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THE TRANSACTIONS
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OR
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NOTE.

ON MAN'S PLACE IN NATURE.

As regards theories on this subject, one, which has been somewhat urged of late, is thus referred to by the President of the Institute, Sir G. Gabriel Stokes, P.R.S., in his paper *On the absence of real opposition between Science and Revelation* (Vol. XVII, p. 195). He says:—

“Some have endeavoured to combine the statements of Scripture with a modified hypothesis of continuous transmutation, by supposing that at a certain epoch in the world's history mental and moral powers were conferred by divine interposition on some animal that had been gradually modified in its bodily structure by natural causes till it took the form of man. As special interposition and special creation are here recognised, I do not see that religion has anything to lose by the adoption of this hypothesis; but neither do I see that science has anything to gain. Once admit special divine interposition, and science has come to the end of her tether. Those who find the idea helpful can adopt it; but for my own part this combination of the natural and the supernatural seems somewhat grotesque,* and I prefer resting in the statement of a special creation, without prying into its method.”

Sir J. William Dawson, C.M.G., F.R.S., in his new work, *Modern ideas of Evolution*, thus refers to man, anatomically considered:—

* Of course it is not to the combination in itself that this is meant to apply, but to the combination in our attempted reasoning; in other words, to the endeavour to infer from merely natural laws what was the condition anterior to the stage at which a supernatural power is supposed to have intervened.

“Anatomically considered, man is an animal of the class *Mammalia*. In that class, notwithstanding the heroic efforts of some modern detractors from his dignity to place him with the monkeys in the order *Primates*, he undoubtedly belongs to a distinct order. I have elsewhere argued that if he were an extinct animal, the study of the bones of his hand or of his head would suffice to convince any competent palæontologist that he represents a distinct order, as far apart from the highest apes as they are from the carnivora. That he belongs to a distinct family no anatomist denies, and the same unanimity of course obtains as to his generic and specific distinctness. On the other hand, no zoological systematist now doubts that all the races of men are specifically identical.