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## REVIEWS OF BOOKS.

THE ORIGIN AND GROWTH OF RELIGION. By W. Schmidt, Translated from the German by H. J. Rose, M.A. *Methuen & Co., Ltd.*, London. 15s. net.

The study of origins is a pursuit which attracts the student of science, but the study of the origins concerning man and all matters pertaining to him is a pursuit which naturally attracts the attention of all men. Whatever views a man may hold of Genesis and however firmly he may believe in the Biblical revelation, he is none the less attracted to the study of all that the world is learning of the past. As the spade of the archæologist is revealing to us the traces of civilization ten thousand years and more prior to the Christian era, or when anthropologists discover for us human remains possibly fifty thousand years or more old, we naturally speculate on the relation of suchlike facts to the revelation of God given to us in the Bible.

But the study touches us more pertinently when we investigate what the history of the human race has to tell us of the origin of religion. The last two or three generations have seen an increasing interest in the study of religious origins as the science of ethnology has gradually developed. For most readers, however, the study has had but a barren interest since the science has been so bound up with rigid evolutionary views. The presuppositions of the evolutionary view of the origin of religion have usually been tied down to the supposed axiom that the higher must always come later than the lower. The evolutionist could never see monotheism in the early history of religion, it must always come last and it must always be preceded by polytheism, which itself must be preceded by more elementary forms of belief. Thus Comte imagined that man worshipped all natural objects but without any thought of a spirit in them. This he considered was followed by the conception that natural objects had a spirit to be worshipped. From this came polytheism and then only at a later stage came monotheism. A similar theory with perhaps more elaboration was put forward by Lord Avebury, but the writer whose ideas dominated the scientific world a generation ago was Professor E. B. Tylor. The latter inferred that primitive people obtained an idea of the soul from sleep and death and from dreams and visions. This was supposedly followed by the belief that beasts and plants as well as man possessed soul as well as body. From thence came ancestor worship, and then polytheism, out of which eventually came monotheism.

A breach in this rigid evolutionary idea came when Andrew Lang enunciated the view that both higher as well as lower religious conceptions were to be found amongst primitive peoples, and the breach was widened when monotheistic ideas were found in Egypt,

Babylonia and other places. A further stage has now been reached by the publication of the important book now before us. Father Schmidt is a Professor and teacher in the University of Vienna and he has incorporated in this volume some of the work upon which he has been engaged for some years. He first of all gives in outline the methods and results of those who have been engaged in investigating the origin of religion. He brings together the main results of most of those who have attained eminence in the pursuit of the origin of civilization and of religion. For this alone the book is invaluable. The main importance, however, lies in the fact that Professor Schmidt runs counter to the still dominant evolutionary theories by asserting that belief in a Supreme Being is found wherever primitive peoples are discovered. So far from these primitive peoples being atheists or animists, they address the Supreme Being as Father, and they regard Him as Creator, Eternal, Omniscient and Omnipotent. So far from primitive people being totemistic in their ideas of God, they look upon Him not as the God of one tribe but of all men.

Professor Schmidt's work is thus revolutionary of the former evolutionary theories of the origin of religion, and it is important in that it is based not on *a priori* considerations but on the historical method and on revealed facts.

It is perhaps too early yet to dogmatize about some of his conclusions, but his work shows at all events that a belief in a "Supreme Being is to be found among all the peoples of the primitive culture, not indeed everywhere in the same form or the same vigour, but still everywhere prominent enough to make his dominant position indubitable" (p. 257). Such a statement is epoch-making and should commend Professor Schmidt's book to the attention of every serious student of religious origins.

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A STUDY OF CONVERSION. By the Rev. L. Wyatt Lang, M.A.,  
Vicar of S. Mark's, Plumstead Common. London: *Geo. Allen  
and Unwin, Ltd., Museum Street.* 10s. 6d. net.

In these pages Mr. Lang describes the course of spiritual development in man and the part played therein by the process of religious conversion. In his thoughtful and suggestive introduction he gives some account of the best-known works on the subject, and he has gathered into these pages many new facts and new viewpoints which will well repay their study. In his Foreword, Dr. William Brown (Wilde Reader in Oxford University) speaks of Mr. Lang's illuminating treatise as "an important contribution to the study of the development of Christian personality." There is a considerable quantity of biographical matter of which Mr. Lang makes effective use. Here will be found some account of the conversions of men and women of past ages as well as those who have been gathered in through the activities of Evangelists of more recent times. Here will be found, for example, the conversions of David Brainerd, John Bunyan, Josephine Butler, Andrew Carnegie, Dr. Talmage,

Richard Weaver and many others. Then every Christian minister will be interested in the accounts of conversions by Moody and Sankey, Torrey and Alexander, the Welsh Revivalists and the preaching of John Wesley and in the experience called by Mr. Lang Conversion-crisis and Conversion-decision. It seems strange to find no mention of the Aitkens—father and son, or of Father Benson or George Body—all of whom exercised a considerable influence in the Anglican Church. Nor is any reference made to the movement that came to be known as the Irish Revival in which Denham Smith, the Earl of Cavan and others played a conspicuous part which led to the conversion of some notable laymen. No study of Conversion can be complete without an account of their work and its fruits as well as its methods.

S. R. C.

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THE REALITY OF GOD AND RELIGION AND AGNOSTICISM. BEING THE LITERARY REMAINS OF BARON FRIEDRICH VON HÜGEL. Edited by Edmund G. Gardner. *J. M. Dent & Sons.* 15s. net.

Baron von Hügel occupied a unique position in the religious world during his lifetime. Although he was a strict member of the Roman Church he had many intimate friends not only in other Communion but in the ranks of the agnostics with whom he engaged in frequent interchange of religious views. He was chosen by the Senate of the University of Edinburgh to fill the Gifford Lectureship for two sessions, 1924-5 and 1925-6, but a breakdown in health prevented him from delivering the lectures. His subject was to have been "The Reality of God," and he had made extensive preparations in collecting material. He continued this work but died before completing it. He was also engaged for some years in compiling material for a study of Sir Alfred Comyn Lyall, the writer on Asiatic religions. This book was also left incomplete, and the two have now been issued by Mr. Edmund G. Gardner, F.B.A., the Baron's Literary Executor. Although the material was left in a formless and tentative condition, it has been arranged as far as possible by the Editor, and it provides an excellent example of the Baron's method of work, and of his outlook upon religion, and shows the bearing of modern scientific and philosophical thought upon the basis of religion.

The scope of the first work is shown in its full title:—"Concerning the Reality of Finites and the Reality of God: a Study of their Interrelations and their Effects and Requirements within the Human Mind." His position may be described as Critical Realism. His theory of knowledge leads him away from any mere subjectivity, and he finds in nature and life an objectivity which he regards as an essential element of human thought. He follows out the development from earliest childhood of man's contact with nature and finds a real knowledge of real existence distinct from the human mind itself. This leads on to "the presence within our lives, as in the

great world of realities around us, of God, a Reality, *the* Reality, never exhaustible, never scientifically definable by us, yet a Reality the non-recognition of which leaves our best experiences unutilized, unexplained even to the degree in which they are most genuinely explicable." He deals indulgently with mysticism, and naturally as a member of the Roman Church finds that the "historical and institutional forms of religions, or rather the historical and institutional element which always appears promptly in religion, must be a most important constituent part of the whole." The book, he says, is not intended to be a demonstration of God. "It is simply intended to show to those who believe in Him, or who long to do so, how striking is the affinity between the habits of mind which man in the long run is always obliged to cultivate, and our belief in God." It is impossible to follow out the wide range of interesting thought which is followed, and the incidental criticism of Kant, Hegel and other philosophical teachers, the exposure of the limitations of materialism and Pantheism, "the Arch Enemy of religion." The biographical touches give vividness and force to the presentation of his case.

In the second part, "Religion and Agnosticism," he gives a study of Sir A. C. Lyall's attitude towards religion, and "recollections and reflections concerning the last twelve years of Lyall's life," during which period they had frequent discussion on matters of religious interest. Lyall came early in life under the influence of Hume's scepticism and never completely escaped from the turn which was thus given to all his thought. This provides Baron von Hügel with an opportunity of examining the limitations of Hume's philosophy, and the development of it in his successors. Thinkers from Descartes down to Huxley and Herbert Spencer are subjected to critical examination and the failure of their religious theories is laid bare. Lyall showed "persistent gratitude and docility towards Herbert Spencer." The Baron's comment is: "Yet Spencer was, for some quarter of a century, the international high priest of an Agnosticism, drearily monotonous and sterilizing in its content and effect and, for the most part, shoddy and unhumorous in form. But I never found this *bourgeois* mind to repel, and not, somehow, even to attract, the dainty stylist and aristocratic critic so unmistakably presented by Lyall himself." Spencer's influence was reflected in Lyall's theories as to the origin and development of the religions of the East, and here again Baron von Hügel points out the sources of error.

This is a book to which students will return again and again. Its treatment of some of the fundamental facts of experience in their bearing on religion and the conception of God will repay frequent study. Constant help will be found in it in dealing with many of the problems which have been raised in modern times by Psychology and Science.

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