

## CHRONICLE

### THE HISTORY OF RELIGIONS.

THE Stockholm Society for the Scientific Study of Religions is proposing to issue a series of *Beiträge*, the first of which is already published by Dr Nathan Söderblom, Professor of the History of Religions at Leipzig. His *Natürliche Theologie und allgemeine Religionsgeschichte* (Hinrichs, Leipzig, 1913) is a new enquiry into a familiar problem in the light of the modern comparative study of religions. The opening chapter (pp. 1-25) points out that the first stage of 'Natural Theology' was a preliminary and preparatory one, and draws attention to the different attitudes of early Christian writers to non-Christian thought, in particular, their respect for Greek thought. The second stage is quite definite; it is that of Medieval Scholastic teaching. While the third can be characterized by the formula, 'All religion is natural religion', the fourth is primarily associated with Schleiermacher and the formula, 'There is no natural religion'. The third and fourth stages have their modern representatives in the conflicts touching the claims of reason, tendencies to Platonism, anti-Hellenic tendencies, &c.; but meanwhile a fresh stage has come into being, and the new study of religions forces a reconsideration of the old problems. The author shews that the non-Christian religions are characterized by a certain obligatoriness; the application of the *Tabus* may change, but the recognition remains of something unconditioned. With J. H. Newman it can be said that all religions have in them something of a revelation (p. 64), and this raises new questions for Christian theology. The writer then proceeds to consider the importance of the study of non-Christian religious experience, and in his concluding chapter (pp. 80-110) suggests the lines upon which some aspects of the superiority of Christianity can be demonstrated. Here he lays special emphasis upon the historical continuity, the activity, and the markedly personal factors in the development. The book is of great interest for its treatment of some of the problems which the study of the non-Christian religions sooner or later raises.

The *History of Religions* by Prof. G. F. Moore is a valuable addition to the 'International Theological Library' (Clark, Edinburgh, 1914). The author is a well-known Old Testament scholar, and Professor of the History of Religion in Harvard University. The present volume handles the religions of China and Japan (in 143 pp.), Egypt, Babylonia and Assyria (100 pp.), India (110 pp.), Persia (50 pp.), Greece and

Rome (nearly 200 pp.); a second volume is to be devoted to Judaism, Christianity, and Mohammedanism, 'three religions so intimately related in origin and history as to constitute a natural group'. The aim is to describe the several religions in their relation to race, environment, and national life and civilization, and to trace their progress and vicissitudes. Attention is paid to the religious conceptions as they are implicit in myth and ritual, or made explicit by poets, prophets, and others. The higher developments in theology, ethics, and religious philosophy are carefully observed; and especially so where they have persisted or have contributed to more modern religious systems. The effort is made to bring out the distinctive features of the various religions rather than the features common to all; but the Index is so planned that the reader can easily enquire for himself into those points of resemblance or of difference which the book does not discuss. The general treatment is adequate, and a select bibliography at the end gives a useful survey, including monographs on special questions. In the nature of the case a book of this kind, covering so wide a field, hardly lends itself to review. It must suffice to say, therefore, that Prof. Moore is a competent authority; he presents the evidence fairly; and his book has that unity and cohesion which are wanting when a single author is replaced by a number of specialists. It provides the reader with a good store of knowledge, and is a valuable introduction to the further study, whether of the individual religions or of religion in general.

Prof. Sayce has prepared a second edition of his Gifford Lectures for 1900-1902, and *The Religion of Ancient Egypt* (Clark, Edinburgh, 1913) now appears separately, the lectures on the religion of Ancient Babylonia being left for another volume. The evidence is conveniently arranged so that the reader gains a sound idea of the main features of the religion, though not, perhaps, of its historical development. In the Introduction there are some sensible remarks on the method of studying ancient religions, and the reader is rightly warned that, dependent as we are on literary material for our knowledge of them, we are at the mercy of such evidence as happens to be preserved. Besides this, we have the ideas of the more conspicuous individuals rather than of the rank and file, and chap. ix, on 'the popular religion', gives a very interesting account of the beliefs and customs of the ordinary people. At the same time, this chapter illustrates the psychological characteristics of the natives, and actually justifies some of the 'anthropological' methods at which Prof. Sayce is elsewhere inclined to look askance (p. 17 sq.). The new edition does not call for any detailed notice; it preserves the distinctive features of the old one, and is throughout more popular than technical.

Three technical works may next be noticed. Dr Johann Schwab publishes a doctoral dissertation: *Der Begriff der Nefes in den heiligen Schriften des Alten Testaments* (Noske, Leipzig, 1913). This is an elaborate little monograph of over 100 pages, crowded with detail and often unnecessarily ponderous. It is, however, an interesting contribution to the ideas of the soul in pre-Christian Palestine, and is quite worthy of consideration. The psychological and anthropological sides are rather weak. Highly technical, though of very real importance, is the work by Prof. James A. Montgomery, *Aramaic Incantation Texts from Nippur* (University Museum, Philadelphia, 1913). The work is the third volume of the publications of the Babylonian section of the Museum, and, extending outside the field of the Nippur texts, deals with 'bowl' inscriptions and ancient magical literature. There are forty-two texts, Jewish, Syriac, and Mandaic, with forty plates. Apart from their philological and other features of technical importance, the value of the texts lies also in the light they throw upon popular religious and magical ideas in Babylonia about the sixth to eighth centuries A.D. They furnish positive evidence for the character of popular thought in a land when its civilization has decayed; and this opportunity of comparing the vicissitudes of the higher and lower forms of thought enables one to test current notions of the 'evolution' or development of religion. Very noteworthy is the retention of much of the Old Babylonian stock of names, ideas, &c.; on the other hand, hardly a trace of Zoroastrianism can be found, and the question arises whether the influence of Persia has been overrated, or whether it had spent itself. The third work is a small pamphlet on 'Babylonian Oil Magic' in the Talmud and in the later Jewish literature, by Dr S. Daiches (Jews' College, London, 1913). He discusses eleven texts found in MSS of the fifteenth and succeeding centuries, and belonging to Dr Gaster; full explanatory and illustrative notes are provided. Of more general interest, perhaps, is no. 11, on account of the use made in it of verses from the Psalms. This practice finds an exact analogy in the Old Babylonian custom of using hymns and psalms in their incantations. In view of certain theories of the priority of magic over religion and of spell over prayer, it is useful to observe how, in the history of a cult, people, or area, the distinctively magical and allied features may represent a later and secondary stage.

Dr Rendel Harris returns once more to his far-reaching study of the distribution and significance of Twins. His latest work, *Boanerges* (University Press, Cambridge, 1913), takes us to the Bible, and in particular, as the title hints, to the Gospel narratives. The bulky volume (about 450 pp.) has a value of its own for the store of material collected by the author himself, by Mr R. H. D. Willey, and by others. There is much in it that is entertaining and suggestive. On the other hand, the

method is open to serious objection. Cults of twins may be freely admitted, and no doubt twins were (and are) often the object of beliefs and practices that are sporadic, isolated, and unsystematized. But it is unmethodical to suppose that every twin-datum presupposes a systematic twin-cult or even an organized body of ideas concerning twins. People acquainted with the Dioscuri or with any twin-cult were doubtless wont to 'dioscurize'; and though this may have been done in the past (see pp. 248 sq., 254 sqq.), the modern student must be more cautious. It is simply astonishing, therefore, to read that the book of Genesis is 'heavily dioscurized' (p. 275). The redness of Esau is taken to be 'dioscuric', though another *motif* could easily be found, and when Esau's hatred of Jacob is gravely supplemented by the extra-biblical tradition that Jacob killed Esau (p. 277), it is overlooked that according to another traditional fancy Esau was killed by a son of Dan. Hence if there is Dioscurism, it appears only in one of the very late stories, and the method adopted by Dr Rendel Harris would also shew that Genesis is heavily coloured with ophiolatry, or dendrolatry, or phallicism, or astral-mythology—according to our choice. In a word, grateful though one must be for this patient collection of data, the argument as a whole is endangered by the method of interpretation and the failure to distinguish between possibility and probability. Two especially provoking arguments deserve the pillory. Since the names Liveing and Livingstone primarily involve the *Levin* or thunderbolt, and since the former name can be seen on the main street in Birmingham, Dr Harris permits himself the enlivening remark that 'sons of thunder can be found here as well as in Palestine' (p. 295). Again, since the symbol of the two fingers suggests twins, which are either a curse or a blessing, when 'our ecclesiastical superiors' give the benediction with two fingers raised, this means either 'may you all have twin children!' or, 'may the twins themselves bless you and take care of you!' (p. 315). The unfortunate reviewer is in a difficulty: is he to take this seriously or as a joke? If it is meant for a joke, may it not deceive the serious? and if it is meant seriously—but this is incredible.

STANLEY A. COOK.