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[p. 4e]

### ‘Man’s Birthplace.’

It is curious to observe that the speculations of the most recent advocates of evolution place the birthplace of man in nearly the same region of the earth as that to which Christian tradition has assigned it. Mr. Alfred Wallace, distinguished evolutionist, in his newly-published work expresses the belief that man originated somewhere in the Asiatic plateaus. The Christian traditions of the Middle Ages have almost uniformly placed Eden in Asia. The belief, or perhaps we should rather say the supposition, in which most people have been brought up of late years is that the “garden eastward in Eden” was situated between the rivers Tigris and Euphrates. This belief, of course, rested upon the fact that the Euphrates is mentioned in the account in Genesis. Various mediæval stories have placed Eden all over Asia, from the extreme east to the extreme west. One account, indeed, places it in an island just east of Asia, which is, of course, Japan, and many modern enthusiasts regarding that island would say that this was not a bad guess. One account places it in Armenia; another in Cochin China. But the favorite locality is the neighborhood of India. Christian tradition, indeed, usually points to the tropics as the origin of the race. Although insisting that the temperature of the country was equable, the accounts describe a pomiferous vegetation and flowers that could only be found in the tropics. It is said of the Irish monk who found Eden, and whose accounts incited St. Brandan to set forth on his voyages, that on his return to the abbey his garments were still fragrant with the odors of Paradise. One mediæval preacher, however, came somewhat nearer the scientific conception. This was Mefferth, who got into trouble by denying the immaculate conception of the Virgin. This preacher, in his second sermon for the Third Sunday in Advent, discusses the locality of the terrestrial Paradise, and claims St. Basil and St. Ambrose as his authorities for stating that it was situated on the top of a lofty mountain in Asia. It was so high that the water which rose over Ararat was only able to wash its base. Although the most various beliefs prevailed as to the locality of Eden, all Christendom agreed in holding that there was somewhere in Asia a locality such as is described in the second chapter of Genesis. There is one curious evidence of the fullness of this belief on the part, indeed, of a not very wise man. James I. held that, as there was a river in Asia which parted into four streams, so there must be one in the western hemisphere. It was upon this idea that he instructed Capt. John Smith to sail up the James River, thinking that one of the other three branches no doubt to be found at its head might lead out into the Pacific Ocean.

Now, let us compare with these ideas Mr. Wallace’s surmises as to the probable birthplace of man. The scientific view differs at two points from the Christian tradition. One is that he had his origin in an open plain rather than in a wooded region. Monkeys are essentially arboreal in their structure; their hands and feet are adapted to climbing trees. The distinctive character of man, on the contrary, is his special adaptation to terrestrial locomotion. He can hardly, therefore, have originated in a forest region where the chief vegetable food was fruit, to be obtained by climbing. The other point of difference is that man originated in the temperate rather than in the tropical regions. “It is more probable,” says Mr. Wallace, “that he began his existence on the open plains or high plateaus of the temperate or sub-tropical zone, where the seed of indigenous cereals and numerous herbivora, rodents, and game birds, with fishes, molluscs in the lakes and rivers and seas, supplied him with an abundance of varied food.” In a region

such as this he would develop skill, first as a hunter, trapper, or fisherman, and later as a herdsman or cultivator; we have proof of this succession of employments in the early history of man.

But Mr. Wallace holds that Asia is the probable birthplace of man. Man is related to the apes known as anthropoid, *i.e.*, resembling man. It is not believed that he is descended from any of these apes. There is, by the way, a popular impression that Darwin held that man is descended from some of the higher apes now existing. This is, however, a mistake. Although man resembles these species very closely, he also differs from them very widely. The belief of the evolutionist is that he and the anthropoid apes are descended from a common ancestor. But man must have originated in the same region as the anthropoid apes. These apes do not exist, and have apparently never existed, in America. The birthplace of man must, therefore, be looked for in the Eastern Hemisphere. But recent inquiries also exclude Africa. Africa is known in former ages to have been separated from the rest of the Eastern Hemisphere. In those ages Madagascar was part of Africa and separated from Africa before Africa was joined to Asia. In Madagascar, therefore, the fauna of ancient Africa exist, and anthropoid apes are not to be found in Madagascar. There is proof that man existed before the union of Africa with Asia. It is in Asia he must first have existed, because there only do we find traces of early anthropoid apes, those now existing in Africa having been acquired from Asia after the union of the two continents. Mr. Wallace also considers the complexion found in Asia, the Mongolian, which is midway between the black of the negro and the white of the Caucasian, to be the natural primary color of mankind. Climate turned this color into black in Africa and into white in Europe. He also hints that the reason why we have not found the earliest progenitors of our race among the rocks is that no part of the world's surface has been so little explored by the geologist as this very region of Asia in which he holds that they existed. It is there he expects, sooner or later, to find the missing link.

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*The Alfred Russel Wallace Page*, Charles H. Smith, 2015.