

Review

Liberal Protestantism. B. M. G. Reardon. A. & C. Black, 35s.

This useful book belongs to *A Library of Modern Religious Thought* which includes, for example John Locke's *The Reasonableness of Christianity*, and Lessing's *Theological Writings*. It consists of a series of extracts from the works of liberal theologians edited and introduced by Mr. Reardon, to show their range and variety. Ritschl has pride of place, nearly thirty pages being allotted to extracts from *Justification and Reconciliation* under the headings, Justification, The Knowledge of God, The uniqueness of Jesus Christ. Hermann comes next with twenty-seven pages from *The Communion of the Christian with God*. Hermann of Marburg exercised a considerable influence on the immediately past generation of Baptist scholars, several of whom were in Marburg as students. The passages from Julius Kaftan's *The Truth of the Christian Religion* are valuable; the English translation by G. Ferries is not easy to find. Harnack, Sabatier, and Reville, are also represented. J. F. Bethune-Baker, C. J. Cadoux, William Adams Brown, represent Britain and America. Liberal theology has been feared, denounced, slain, and buried; there is now some chance that it may also be read.

The introduction is especially useful; it should probably be read after the extracts. The importance of Kant and Schleiermacher (from whom there are no extracts) is noted. Mr. Reardon pays special attention to the ethical basis of Ritschl's theology, to his conception of the value-judgment, to his treatment of the Kingdom of God and Christology. He claims that a complete break with the past was more characteristic of Harnack and of Kaftan than of Ritschl himself, and in this connection, he insists on the importance of his conception of the Church. The difference between Continental and British liberal theology is noted; the criticism that Liberalism has only a reduced Christology is examined, and the conclusion is reached that condemnation has often been indiscriminating and unfair.

Liberal theology played an important part in the thought of the British Free Churches. Particularly in England the assaults of Barth and Brunner dealt it no mortal blow and in various modified forms it continues to influence religion and theology. *Liberal Protestantism* will help towards the understanding of it.

G.J.M.P.