

II. APOLOGETIC.

Unbelief in the Nineteenth Century. A Critical History.

By Henry C. Sheldon, Professor in Boston University. New York. Eaton & Mains. 1907. Pages 399. Price, \$2.00 net.

The nineteenth century was notable for its missionary activity at home and among the heathen, its practical reforms, its general Christian activity. It is doubtful if any other Christian century manifested such general and beneficent activity. And yet there was much thinking which may truly be called "unbelief". Its attitude to Christianity was not always positively hostile. It was often content to modify Christianity in such a way as to destroy its essential character at some point.

But what may be properly classed as unbelief? No absolute answer to this question can be given. The standpoint of the writer must largely determine the standard by which he judges a system of thought or criticism. The author recognizes this fact and then proceeds to set up for himself the following canons of essential Christianity: 1. "A staunch theistic conception, that conception in which the ultimate reality is presented as thoroughly personal" (p. 3). 2. "Jesus Christ was a transcendent personality, and came into the world to fulfill an extraordinary mediatorial office" (p. 4). 3. "Such a view of man as is consonant with his dignity as a subject of moral rule, as a servant and a son of the Most High, and as a candidate for the pure blessedness and high fellowships of an immortal life" (p. 4). "The content (of Christianity) in its full compass has received a credible historic attestation. Christianity is not a name for a purely speculative system or a body of ideal truth. It assumes to be an historical religion." Its highest revelation is in Christ, and the primacy of the Bible rests upon the fact that "it is the most authentic record of the revelation leading up to and culminating in Jesus. It has authority as being on the whole a trustworthy compendium of these truths" (p. 6).

With these canons as a standard of judgment the author then goes through the literature of the century, pointing out where and wherein unbelief has made itself evident. "It

is quite foreign to this volume to pass judgment upon persons. The volume deals with unbelief taken purely in the theoretic or intellectual sense" (p. 1). The material is grouped under the three general divisions of "Philosophical Theories", "Quasi-Scientific, Theological and Ethical Theories", "Critical Theories". Under the first group "Radical Idealism", "Radical Sensationalism and Materialism", "Positivism", "Agnostic and Anti-theistic Evolution" and "Pessimism"; under the second "The Challenging of the Supernatural", "Denial of the Finality of Christianity", "Denial of the Transcendent Sonship of Jesus Christ" and "Utilitarian and Naturalistic Ethics"; under the last the author treats the criticism of the life of Jesus by Straus, Baur, Renan, Keim and others, and finally radical criticism of the Old and New Testaments.

The author states in his brief preface, "Compact and accurate exposition was the first end kept in view in the preparation of this treatise. Criticism of different forms of unbelief was the second end." It is but fair to say that the author has succeeded remarkably well in both respects. Considering the compass of the book a clearer and more accurate exposition could hardly be made. Naturally it was impossible to go into details at some points where details are almost necessary to a full understanding of some theory. But the author has seized the essential kernel with remarkable success and has set this forth with clearness and succinctness. The style is as limpid as a mountain brook.

His strictures on the various forms of unbelief will not satisfy everyone, of course. But they undoubtedly form a valuable addition to apologetic literature. The book is a very valuable study of one phase of the intellectual and religious life of the nineteenth century.

W. J. MCGLOTHLIN.

Naturalism and Religion.

By Dr. Rudolph Otto, Professor of Theology in the University of Göttingen. Translated by J. Arthur Thomson, Professor of Natural History in the University of Aberdeen, and Margaret R. Thomson. Edited with an introduction by Rev. W. D. Morrison, LL. D. G. P. Putnam's Sons, New York. Williams & Norgate, London. 1907.

This work belongs to the Crown Theological library, and is another attempt to vindicate the validity and freedom of the