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Recent Foreign Theology.

DR. CONTENEAU, one of the ablest of the French Assyriologists, has just published a little book,¹ intended for popular use, on what we now know about the civilization of ancient Babylonia and Assyria. It is needless to say that the information is all at first hand, thoroughly reliable and brought up to date. The author is an archæologist as well as a philologist, who has not only been a pioneer in the editing and decipherment of the Cappadocian cuneiform texts, but has also done good excavating work in Syria. The booklet is crammed with facts, but at the same time eminently lucid and readable, as might be expected from the work of a Frenchman. The contents comprise a history of the archæological exploration of Assyria and Babylonia and of the decipherment of the cuneiform inscriptions, together with résumés of the religion, art, and institutions of the Euphratean lands; and there are a good many well-chosen illustrations and a useful bibliography.

The enterprising Japanese publishers, Maruzen & Co., have recently published a book² which, to me at least, is exceedingly interesting, and will be equally so, I have no doubt, to other students of religion. Mrs. Gordon is already well known by her works on 'Northern Buddhism and its relation to Christianity.' The present volume brings all her previous labours, as it were, to a focus and enforces the Johannine doctrine, that there is One Light, 'which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.' The first half of the work is a reprint, with editorial notes, of Thomas Yeates's forgotten book on *Indian Church History; or, An Account of the First Planting of the Gospel in Syria, Mesopotamia, and India*, which appeared more than a century ago; the second half consists of Appendices by the editress. These are crammed with facts and comparisons gathered from all quarters, many of them of the most out-of-the-way description, and form a very valuable contribution to the study of comparative religion. The comparisons between the early symbolism of Christianity as revealed in the catacombs and that of

Buddhism are especially interesting. Naturally the 'facts' (for which references are always given) differ in value and trustworthiness, but this is necessarily the case in compilations of the kind—as Herbert Spencer and Sir James Fraser have made manifest,—and the doubtfulness of some of them does not affect the general evidence of the majority.

The delightful illustrations which accompany the text add much to its charm and persuasiveness. Christianity and Northern Buddhism influenced one another doctrinally as well as externally; and under this mutual action and reaction Mahâyâna, Buddhism of the North, came to differ so materially from the Buddhism of the South as to seem an almost wholly different religion. Nestorianism, no doubt, had much to do with this; but it is now evident that there must have been contact between Buddhism and Christianity long before Nestorian Christianity penetrated to Central Asia—possibly in Alexandria. The result is that to-day there are many educated Japanese who are at once Christians and Buddhists, at one moment Christianized Buddhists and at another Buddhist Christians. Their religious attitude finds expression in the words of the Abbot of the Chio-in monastery at Kyoto quoted by Mrs. Gordon: 'Buddha and Christ are One—only One great Way.' During the War I attended a requiem service in one of the Kyoto temples for the soldiers and sailors who had been killed, and I found it difficult to realize that I was not attending a similar service in certain churches in London.

A. H. SAYCE.

Oxford.

Holl's Luther.¹

A NEW work by Professor Karl Holl, of Berlin, awakens high expectations. In this volume he has collected essays and lectures on Luther, adding full and valuable notes and citations from Luther's works. The book is of first-rate importance, and may fairly be said to have decided some vital points in the elucidation of Luther's thought. 'The great Reformer has imposed on later ages the

¹ *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Kirchengeschichte*, von Karl Holl. Band i., 'Luther.' Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1921. M. 96.

¹ *La Civilisation Assyro-Babylonienne*, by G. Conteneau. Payot & Co., Paris, 1922.

² *Asian Christology and the Mahâyâna*, by E. A. Gordon. Maruzen & Co., Tokyo, 1921.

task of continually interpreting him afresh, for his primary works are more deeply charged with the power of Christian religion than anything written between his time and the New Testament.

The first essay, entitled, 'What did Luther understand by Religion?' may become a classic. At the outset the keynote is firmly struck. 'The significance of his Reformation does not merely lie in the fact that he altered particular doctrines and arrangements of the Roman Church. He built new from the ground, he even re-shaped the idea of God.' What lifts him above his whole age is a passionate resolve to be clear about his relation to God—for pardon or rejection. He had, in fact, a different sort of conscience from his Catholic contemporaries, a conscience that dealt in absolutes not relatives. No man with his profound conception of morality could be long satisfied with the Roman system. Forgiveness, to his mind, is the live heart of Christianity. And what alone could help him there was not the voice of a priest, but the self-accrediting Word of God. By grasping the living God as Holy Love, he implicitly put aside the Roman thought of God as ultimately capricious and unknowable; while at the same time his idea of the absoluteness of God towers up far beyond the corresponding ideas of mediæval theology.

Luther never was a mystic in the proper sense. Mysticism proper had taught that 'in the depths of his inner being man has a bridge to God which cannot be destroyed. He can cross it as often as he will, simply by remembering that the sources of his life are in God. Even guilt is no obstacle. Let him only strip off the sense of self, and therewith he has also got rid of sin. To Luther this line of thought was never anything but unintelligible. . . . He could not understand how people could deal so cavalierly with conscience.' He rather laid terrific stress on the unconscious will of sin present in every man. Religion means taking our life from God's hand as a pure boon—taking it primarily in pardon, then each day afresh for the common duties of the world. The problem of evil is not to be solved by looking forward to another life: 'Know thyself blessed in God *now*.' From start to finish he is the sworn foe of eudæmonism in religion.

I think that Holl says less than he should regarding the place of Christ as Mediator in the argument of Luther's faith. His own quotations,

as well as famous passages in the Commentary on Galatians, suggest this. The defect is partially righted in the second essay. What certifies the grace of God to sinners is the fact of Christ. From this insight Luther never moved or wished to move.

In the third essay, on Luther's new construction of morality, Holl argues that the Reformer broke through the distinction of law and counsels of perfection by a firm epoch-making declaration that the unconditional Divine will claims all of man, and claims each man's life as a unity. He was the first for centuries to realize what is meant by the wrath of God. In ethics we must talk not of virtues or goods, but of duties to God and our brother; not only so, but in Luther's view an act is rightly done only when, besides being dutiful, it is performed gladly. In short, Luther applied to himself a very much severer standard of goodness than was or is customary in the Church of Rome. Rome had represented morality as the means of winning God; Luther, reversing this, urges with unequalled force that all true and triumphant morality flows from antecedent fellowship with God. No one before had worked out so convincingly the sheer difference between goodness and the desire for happiness. This was all the more striking—we might say the more paradoxical—because he never failed to urge that a non-religious morality is no morality at all. 'He saw right to the depths of the antithesis between a morality determined by religion and a morality that circles round the ego, and, like St. Paul, did not shrink from pushing the consequences of this to the very limit. These two conceptions of morality are not related to each other as two stages, so that by merely heightening his point of view a man can pass from one to the other. The man's attitude is in the two cases fundamentally different. In the one case the final aim lies within the man himself—moral action strives towards self-perfecting; in the other, man knows himself controlled by a higher will.' And since God and the brethren are inseparable for faith, individualism is unchristian. The dynamic of faith gives to genuinely moral action a creative quality; religious insight, as in Luther's own case, means a deeper ethical penetration.

We must glance briefly at the concluding essay on Luther's significance in the history of exegesis. For one thing, he made an end of the allegorical

method, and illustrated the advantages of his own new departure by writing commentaries on Romans and Galatians which—so Holl writes deliberately—have never been surpassed. In his superiority to older methods he far excelled Erasmus. Again, his new principle *scriptura sacra sui ipsius interpres* made an epoch. He was the first to bring out the different values of the different New Testament writings. Though his results came largely by the intuitions of genius, he had an amazing gift for understanding language, and his use of visual imagination marked an important advance in the technique of historical research.

Holl rightly demurs to Troeltsch's well-known view that Luther in some essential points belongs to the Middle Ages, and that the properly modern period commences with the enlightenment of the eighteenth century. He makes it quite clear that Luther's view of religion as a thing of conscience broke with Mediævalism at a vital spot. Nor

can he accept Troeltsch's distinction of 'church' and 'sect.' In fact, he indicates that prior assumptions rather than facts have shaped certain conclusions which Troeltsch's great authority is tending to make orthodox for many. Grisar and Denifle's anti-Protestant polemic is dealt with in a just but faithful spirit. It is odd that Denifle should cite as patristic a passage from a work now known to be a forgery of Erasmus.

Throughout his book Holl is speaking of Luther at his best and loftiest. He does not raise the question how far the Reformer may at times have lapsed beneath the height of his own principles. That topic he legitimately puts aside for the moment. Here, he virtually says, is Luther's contribution, his original and novel expression of the great Christian convictions. He has given us work of the first quality, which future travellers in the wide world of Luther's mind will neglect at their own risk.

H. R. MACKINTOSH.

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In the Study.

Virginibus Puerisque.

What are you Writing?

'My name shall be there.'—I K 8²⁹.

ISN'T it queer how fond we are of writing our names upon things! You aren't back in school a week before you have scribbled all over your new books 'John Smith, 25 Union Street,' or whatever it is. Folk from the cities take a day in the country, and nearly always leave the date and their names and addresses on some bridge or some barn door. And the odd thing is that people seem always to have done that. There are old, old cities that were buried by earthquakes or by some sandstorm from the deserts; and now that they have been unearthed again, everywhere about the streets wise men have found names and little jests of people who were dead long before Christ was born. Always people have liked to write their names upon things, to show that they were there.

And perhaps what this verse means is that even God does that. Those people had built a splendid huge new church, and what they prayed for was

that at the very first service in it God would come and be among them, and to show that He was there, would write His name upon the wall; so that whenever they came to worship they might look up and see it, and remember. God was once here: look! there is His name upon the wall, written by His own hand. And perhaps He may come again to-day.

For that's why people come to church. It's to see God. I wonder what you do during the prayers and the big folk's sermons. I doubt you aren't listening much, are you? Not you! But your two swinging legs are two horses galloping, galloping, galloping far away! or the pew isn't a pew, it's an aeroplane, and you are flying over wonderful lands, until at last the minister gets finished. But while you are doing that, father and mother are listening, and looking and watching. For God may come. Look! there's His name upon the wall to prove He has been here before, and who knows but He may come again to-day. And perhaps if you listened and watched you might see Him too. And always afterwards you would remember; and always when you went