

Dangers from Secularized Sociology.

Just now sociology seems to be the great fad—especially among the clergy. The inquiries that come to an editor from all quarters seem to indicate that it is regarded as the one all-important subject before the world. There are indications of danger also in this connection. The dangers arise chiefly from the secularized sociology. THE HOMILETIC REVIEW has introduced the thorough and comprehensive presentation of sociology from the Christian point of view, by Dr. Stuckenberg, under "The Social Problem," in order to help its readers to Christian views on this subject.

The vast mass of material on all subjects that is now being urged upon the attention so persistently by the secular sociologists is largely based on the materialistic system of Mr. Spencer. It can scarcely be regarded as science except in a loose and empirical sense. It is rather a heterogeneous mass of facts and fancies. Its advocates generally ignore the all-important elements in society, and hold and advocate materialism without knowing it.

It may be helpful to point out some of its fallacies, scientific and practical:

Its scientific fallacies are all of a piece, arising out of the assumption of the truth of the evolution hypothesis.

1. It attempts to make the methods of physical science the sole methods.

The social unit is the individual. Physical science can approach and study this unit from one side only—the outside. Social science can approach and study it from the inside as well—the inner properties on which the properties of the aggregate—of body and soul—depend. It is bound to study these inner facts because they are the all-important ones.

2. It tacitly assumes that society is an *organism* that unfolds along fixed lines by the simple principles of biology.

Now it is not an organism except in the loosest analogical sense. An organism has not only an organic arrangement of parts, but also a pervading principle of life. The life of society is life only by violent figure of speech. Society is made up of many living beings in whom life is a secondary element as compared with mind and will—and in whom reason is bound to upset all the calculations of the biologists.

There is no such evolution of society independent of man and of God as these men assume.

3. This leads to the further fallacy of confounding "evolution" with "social progress." The two are absolutely diverse and opposed. In evolution there is "the reasonable sequence of the unintended" in a series of events; in social progress, "the reasonable sequence of the intended." The former ex-

cludes will, mind, as having no place in it. So, Mr. Spencer and all his friends. The latter includes as the essential element will, mind, man, great men, God, and the divine will. Nothing would be easier than to show this from business, social, and national life, or from history. Deliberate intention on the part of men—great men—God—enters as the shaping force.

4. This fallacy of identifying evolution with progress leads to the further fallacy of identifying both with the results of the "struggle for existence."

The "struggle for existence" may be an important factor in the animal and physiological world, and may have importance as an agent in the social world; but it is not the chief nor the essential thing there. The part played by the design and the intention of inventors, authors, workers, etc., is the supreme element, and is readily separable from every evolution element. The struggle that causes social progress is thus easily seen to be, not the brute struggle that these men regard it as being, but a struggle—on the whole beneficent—of the few against the few. The end is the domination of the fittest for the ends of life, in directing the productive power of the masses for the increase of production, rather than the survival of the fittest by the death of the unfit.

But there are some practical fallacies in the secularized sociology that specially concern the preacher.

1. It substitutes reform for regeneration, and that largely through the back and the stomach. That is a fatal error. Bushnell said: "The soul of reformation is the reformation of the soul."

2. It reverses the rational and Gospel method of reaching and molding men.

That is to make use, not of scattered facts, but of great formative ideas. These appear first in great men and great works; then in others of high order; and they are finally embodied in customs, institutions, arrangements, that keep these ideas always before the masses. The mass of twaddle that the unbelieving sociologists propose to substitute for the great truths of the Gospel would inevitably result (1) in utter confusion of the popular mind, and (2) in the destruction of Christianity.

3. From the side of human nature—both in hearer and preacher—their method is an irrational and impossible method.

Singleness of purpose, concentration of aim, unity of doctrine in Christ, constitute the secret of success in preaching.

Paul said: "This one thing I do." Christ said: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God," etc. The whole truth is well summed up in the First Epistle to the Corinthians, "Covet earnestly the best gifts. . . . And yet show I unto you a more excellent way. Tho I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity," etc. The better way for the Christian or the preacher to exert a powerful influence over men is by keeping the attention always fixed on divine love with its transforming and molding power, and working through that.

Mr. W. H. Mallock is doing a good work by calling attention to some of the scientific fallacies. The preacher needs a level head just now, if he is to get the best light and escape the faddists.