

PACIFIC CHRISTIAN MESSENGER.

"GO YE, THEREFORE, TEACH ALL NATIONS."

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A New Aspect of Natural Selection.

BY PROF. BORDEN P. BOWNE.

The survival of the fittest is the great key which, in the hands of our advanced scientists has unlocked so many of the mysteries of mind and organization. Mr. Darwin has familiarized us with it in its application to organisms, and Mr. Spencer has emphasized its significance in psychology. The latter has built up an entire system of mental science on this conception. Mind itself he views as an adjustment of inner relations to outer relations, and those thoughts are adjusted which lead to survival. In this way natural selection is brought into play in the mental realm. Those beings whose thoughts are ill-adjusted to the nature of things must speedily collide with reality and perish. Only those organisms can possibly survive whose inner relations or thoughts are adjusted to outer relations or things. Hence, the adjusted survive, and by heredity their mental tendencies are integrated and transmitted. In this way instincts, beliefs and forms of laws of thoughts arise. As such, they express in a short-hand-way, the conditions of survival. This is the gist of Mr. Spencer's psychology.

We have no intention of disputing the principle of natural selection in mind; but rather to point out some of its prominent bearings upon the faith of the future. Mr. Spencer in his "Data of Ethics" has given us a glimpse of a millennium which is to result from the principle. He points out that its inevitable outcome must be to produce a race of men who will be so adjusted to their environment that they shall find their chief happiness in work, and who will be as eager to do their work as they now are to get their wages. In the long run, the lazy, the shiftless, and the unduly selfish will be eliminated, and the thousand years of peace will begin.

But it is to be regretted that Mr. Spencer has not considered the bearings of the principle on the beliefs of the future. Indeed, a certain inconsistency is observable in the writings of all the theorists concerning the application of natural selection to belief. They are all ready to apply it to the laws of merely formal thinking, and when we ask a reason for the superior cogency of these laws, they tell us that a universal experience must result in universal laws of thought. But from this it would follow that in a general experience, must have a very high probability. No belief can become general which is not adjusted to reality. This is a necessary inference from

the principle of natural selection as applied to mind. It creates, therefore a feeling of surprise and concern that those who appeal to the principle should so often reject all the general beliefs of the race as totally baseless; whereas, on their theory, a general belief has the highest possible warrant. For example, the belief in theism and future retribution are common to mankind. By the assumptions of the theory they express the conditions of survival. They are then adjusted to reality, and we may adopt them with unhesitating assurance. But, oddly enough, this implication of their view never occurs to the speculators; and they even at times declare that the perennial beliefs of the race are suspicious on that account if the theory be true, ill-adjusted beliefs cannot survive.

But passing by this inconsistency, we wish to propose and consider the following problem; given natural selection as a universal principal in mind to determine the faith of the future. It is plain, if the race is to continue, then beliefs which lower and enfeeble either individual or social life must finally be eliminated; and those beliefs on the other hand, which lead to more and fuller life for both the individual and society must gain, the human mind to themselves. Otherwise, the fittest would not survive, which would be contrary to the hypothesis. We must bear in mind, too that in this theory there can be no question of absolute truth, but only of survival; or if there be any absolute truth, it is revealed only through survival. But here the embarrassing fact comes out that the new views, if true, must necessarily be eliminated, as not adjusted to the end of survival; and if not adjusted, then by the terms of the theory, they are not true. Compare theism and atheism. The belief in a righteous Judge of all the earth has an undoubted value of society and the individual. The highest and most valuable satisfactions of the individual spring directly from it, and as an idea it is the great support of righteousness in private and public action. The atheist would deny this; but having denied God, he does not stop at denying anything which stands in his way. We call his attention to the fact that atheistic saints are very rare appearances, and are generally explicable by the environment. Whenever we hear of an atheistic tribe, we know that it is in the pre-human stage of development. It is beyond question that the actual conscience of men finds its chief stay in the belief in God. It is equally unquestionable to common sense that to destroy the belief would lead to a very general destruction of moral and social order—at least, among the rabble. Indeed, it is whispered that the private life of many of the advanced thinkers already shows certain egocentric tendencies and a relaxation of moral principle. But such a state would mean non-survival, and hence non-adjustment, and hence untruth. Natural selection, there, can only take the direction of rooting out atheistic beliefs and confirming theistic faith. We cannot stop even with agnosticism for this is only another phrase of atheism. Nothing short of the Christian conception of God can give the idea its full power and lead to the best results. Behold then, natural selection working toward Christian theism!

A similar argument is possible with reference to immortality. Any view which limits our life to earthly existence ends sooner or later, in pessim-

ism, despair, and self-abandonment. As between two tribes, one of which holds to the christian conception of God and the future life, and the other holds that matter is all and that death ends in all, there can be little doubt that life will take on higher and more stable forms in the former case than in the latter. There will be a higher estimate of man and his rights, and hence greater philanthropy and benevolence in general. Life, too, will lose the horrid irony, which it always has to a thoughtful mind, when death is supposed to end all. The good will find the highest possible encouragement to right action in their belief, and the bad will find the highest possible discouragement in it. Thus the richer and fuller life must go with the broader hope and the richer faith. But this means survival for the former, hence adjustment, and hence truth. It means also non-survival for the latter, hence non-adjustment, and hence untruth. Even if we should allow that right action might be maintained for a time without these beliefs, it must be allowed that when purely held, they are powerful adjuncts of hope, happiness, and good conduct. Hence they will always have an advantage over any system which attempts to ignore them. In the long run, this advantage must tell by rooting out all opposition.

We might continue this argument, and show that New Testament Christianity must be the faith of the future if natural selection is to determine our beliefs. Let any person accept in good faith Christ as his teacher, and master, and there is no doubt that such a person will be more valuable in every relation of life. He will be a better father, or husband, or son, or neighbor, or citizen. His inner life, too, will take a higher tone, both in its aims and its satisfactions. Again, let any community honestly adopt the teachings of Christ, and the knottiest problems of political economy will solve themselves. The threatening specters which disturb our social peace will vanish. As a belief, Christianity furnishes the best possible platform for both personal and social action. And being true as a fact and a great world-force, natural selection shows that it must finally displace not only all other religions, but all irreligions, as well. Atheism, materialism, agnosticism must vanish, because they do not lead to the highest and fullest personal and social life. Relatively to Christianity, they lead to non-survival, and hence are unadjusted, and hence are false. And, as those who appeal most to natural selection are atheistic and materialists, it looks much as if they were to be hoisted with their own petard. Modern atheism has been based mainly on the claim that natural selection can produce adaptations without any designing intelligence; and now it appears that the same principal is at last to root out atheism.

Now, to the average disciple of natural selection all this will seem bizarre and even absurd. Natural selection is not to be used in such way. The unpractised reader, on the other hand, will probably miss the point entirely. For the enlightenment, therefore, of all whom it may concern, we point out that our present concern is not with the truth or falsehood of natural selection in belief, but with its implications as a principle. And we insist that, if Mr. Spencer's claim is sound that our beliefs express only the conditions of survival, then either

there is no truth, or certain conclusions follow which he has not drawn. The general beliefs of the race in God, immortality, and retribution could never have arisen if mal-adjusted; and as well-adjusted they have the only mark of truth possible on the theory. Again if the principle be true, then those beliefs which lead to the richest and fullest personal and social life must, in the long run, eliminate all others. Thus natural selection points to Christianity as the probable faith of the future. It clearly points to the dying out of all the theories of man and his destiny which are held by advanced science. Who would have thought it! But logic is great and must prevail. For all who may be inclined to quarrel with the conclusions, we restate the problem: Given natural selection as the determining principle of belief, to find the faith of the future. We commend it to all Spencerians as a profitable subject for reflection.—*The Independent.*

Sunsets.

This is the way the new editor of the *California Advocate* gives an artist friend devoted to brilliant sunsets his first experience with Western sunsets:

"Well we do not know that we have anything better in the way of sunsets, but when it comes to fog, that is our forte. We can put up more fog to the square inch than any spot on earth except London.

"We went through the Golden Gate with the most extravagant hopes of seeing things, the ocean, the shores, the ships, the seabirds, the golden light shimmering over the rolling waves, the—well, what we did see was an old lady crawling into her berth, seasick, and the fog so dense that it seemed difficult to get through it,—and the deck of our vessel. We heard the screech of a fog horn, and our own steam whistle, and that is what we heard. We saw a streak of the sea we were running in, and Santa Cruz after we ran into it; but coming back from Monterey we made up for the lost time, and had a good view of ocean and shore.

O, friend of ours, the sun does not set out here.

It goes early to bed and covers up. In the morning it gets up its night-gown, and does not put in an appearance until after breakfast.

Here we ride down town on a thing that runs itself. We do not want any sunsets, while we have that and Dennis Kearney's set."

Weather Report for July, 1880.

During July, 1880, there were 2 days during which rain fell, and 0.25 in. of water, 18 clear days, and 11 cloudy days, other than those on which rain fell.

The mean temperature for the month was 65.10°. Highest daily mean temperature for the month 78°, on the 15th. Lowest daily mean 55°, on the 10th.

Mean temperature for the month at 2 o'clock P. M. 77.25°.

Highest record of thermometer for the month 94°, at 2 o'clock P. M., on the 15th. Lowest thermometer 52°, at 7 o'clock A. M., on the 28th.

The prevailing winds for the month were from the North during 27 days, South 3 days, N. W. 1 day.

During July, 1879, there were 2 rainy days and .92 in. of water, 18 clear and 11 cloudy days. Mean

temperature for the month 63.63°. Highest daily, 80°, on the 26th. Lowest daily, 54°, on the 4th.

T. PEARCE.

Eola, Or., Aug. 2, 1880.

—It is all very well to talk about the advantages of travel—the culturing influences of travel; but it must be borne in mind that to travel is one thing, and to gain the advantages of travel is quite another. The "tramp" is a great traveler; but the advantages of travel, to a tramp, in his mental or esthetic culture, are by no means always apparent. A tramp who has been ten years on the road has had fine opportunities of observing scenery and of studying human nature, but he is not always in advance of men who have remained about-home meantime, either in refinement of taste or in his acquaintance with the ways of the world. So far, the tramp is like a great many tourists—in fact, like the majority of tourists. As a matter of fact, the average tramp enjoys scenery quite as much as the average tourist; and he gains more practical knowledge from his travel; for the tramp commonly has his eye on the country he passes, and on the people he meets,—for selfish considerations, if for nothing more,—while the tourist more frequently looks to his accommodations of travel, and is anxious to make an impression on others rather than to gain any impressions of them. Travel does not of itself give any love for scenery, or any desire after knowledge. That love and that desire must exist within one's self at home, or it will not come out away from home. And those who have it at home will find more enjoyment in the little glimpse from the window of the upper room in the city, of a neighbor's garden, or of the vines over a porch across the way, or of a bit of cloud scenery down the open street at sunset, and they will learn more of human nature in the study of the traits of their immediate acquaintances, or in their reading, than is gained by most persons who have had several seasons in Europe and have traversed the American continent in its length and breadth. And of those who go away from home with the love of beauty and the desire for knowledge in their minds, the ones who gain most are, as a rule, not the ones who travel farthest, but those, perhaps, who settle down quietly in a lovely spot among the mountains or by the sea-side, and look out on nature in its ever-fresh and ever-changeable moods, with an appreciation of all that they see, and a purpose of learning all the lessons that are set before them. If you cannot travel in these midsummer days; if you must rest at your city home, or at one place away from home—thank God that you can gain, just where you are, more of the lessons of truth and beauty than the tramp or the tourist who expects to acquire all that he thinks worth living for by simply moving on.—*S. S. Times.*

—The *New York Tribune* says: "The readiest way for a mediocre man to gain notoriety is to proclaim himself an infidel and attack the Bible. His blows may be as a hen's pecking, but they are sure to attract notice because of the holy and tender regard in which the object he assails is held by the noblest part of the race."

—Never threaten. Seldom scold. Refuse firmly. Consent cordially. Seldom find fault. Commend often. Do not hurry. Do not worry. Avoid sarcasm.