

ARTICLE X.

NOTES ON BRITISH THEOLOGY AND PHILOSOPHY.

ONE of the most interesting of recent works in theology is an "Introduction to the Early History of Christian Doctrine"¹ by J. F. Bethune-Baker, B.D., Fellow and Dean of Pembroke College, Cambridge. The book is one of a series of Handbooks on Theology, edited by Principal A. Robertson, D.D., London, and is carried up "to the time of the Council of Chalcedon." Mr. Bethune-Baker has kept the text-book purpose steadily before him, giving a continuous narrative in free and untechnical fashion, with footnotes for authorities and details. His design is to show theology in the making, and this he succeeds in doing most admirably, for the student's purpose. The work is performed, not only with wide and painstaking scholarship, but also with discrimination and independence, its prevailing orthodoxy notwithstanding. It would, of course, not be fair to judge particular parts or aspects of a student's handbook from the standpoints of experts, for it could not but be wanting from such viewpoints. Remembering, however, the purpose of the book, Mr. Bethune-Baker's work is altogether admirable, and deserves to be very extensively used, for teaching purposes, on both sides of the Atlantic. The author in his modest preface says, "I believe that this point of view, from which Christian doctrines are seen as human attempts to interpret human experiences—the unique personality of Jesus of Nazareth supreme among those human experiences, is a more satisfying one than some standpoints from which the origin of Christian doctrines may appear to be invested with more commanding power of appeal." It cannot be expected that

¹ London: Methuen & Co. Pp. xxii, 436. 10s. 6d.

different readers will account all parts of such a work equally well done, even for students' use. Occasionally, one feels tempted to wish the author had practised a less "strict economy" in works referred to, and at stray points one judges philosophical matters readily susceptible of stronger treatment. But, withal, so great learning and labor have been expended on the work that one cares not to indulge in ungracious reflections. To many of us, indeed, such teaching would, in student days, have been a veritable godsend, and they are to be heartily congratulated into whose hands Mr. Bethune-Baker's extremely able and serviceable book may be placed, for instruction in things theological. It need hardly be said that the publishers have done their part, in all respects, with their usual excellence.

Another work of much theological interest is "Studies in Theology" by J. Estlin Carpenter and P. H. Wicksteed.¹ These studies are thirteen in number, and of varying merit. Two of them—Mr. Wicksteed's "Religion of Time and the Religion of Eternity," and Mr. Carpenter's "Place of Immortality in Religious Belief"—are alone worth the price of the book. Not for a long time have we read a more timely and able pronouncement than this paper by Mr. Wicksteed, enhanced by some scholarly notes as an appendix. It deserves the warmest praise, as a valuable corrective to some current tendencies of thought. We are entirely at one with the writer's insistence—for it has been our own—that progress is related to end or goal, and that the true life of the soul is a progress *in*—and not merely *to*—the life that is in God. Mr. Carpenter's paper on Immortality is also excellent, and puts the case in varied, temperate, yet telling fashion. The writers seem to be at their best in these two pieces, and the themes were worthy of it. All the other papers may be read with pleasure (which does not mean always agreement) and profit, such subjects ranking amongst them as "The Education of the Religious Imagination," "The Place of the History of Religion in Theological Study," "Sociology

¹ London: J. M. Dent and Co. Pp. 543. 5s., *net*.

and Theology," and "Religion and Society." The chapter on "Unitarianism as a Theology" is of too sectarian a character to be of general interest, and indeed one almost regrets its accompanying themes of much larger and more inspiring interest. Our occasional vigorous and emphatic dissent from a phrase or a position does not in the least interfere with our most grateful welcome of these theological studies, which may be most heartily recommended to all robust-minded persons interested in problems of modern theology.

A noteworthy work in philosophy is the newly-issued volume, "Principia Ethica," by George Edward Moore, Fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge.¹ In his preface Mr. Moore says, "I have endeavored to write 'Prolegomena to any future ethics that can possibly pretend to be scientific.'" If there is boldness in Mr. Moore's aim, we do not on that account object to it, in days when so many works are sent forth without any sufficiently definite or justifying aim. Mr. Moore is already known to philosophical readers as an acute thinker, with masterly powers of analysis and dialectical fence. His treatment will certainly provoke criticism and dissent, possibly even antagonism, but it is to be welcomed all the same, and he deserves all credit for his intellectual courage, candor, and independence.

After a chapter on "The Subject-matter of Ethics" comes one on "Naturalistic Ethics," which deals with the question of "good in itself," and examines Spencer's positions in particular. Mr. Moore's criticism is clear, excellent, and timely. An interesting and able refutation of Hedonism follows in the next chapter, which contains a criticism on Utilitarianism that is deserving of attention. One cannot help being surprised that ethicists are so slow to perceive what we account the vicious—or say, fallacious only—identification of ethical character with mere constitutional motive or natural impulse, in theories of Hedonism. Also, that they so often fail short of realizing what a resolution of ethical right into

¹ Cambridge: At the University Press. Pp. xxvii, 232. 7s. 6d., net.

a mere amiable desire to please or make happy is involved in Utilitarianism.

The succeeding chapter on "Metaphysical Ethics" is one with which we are in less agreement than any other part, perhaps, of the book. Mr. Moore's discussion is too abstract and verbal, and he is too absorbed in his ethical aspects to be able to realize how deeply related these are, and must be, to the much-reviled metaphysical phases. Mr. Moore too readily assumes his "good"—even with the addition "in itself"—to be something really ultimate and unanalyzable. Ethics would be in danger of becoming a science of the visionary, imaginary, and unreal, if Mr. Moore's "confusion"—the "confusions" of metaphysicians seem dear to him—of the distinctive character of a truth as ethical ("unique in kind," as no one denies) with its absolute unrelatedness to truth or reality, were ever to have the slightest chance of currency. Be it plainly spoken, therefore, the true or the real has much more significance for the good than Mr. Moore's ethical philosophy has discovered or admitted. Metaphysics and ethics have to do with a universe that is real and rational, and we wish Mr. Moore had come into closer grips with reality here. For surely philosophy is, in our time, and none too quickly, awakening to the fact that its business is to transcend all one-sided procedures, and see to it that metaphysics shall be ethical, and that ethics shall do justice to metaphysical presuppositions. It should be thoroughly understood in this connection that the ideal is indeed the fundamental reality, so that metaphysical presuppositions cannot be got away from. When Mr. Moore comes, in the fifth and sixth chapters, to treat of the good and the ideal, he does not set forth the good sufficiently as something determined by us under the truths, laws, and ideals of reason. He makes insistences like "good is good and nothing else whatever," telling us he has "established" this, and urging almost in the same breath that such fundamental truths of ethics are "self-evident" in the sense that no reason can be given for them. This sort of thing gives an irrational cast to ethics which is

hardly to be commended. There is nothing more inspiring about Mr. Moore's book than his own fine, unfailing interest in ethical method as such, but the subject itself is left concerned too little with ethical beings—their characters, choices, volitions, self-determinations—and too largely with abstract ethical objects, to reach the level of interest of which it is capable. The good and its recognition is much too axiomatic an affair for our ethical philosopher, in the rarefied atmosphere in which his thought moves, to care one jot or tittle whether the whole matter has any vital interest for us or not. Not so have we learned ethics, but with "that severe, that earnest air" which marks the strenuous moods of the moral life. It is to be said, however, that Mr. Moore has given us a book which may be cordially recommended to the notice of ethical students on both sides of the Atlantic, as one which, by its fundamental questionings and its acute, ingenious, and brilliant discussions, will prove a valuable contribution to the scientific study of ethics.

A small book from the pen of the veteran philosopher, Dr. J. Hutchison Stirling, is on "The Categories."¹

Though small, the book is extremely able. As Dr. Stirling's, it could not be anything else. Not even its occasional jerkiness of style avails in the least to take away from the fascinating interest of the work. Dr. Stirling lays down in his preface that the net result of modern philosophy is just the ego. That, of course, is no new word, but Dr. Stirling has his own way of amply illustrating its truth.

In his first chapter he deals with the "Categories Generally," remarking at its close that "it is not meant to talk of Categories, as formally the business in hand. What comes into speech here is, for the most part, a general theme, and really in continuance of philosophy as I have of late written on it, say, in my immediately previous book, 'What is Thought?'" The second chapter, on "The Double Statement," is supremely interesting, dealing with the contradiction of reason and faith, the reflection-philosophy, and the re-

¹ Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd. Pp. 158. 4s.

lations of Hegel and Schelling. Now, it may very well be that Michelet and others have overdone Hegel's indebtedness to Schelling, but we are by no means clear that Dr. Stirling is free from overdoing Hegel's independence of Schelling. No doubt, Hegel—as Dr. Stirling insists—owed enormously to Kant, but it does not seem easy to doubt that he owed much also to Fichte and to Schelling—more than Dr. Stirling is willing to admit. Kant and the Illumination taught Hegel the worth of formal scientific strictness, on which he improved by making it no more abstract; but Hegel learned depth and richness of content from the despised and unsystematic Schelling, and the same Hegel put a quite new logical consecutiveness into Fichte's principle of development, with whose philosophy of spirit as a leading interest or dominant feature Hegel could not but have a certain sympathy. And, in truth, he improved on it by making his emphasis on spirit such as to be untinged with Fichtean contempt of nature. Nor, it may be added, are the faults of Schelling easier found than those of Hegel. Also Schelling is, in any case, a much more considerable philosopher than Dr. Stirling's "beginner" would naturally infer from these pages. Hero-worship of Hegel is so perfectly innocent a thing that we have not the slightest objection to it; still, we cannot all agree to be too unmindful of the great precursors of the Hegelian Agamemnon. Hegel is Hegel still, consonantly with all that has now been said, both by reason of originality of conception and massive grandeur of achievement. Let a concession so liberal, richly deserved, and freely given, satisfy the most vehement of his disciples or devotees. Sharing, however largely, their rapturous admiration, we have never forgotten—cannot forget—there is criticism as well as exposition of Hegel. *Verb. sap.*

The third chapter takes up the "Categories and Physics," and passes on into a lively and somewhat entertaining vein at the expense of certain modern physicist and evolutionist theories. Chapter the fourth deals with "Religion and the Categories." It would, let us only remark, have given Dr. Stirling's "beginner" more cause for gratitude, had the author

not merely set down a few pious phrases to show the religion of Hegel, but actually dealt with the standing difficulty said "beginner" is sure to encounter, in that, while Hegel is made to stand for the truth of a personality that is Absolute, the same Hegel is set forth roundly declaring it absurd to predicate personality of the Infinite. If Dr. Stirling would do so much for the "beginner"—and no one could do more—why, though Hegel has been glorified, leave the "beginner" long time perplexed?

Let it be said, however, the veritable *multum in parvo* which Dr. Stirling—*clarum et venerabile nomen* to all philosophical students—has here given us, will be found of entrancing interest to readers of philosophy, and must prove highly serviceable to very many. As such, we most cordially commend it to readers of the BIBLIOTHECA SACRA.

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