

about God and man, for it says that it comes from Him who had supreme ways of knowing God and man. There are other claims also, claims which Christianity asserts on behalf of Jesus Christ, as to what He is, His cosmical position, His relation to God and to man, His power to reconcile man to God, His ability to help and save men to-day, and other claims which we need not enumerate. These claims are vital, and were they to be overthrown, Christianity would become other than it is. Now, if this is so, Professor Caird's view must inevitably be resisted. Christianity is not a stage in a process. We do not start from the life and teaching of Christ as a certain stage in the evolution of thought and life; we do not regard the New Testament as something assimilated by men, in order to a further advance; on the contrary, the life of Jesus Christ and His teaching stands out as an absolute standard for humanity, not yet attained, and not yet quite understood, and the New Testament has a unique position in literature. If this be so, then neither the life and teaching of Christ, nor the New Testament, can take a place in the historical evolution of the life and thought of the human race. We must have recourse to some other means than an evolutionary process.

True, indeed, we have a good deal of talk about the historic Christ, and about the necessity of going back to the Gospel story. It is quite right that we should learn all that can be known about the historic Christ. But the historic Christ is one with the Risen Christ, and men ought to be careful lest the impression be created that the historic Christ is merely a figure among other figures in

history. It ought to be always remembered that the Christ is living to-day, can help men, save men, bless men, and enter into the lives of men to-day. "Christ liveth in me" is a fact of human experience which has its value like all other facts.

There is also a good deal of talk about translating the statements of early Christianity into terms of our modern experience, and Professor Caird's *Evolution of Religion* is one of the ablest of these attempts. By all means let us so translate them if we can. But such translation must not leave out the essential facts. When men can be produced of the mental and moral stature of Jesus Christ, when other men can speak as He spoke, live as He lived, work as He wrought, and wield such an influence as He has wielded, then it will be time to begin to speak of translation. Until then we shall continue to accept his life and work as unique. When we can produce a literature like the New Testament, we shall have a right to make Christianity a stage or a step in the process of evolution, but not till then.

We have said little of the many merits of Professor Caird's Gifford Lecture. We have not had time to call attention to many fresh and striking views, to deep and true glances into the working of the human mind, or to the fine tone of reverence which marks his volumes. We have learnt much from him, and feel deeply grateful; at the same time we must dissent from much of his philosophy, we must regard his treatment of history as inadequate and one-sided, and his treatment of theology, and specially of the Old Testament and of Christianity, as defective.

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## New Thoughts on Old Themes.

BY THE REV. W. P. PATERSON, B.D., CRIEFF.

### I.—THE CYCLE OF CHRISTIAN ENTHUSIASMS.

"I am come to send fire on the earth."—LUKE xii. 49.

THE history of the Christian Church is made up of outbursts of power and epochs of gradual deterioration. Its habitual tendency to degenerate is balanced by a splendid recuperative energy which comes into play whenever it touches a certain point of decline. A period of Church History may be likened to the Frankish dynasties of which it was said that the founders were lions,

their successors dogs, and their cats—after which the Deluge and a new royal line.

The path of deterioration taken by the Church has been tolerably uniform, both on the further and the hither side of the Reformation. It traverses a descending scale of enthusiasms. The fire of primitive Christianity had three main tongues of flame—the love of Christ, the aspiration after

holiness, and the passion for saving souls. By the fourth century the dominant enthusiasm was zeal for sound doctrine. In the Middle Ages this gave way to devotion to the Church; obedience to her became the first of virtues, and the greatest Christian achievements of the epoch were in the arch and tracery of the Gothic cathedral, and the Madonnas and saints of the fresco. Then God remembered that the gates of Hell should not prevail against her. Below the ecclesiastical level she might not sink; the Spirit blew; and the Reformation was a fact.

The Protestant Churches have struggled more vigorously against the downward pressure, yet on the whole have taken the same course. The sixteenth century revived the glory of Christ and the passion for personal righteousness, but in the Reformers these were united, less with the missionary spirit of the apostolic age, than with the spirit of dogmatism and polemics that filled the workshops of the Œcumenical Councils. In the seventeenth and the first half of the eighteenth century the doctrinal interest again established its supremacy; the Church became essentially an institution for the diffusion and defence of correct opinions about God and divine things; the descendants of arch-heretics placed the heretic below the evil-liver. The nineteenth century brings us to the period of Protestant ecclesiasticism and æstheticism—when Protestant sects re-echo the claims of the Catholic Church, and copy the splendour of the mediæval cathedrals. It is true that two outstanding features of the Protestant life of our century seem to link it to the nobler epochs—the magnificent effort of Protestantism in foreign missions, and the growth of important schools of Christian endeavour and practical holiness. It can, however, be plausibly maintained that by far the strongest and the most general feeling in the religious world is to-day affection for or devotion to a historic Church, a denomination or a congregation. Less because of the object, than because it is the Church that solicits it, does so mighty a stream of money flow into the missionary exchequer; and still more heartily are the contributions given when they are asked for the erection or embellishment of a visible sanctuary. The smaller the Church the more rapidly does it seem to run down the scale. Some are at the stage where the battle of orthodoxy and heresy is the paramount consideration. Others have outgrown even their

interest in doctrine, and retain little but a sectarian bias and a satisfaction in the stone and lime aspect of the kingdom of God.

It may therefore be assumed that Protestantism is on the eve of another Reformation. On other grounds it is clear that a doctrinal reformation is impending; for no ordinarily instructed student is ignorant that the doctrinal systems of the first period of Protestantism rested on a theory of the earth and of the Bible which science and criticism have shown to be untenable. Christianity must be reduced to a form which, on the one hand, gathers up in simplest form the essence of Christian faith, and, on the other, has nothing to fear from any results of natural or historical science. The religious genius required for this may be discovered by our Jewish Missions; and in any case we cannot have much longer to wait for the ringing, convincing message which will reconcile the old faith and the new light. Along with this there will be some reversion to the original enthusiasms, though, as history never quite repeats itself, they may vary in form and relative strength. According to present signs, Christ will maintain His position as Saviour to be trusted, King to be obeyed, God to be adored. To copy, at however great a distance, His personal life, will be recognised as an indispensable note of discipleship. But the great problem of the second Reformation will be: What form will be taken in it by the enthusiasm of brotherly love? Will it limit itself to Home and Foreign Mission Schemes? Or will it pour itself into the channel of socialism? In all probability the historic Churches, and not least the voluntary Churches, will throw in their lot with capital in the approaching economic struggle, and preach the law of love on the old lines of evangelistic and philanthropic enterprise. To a section in every Church, however, it will seem, once the socialistic criticisms and ideals are fairly stated, that socialism represents the one great practical proposal that has been made to realise the Christian idea of human brotherhood; and these will fling themselves into the fray with all the fire of soldiers in a holy war, with all the adventurousness of the great missionaries, with the martyrs' joy in persecution and death. In no other cause save that of human brotherhood is there likelihood of a reappearance of primitive Christian fire in the next stretch of time.

If the issue of triumphant democracy, as is on

the whole probable, is to be the socialistic state, dark days and tempestuous are doubtless in store for the Christian Church. In the transition period the opposition of the great Churches to the movement will alienate the proletariat, as at present on the Continent, from the faith and hope of Christianity, and may even colour a considerable period with the dark hues of sacrilege and martyrdom. As, however, Christianity is an efficient prescription for evils which even the most sanguine socialism

declines to grapple with—the ills of guilt, pain, bereavement, and death—it must be regarded as having come into the world to stay. To the new social order it will ultimately reconcile itself as easily as it did to the abolition of slavery, and more easily than to Copernican astronomy and Darwinian evolution. It will regard Justification by Faith as the gospel of the first Reformation, and the accomplishment of human brotherhood as the achievement of the second.

## The Books of the Month.

### PART I.

THE TRUTH OF THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION. BY JULIUS KAFTAN, D.D. (*T. & T. Clark*. 8vo, 2 vols., pp. x, 357; vi, 444.) When the *Doctrine of Justification and Reconciliation* first attracted attention in this country, Ritschl was already upwards of fifty years of age, and no prophet arose to proclaim that yet, before he died, he would exercise a wider and more fervent influence in Germany than any theologian since Schleiermacher. For Englishmen judged by Ritschl's writings, and the state of theology in England; they left out of account both Ritschl's magnetic personality, and the unsatisfied expectancy of German theology in his day. Even yet we speak of Ritschlianism as a phenomenon, and listen with amazement to the latest news of its swift-spreading influence.

But now even the last and laziest theologian amongst us is asking what Ritschlianism is,—and expecting a ready-made answer, which cannot be given him. For Ritschlianism is life, and will not be gathered into a cupful of definition. Define the Ritschlianism which Bornemann teaches at Magdeburg, and you have not even touched the fringe of Bender's Ritschlianism at Bonn. But the surest and most profitable way is to grapple honestly with one of the great and fertile Ritschlian writers, as Herrmann or Harnack or Kaftan; and in the judgment of Professor Flint, the easiest and the best is Professor Kaftan of Berlin.

Kaftan's two great works, the *Nature* and the *Truth of the Christian Religion*, are worthy of the successor of Dorner. The second is now translated in the two fine volumes before us.

Quite apart from the immediate question of obtaining a knowledge of the Ritschlian theology at first hand, these volumes are welcome, for Kaftan is no imitator, but a fertile and able writer. In the near future his view of theology, its essence and its accidents, will exercise a deep influence in our land. That much it needs no prophet to declare. And it is one of the minor comforts, for which we cannot be too grateful,—they make so real a difference in our life,—that Mr. Ferries translates the German accurately, and hides it utterly out of sight in pure idiomatic English.

THE EARLIEST LIFE OF CHRIST. BY THE REV. J. HAMLYN HILL, B.D. (*T. & T. Clark*. 8vo, pp. 379.) It is Tatian's *Diatessaron* that Mr. Hamlyn Hill has translated and issued under the above title. He has translated it literally from the Arabic version; told us its origin and history in an exhaustive and surprisingly interesting Introduction, and added many footnotes, and an Appendix of eleven other and longer notes. For we do not need more than one edition of a work of this nature, and it is of the last importance that the edition, when it comes, should be both accurate and complete. As for accuracy, we have Mr. Hamlyn Hill's own scholarship, and the assistance and revision of Professor Armitage Robinson, Dr. Neubauer, Mr. Buchanan Gray, and others, as *a priori* evidence; and as for fulness we have this handsome and elaborate volume.

The publishers have prepared it so that it may take its place beside the volumes of the Ante-Nicene Library, where it has an excellent right to