which I am familiar, confirm this view: that agriculture was man's primary vocation. No matter where we look in the eddas and sagas, we find an emphasis laid on this pursuit of man, which is unmistakable in its reality. It seems to have been an ever-present note of man's work in the history of the race. And, as I have said above, the earliest symbols he fashioned in connection with his worship, represented the elements present to his notice every day, which served the ends of tilling the soil. The sun, the earth, and rain, are most conspicuously symbolized in his examples of sculpture. Curiously enough, he seems to have been a Trinitarian from the earliest time. The

altar symbols which have been produced in evidence in recent years reveal a stage when he worshipped the Creator—sun; the earth—mother; and the son of the union of the Father (Creator or sun) and Mother (earth). The son represents the crop, the produce, germinating in the earth and fructified by the father. All very simple, when one considers the gratitude that must have risen in the heart of man, when he found abundance was the response to his exertion. And an exertion which was comparatively nothing to that which he was called upon to expend, before he fashioned the first tool! In support of such a contention, the classic historians and poets supply many illuminating texts in their literature.

#### DESTINY OF MAN AS AN INDIVIDUAL

So far, there is no good reason why we should not imagine, in lieu of tangible evidence, that early man was placed here to work out his own destiny—not as a group, but as an individual. And why should it be laid down by the scientist that in this connection our imagination should not play its part, and have a value, as does the imagination of the philosopher-historian, who has dealt so prolifically with the “beginnings” of the State. There is no tangible evidence in support of this theory of the State; it is all imagining, and I doubt whether it deserves the value historians themselves give to it. Certainly it is no more worthy of respect than the imaginings which hold the notion that man’s beginning was anarchistic, so far as any terrestrial governance is concerned, and that he, as an individual, worked alone through all the primary stages of his development. The one theory is just as good as the other. Nay, the latter is better, for we know the individual preceded the group.