

Religion and Evolution
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Evolution and Religion.

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Outline,

1. Definition and scope of the theory.
2. Who are its supporters?
3. Who are its opponents?
4. Definition and basis of religion.
5. The conflict between the theory and our religion.
6. Our duty with regard to this conflict.

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The theory of evolution, which at present is the only scientific way of accounting for the various phenomena of nature, is itself one of the products of evolution. It explains its own existence and that of every thing else. It does this, not by calling for acts of special creation or for miracles but by the processes which are going on before our eyes to-day. Its truths are by no means confined to any one branch of science but are universal and are manifest in all growth and development.

The theory in short, so far as the matter of the universe is concerned, is that — all planets, suns, and stars and life originated from a great nebula or fire-mist which once filled the space now occupied by the worlds. It holds that all changes tending to bring about these phenomena are going on to-day and, therefore, asks only for a knowledge of the facts to be observed at the present time to explain the formation of the worlds and the existence of life. The nebula, on cooling and condensing must have solidified into worlds and stars and, as evidence of this, we know that the smaller planets

-are now cold while the larger ones are yet hot but rapidly - cooling.

After land, water and air appeared - then came life but not by a miraculous leap from a pile of dust into mature man nor from spare-ribs to noble woman. The question will then be asked, how do you account for the development of organic from inorganic matter, or living matter from dead. Science holds that no matter is dead. It has discovered a primitive cell, composed chiefly of nitrogen and albumen, which is the element of all life.

The theory of evolution explains the distribution of fauna and flora; the condition of the races of mankind; and all moral, political, and religious development. It shows a continuous progressive change in the natural phenomena, according to certain laws and by means of resident forces. Embryonic development is the type.

Before going farther I will say that one thing that should cause us to lay aside our prejudice and give this subject due consideration is, that nearly every student, or person capable of passing judgment on

it accept some theory of Evolution.

It seems strange then, does it not, that intelligent persons will oppose a theory that is perfect in every respect and is most strongly supported by scholars who have studied it most and who have devoted their whole lives to scientific research? However strange it may seem there are a large number of the people who not only condemn the theory, but denounce its supporters as infidels, fanatics and lunatics. The supporters, however, are proud to be classed with such lunatics as, Chas. Darwin, Prof. Tyndall, and Herbert Spencer.

The opponents of this theory can be divided into two classes, viz; those who haven't given the subject sufficient study to be able to judge as to its merits or demerits, and those who hold a personal prejudice. Those belonging to the second class very likely belong to the first also, i.e. because of their prejudice they will not give the subject sufficient attention to enable them to understand it. The chief cause of this prejudice is the supposed clash of the theory and its truths with those of

religion, and this point we will discuss more fully.

First let us note that a conflict between religious truths and scientific truths is impossible. No truth can contradict another truth. If a contradiction exists - then it follows that one of the supposed truths is false and should be discarded. Scientific truths are deduced from facts that are open to our observation at any time but the same cannot be said of the supposed religious truths. Religion, like science, is a human product and cannot of necessity be in advance of the age in which it was born. They have both obeyed the laws of evolution in the past and must continue to do likewise in the future. We would now ask, why do people attempt to overturn the very latest products of science by the superstitions of the ancients who were the babes of civilization? Why do we accept a theory of creation which was conceived by those infant minds and reject one which is the product of the combined efforts of the greatest scholars from the time of Christ to the present day? Why do we not accept the

scientific theories of those old fossils - as well as their religious views. The reason is because of that barbaric element, still lingering in our natures, which causes us to consider every thing connected with our religion so sacred that its truthfulness cannot even be questioned. In other words, if the bible says so, it is so whether it is proved so or not.

What then is religion? What is Christianity? Religion is nothing more nor less than a theory as to the relation in which one stands to his God. Christianity is but one of these many theories, so named because first taught by Christ. All of the religions are but different theories of the same thing.

We are under no obligation then to support a certain theory, or a part of it, simply because it pertains to the relationship of God and man. It is just as likely to be wrong as any other supposition with an equal amount of fact in its foundation and we must that the foundation of many of the present religious opinions are very destitute of facts.

It is but human nature to oppose a theory

which conflicts with a more or less generally established belief. Ancient history gives us excellent examples of this. The Greeks once supposed the sun to be the fiery Chariot of a powerful and treacherous God and resented the change of this opinion, which to them was as sacred as any Christian doctrine is to us, as firmly as modern theologians resent the theory of evolution.

The opinion many have of those not holding the Christian religion is that they are the most wicked, savage and brutish people on earth.

Why is not the negro who kneels before the fetich as good, in the religious sense of that word, as he who kneels before the Cross. The Parsee fire-worshipper bows before the sun. The Hindoo walks on hot coals and sharp edged swords. The Chamanian worships the image of his ancestors. The Buddhist sits for hours and even days and reads from his holy book. The Quaker sits and silently awaits the moving of spirit. And the protestant bows in prayer.

The followers of all these religions from Fetichism to Christianity have been inspired by the same passion, the same feelings and

desires were in each heart. Their beliefs were in accordance with their time. That they were sincere is not doubted for what would they not suffer to please their Gods.

How can any one point out the difference between their blind devotion and ours?

Every one of them was right for they were doing what they thought was right. It was their duty to do as they did and they acted with the greatest sincerity, according to the dictates of their consciences. How much greater do they desire, and no doubt will obtain, than the "Sunday" Christian, a species of humanity so abundant in this age.

We can now see that religion, or any theory of religion as Christianity, is not composed of iron-clad principles. Our religion is not the true one, but only the topmost bud on the yet small but rapidly growing branch. Let us then seek to find the

"Father of all, in every age,

In every clime, adored -

By saint, by savage, and by sage, -

Jehova, Jove, or Lord."

Some people seem to think that no inquiry can be made into the descent of man

without denying the existence of an omnipotent God. How much are they like those old intellectual fossils who denounced Sir Isaac Newton as an atheist because he had taken the universe out of the hands of God and given it over to a law. The fact is that the evolutionist gives God infinitely more credit than do his orthodox brethren. The latter give the Almighty power to make all things while the former gives him power to make all things make themselves. The evolutionist accounts for such phenomena as the existence of man by a knowledge of the facts to be observed at present while his opponents seem to think they are well enough acquainted with the divine style to judge as to the probable course of its action.

We often hear the terms science and skepticism used in such a way as to lead us to believe that science breeds skepticism. What if this is true? Science we know, can only mark the limit of the known and the unknown. It cannot then be irreligious, i. e. opposed to the true religion. Now if science cannot be irreligious, but still offers reasons for skepticism with regard to any part of a religion, is it

not evident then, that the said fact of
that religion is deficient and should be
brought up to the present standard of
civilization? Let us then harmonize our religious
views with the highest and best thought of
the times and we will then be as near to
truth and to God as it is possible for those
of our age.

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