

Benjamin Kidd's Social Evolution.

For the Review.

Some weeks ago reference was made in these columns to Benjamin Kidd's well known work "Social Evolution." On that occasion the bearing of the author's views on Christianity, was taken into consideration. It may be of some profit, owing to the continued popularity of the book, to say something in regard to the underlying principles adopted and advocated in its pages.

One of the most prominent of these principles is, that the "struggle for existence" is the force by which life in its more complex forms has been and is evolved. Other Evolutionists such as Herbert Spencer and Dr. Drummond co-ordinate with this force the "struggle for the life of others." This author regards the "struggle for existence" as the only evolving force met in the higher as well as in the lower forms of life.

Another of the principles advocated in the work is that this law of evolution does not commend itself to reason. To quote the author's words: "It seems impossible to conceive how the conditions of progress could have had any sanction for the host of exterminated peoples," again, "The conditions of progress can be viewed complacently by science, but it can hardly be said that they can have a rational sanction for the Red Indian in process of extermination," also, "The conditions of existence . . . can apparently have no rational sanction for a large proportion of individuals." Such statements go to show that the author, while maintaining that the "struggle for existence" is the only evolving force, finds himself incapable of justifying such a method of progress.

A third principle which occupies a very fundamental position is that the place of Religion in the process of Evolution is to give sanction in spite of the opposition of Reason to the method of Evolution through the "struggle for existence." In the earlier stages of Evolution before Reason appeared on the scene there would be nothing to oppose this method of progress. When man however, appeared all this would be changed. His reason would inevitably object to such a method and would refuse to fulfil the conditions that went to secure progress. The result would naturally be an end of all evolution. To prevent such a disaster the influence of Religion is brought to bear. To Religion it is given to overcome the objections of Reason to the method of progress by the "struggle for existence." This Religion is to do by introducing the altruistic spirit that is willing to sacrifice the individual to secure the progress of the species. Evolution says: the individual must be sacrificed to secure the development of the species. Reason answers: the individual is not disposed to submit to such an arrangement. Religion comes to the aid of Evolution by introducing the altruistic spirit which will persuade reason without convincing it to submit to the evolving method that requires the sacrifice of some to secure the progress of others. In other words according to the author the function of Religion in the process of Evolution is to overcome the opposition of reason to the method of Evolution through the "struggle for existence."

Reference might be made to other principles adopted by the author. It must suffice for the present to remark on those above mentioned. In regard to the view that the "struggle for existence" is the only evolving force it is not too much to say that the author is behind the most recent statement of the theory made by Evolutionists. If anything has been established by this school of philosophers it is that the "struggle for the life of others" has had as much to do in the upward movement of life—as the "struggle for existence." Indeed, the statement is made by recent Evolutionists and with considerable show of reason that without the "struggle for the life of others" life could not even be maintained much less be developed. Consequently, whether Evolution is accepted or rejected it must be regarded as a defect in the theory to claim that the "struggle for existence" can account for all the varied forms of the phenomena of life and this can hardly fail to arouse suspicion in regard to the author's solution of the social problems with which he deals.

In regard to the statement made that the method of Evolution through the "struggle for existence" cannot commend itself to reason it may be said that this is an admission that goes to condemn the whole theory. To say that there are difficulties in connection with every theory that cannot be easily explained away is to repeat a commonplace statement. But to say that one of the fundamental principles of a theory cannot be justified by reason is to condemn the entire theory of which it is a constituent. To say that there were difficulties in connection with the method of Evolution through the "struggle for existence" might leave the theory of Evolution intact, but to say that this method of Evolution is as a method condemned by reason is to condemn the theory of which it forms so important a part. The Christian Apologist

has ever with confidence traced the hand of a wise and benevolent Creator in the very lowest form of life. And the fact that he could do so has ever been regarded as one of the evidences for the existence of such a Creator. The admission of this author, were it made necessary by the material at hand, would force the Christian Apologist to reject this evidence hitherto relied upon and to admit that there was no trace either of wisdom or goodness in the phenomena of life. In this admission, therefore, there is dealt a serious stroke both to the Evolutionist and the Christian Apologist. It is only just to add, however, that more recent Evolutionists who give much place to the "struggle for the life of others" do not leave themselves open to this objection. It should also be said that while the admission of this author is the logical sequence of the first principle stated, all Evolutionists of his school have not thought it necessary to make an admission so fatal to their theory.

The third principle stated is that the function of religion in the process of Evolution is to provide the altruism that would overcome the opposition of reason to this method of Evolution. Man endowed with reason would inevitably object to the method of Evolution that requires him to sacrifice self to secure the Evolution of the race. Religion appears and through its altruistic spirit subdues this objection. Here also a serious difficulty presents itself. For the altruistic spirit is destructive of the spirit that begets the "struggle for existence." The "struggle for existence" is purely selfish. The altruism of religion is purely unselfish. The one, therefore, tends to destroy the other. If then the "struggle for life" is the only evolving force, the introduction of religion to the extent that it begets an altruistic spirit brings evolution to a standstill. It is, therefore evident that here also the author is inconsistent with himself.

Offence Given to the Devil.

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A certain honest and God fearing man at Wittenburg, told me, says Luther, that though he lived peaceably with everyone, hurt no man, was very quiet, yet many people were enemies to him. He comforted him in this manner: Arm thyself with patience and be not angry though they hate thee; What offence I pray do we give the devil? What ails him to be so great an enemy unto us? only because he has not that which God has; I know no other reason of his vehement hate toward us.

Was the devil in the case at all? It seems clear that he was. Our Lord points out how he yokes men to his chariot in the case of Peter who would turn Christ aside from the path of duty if he could; "Get thee behind me, Satan; for thou art an offence unto me; for thou savourest not of the things that be of God, but those that be of men." An offended devil finds agents through whom to work, among his own people. He is the god of this world and has hosts of worshippers, and legions of workers who are pleased to do his will. He will even at times, working on the lower nature of God's people get them to serve him, and become great instruments of evil. He makes his hand felt through the grip of his followers, and his voice heard through their cry, and his power known in the influence they exert. He is no painted devil. He is no bold figure of speech. He is no mere creature of the imagination. He is a veritable evil spirit of great capacity and courage, and set against God and all of good in dead earnest. He "now worketh in the children of disobedience." There he reigns and maintains his rebellious force. That is his chosen ground. He blinds the minds of them that believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God should shine into them. He steals away the word out of hearts that are thoughtless, lest they should believe and be saved. He is the adversary of God's people.

When the gospel of God's grace is preached in its purity, and the mercy of God in Christ is disclosed to their minds of men, so completely and perfectly meeting their miserable estate, that they are aroused to consideration, and encouraged to flee to God and embrace the pardon offered to them in the gospel. Then the devil is highly offended, then he rages in his wrath, and throws his fiery arrows thick upon the heads of those who have robbed him, or into the hearts of those who have deserted him. He roars to terrify them. He strikes to wound them. He beets them with manifold discomforts to cause them to desert Christ and return to him again. The temptations of John Bunyan are well-known. He says, "Oh! many a pull hath my heart had with Satan for that blessed sixth chapter of St. John." Again, "This scripture did most sweetly visit my soul, "And him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out," John 6:37. Oh the comfort that I had from this word, in no wise! As who should say, by no means, for nothing whatever he hath done. But Satan would greatly labor to pull this promise from me, telling of me that Christ did not mean me, and such as I but sinners of a lower rank, that had not done as I have done. But I would answer him again, Satan here