Religion

For centuries, scripture and theology were the focus of prodigious amounts of scholarship and publishing, dominated in the English-speaking world by the work of Protestant Christians. Enlightenment philosophy and science, anthropology, ethnology and the colonial experience all brought new perspectives, lively debates and heated controversies to the study of religion and its role in the world, many of which continue to this day. This series explores the editing and interpretation of religious texts, the history of religious ideas and institutions, and not least the encounter between religion and science.

From Comte to Benjamin Kidd

Robert Mackintosh (1858-1933), a professor at the Congregationalist Lancashire Independent College, traces the influence of biology and evolutionary thought on the study of human ethics and society during the second half of the nineteenth century in this 1899 book. He begins with Comte's founding of sociology, and continues with the renewed appeal to biology for the understanding of human affairs found in the work of Darwin, Spencer and their circle. He then looks at Benjamin Kidd's Social Evolution, published in 1894 (and also reissued in this series). Fifty years after Comte, Kidd argued that sociology required further grounding by a new recourse to biology Mackintosh supported Kidd's view. If biological clues are to afford guidance for human conduct, Mackintosh contended, they must be supplemented by a clearer moral and religious vision, and in philosophy by some scheme of metaphysical evolutionism. His work marks a transition from Darwinism to a new Hegelianism.
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From Comte to Benjamin Kidd

The Appeal to Biology or Evolution for Human Guidance

ROBERT MACKINTOSH
FROM COMTE TO BENJAMIN KIDD
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THE APPEAL TO BIOLOGY OR EVOLUTION
FOR HUMAN GUIDANCE

BY

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‘CHRIST AND THE JEWISH LAW,’ ETC.

London
MACMILLAN AND CO., LIMITED
NEW YORK: THE MACMILLAN COMPANY
1899

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DEDICATED
WITH WARM REGARD
TO
The Reverend Principal Scott,
B.A., D.D., LL.B.,
AND TO
RECENT AND PRESENT STUDENTS OF LANCASHIRE
INDEPENDENT COLLEGE
PREFACE

The historical sketch and criticism here attempted had its proximate origin in two consecutive years’ work with a senior class of sociology at Lancashire College. In 1896-97, essays were prescribed on topics suggested by Mr. Benjamin Kidd’s *Social Evolution*; while the seniors of 1897-98 attended lectures covering rather more ground. The material thus collected has been again revised and again considerably added to. The literature of the subject is always growing. Some books of consequence, old or new, must have been overlooked. Still, it is hoped that the subject itself has well-defined limits. The appeal to biology, outlined by Comte, newly defined and emphasised by Darwinism, has now been stated in the most extreme form logically possible. Mr. Kidd’s book holds that significant position.

In studying the questions raised, the author has found himself, though with certain grave reserves, more and more thrown back upon philosophical principles learned at Glasgow, above twenty years ago, from the present Master of Balliol College.
I wish to express thanks for kind help on different points; to Professor Henry Jones of Glasgow University; to the Rev. A. Halliday Douglas, Cambridge; and, among others, very special thanks to Professor J. Arthur Thomson and Mr. Norman Wyld. Both Mr. Thomson and Mr. Wyld, while busy with important work on the theory of natural selection, found time to give an amateur valuable information bearing on the meaning and merits of Weismann’s doctrine of Panmixia.

R. M.
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II. Darwin treats variation as casual, i.e. as a thing with no bearing in itself on the purpose of the species—His theory allows this assumption—But does not prove it—We all habitually understand the theory in that sense, e.g. in contrasting natural selection with use-inheritance—On the fact, evidence is wanted—Conceivably variation may choose very irregularly between many fixed possibilities—This seems to point back to disconnected laws, as in last section.

III. Even on Darwin's own view he is hardly entitled to call the process of evolution natural selection—Aggregate range of possible variation is fixed by the nature of the material—Two agencies must be taken together—Of the two the varying organism, not the blindly selecting environment, seems the better to account for rise of new qualities—Summary of I. II. III.

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Now, Weismann had riddled his own position with qualifications—Kidd also appeals to biology by a doctrine of the social organism; but everything here depends on philosophy, not biology—(3) First, the doctrine of reason; reason is formal, as with A. J. Balfour, Darwin, Drummond—For Mr. Kidd also holds that biological law applies without a break to rational man—Yet reason disturbs process of evolution—And Bagehot, Stephen, Drummond have noted other changes due to it.—Can it be wholly evil?—Balfour and Kidd repudiate Kant or Coleridge’s deeper sense of “reason”—But they cannot avoid such sense if it lies in the word and in the fact—(4) Secondly, doctrine of religion as anti-rational—Not = “future judgment”; that is rational!—Can we believe the irrational?—Does not Kidd tamper with Christian equalitarianism?—Biologically; variation may be purposeful and profuseless—Historically; reason is progressive; by rational methods—Religion its fulfilment—It needs a force to give it motive and constancy.

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