

BOOK REVIEWS

I. RELIGION AND THEOLOGY.

The Religion and Theology of Paul. By W. Morgan. T. & T. Clark. Edinburgh, 1917. 272 pp.

We have come definitely into a new stage of the modern attempt to reconstruct the New Testament. "The methods employed for more than a generation have been those of the "higher criticism." The material of thought has been the New Testament writings themselves. The new stage and method are marked by the same general attitude to the teachings of the New Testament. But the chief material for thought is found in the religious ideas of the Gentile nations of the New Testament age. The aim is to trace the connections between the ideas of the New Testament and those of the ethnic faiths of the period. In the light of the latter group of ideas it is sought to ascertain the genesis and value of the ideas we find in the New Testament.

The volume before us is an instructive example of the new method, both because the author defines its aim in the above terms and because the course and outcome of his discussion enable the reader to perceive the good and the evil of the new method.

Paul, according to the author, was led by his contact with Hellenistic culture to transform the simple Gospel of Jesus into a speculative system. The idea of the Lordship of Christ as found in Paul is directly traceable not to Jesus, and not to Jewish sources in the Old Testament, but to Greek or other Gentile sources. The chief argument adduced to establish this point is a quotation from papyri of the second century in which the god Serapis is called Lord (Gr. *Κύριος*) as follows: "I thank the Lord Serapis that when I was in peril in the sea he saved me immediately," and "I make supplication for thee daily to the Lord Serapis" (page 41). The author does not show any connection whatever between Paul's use of the term Lord as applied

to Christ and this or any other earlier or later Gentile writing. He simply says, since Paul preached to Gentiles it was most natural that he should employ conceptions taken from their own modes of religious thought. On page 49, the author says: "The question how the title *Κύριος* came to be applied to Christ can be answered in only one way. It was the title borne by the cult gods, the title that marked them out as objects of worship." However, Paul did not originate the form of Christ-worship involved in the use of the title. Evidently it was universally accepted by Christians when Paul wrote. The eclipse of the original Messianic Christianity is explained by the "fact that the Jewish element in the Church was, in the course of a very few years, dwarfed by the Gentile, and that the Jewish element itself was largely made up of Jews of the Dispersion, open to the Hellenistic ideas." (p. 50.)

The reader, of course, remembers that the title "Lord" is applied repeatedly in the Synoptic Gospels to Jesus. It occurs in Q, the Logia source common to Matthew and Luke, but the author regards the passage as "doubtful" without justifying himself by giving the ground of his doubt. The author in another place refers to the great saying of Jesus in Matt. 11:27ff, but says that objections can be urged against it "that to me, at least, seem decisive." (p. 263.) The author fails to mention one objection. But critical scholars are quite familiar with the nature of the objections. They are not objections based on internal evidence. The passage, as Warnack holds, is too much like the teaching of John to be regarded as genuine. Its Johannine estimate of Jesus is "decisive" of course for the man who has a theological axe to grind or a philosophic theory to justify. The use of the title "Lord" as applied to Jesus in Acts is also regarded by the author as unjustifiable. It also reflects the Gentile conception, which, in some unexplained and subtle way, injected itself into original Christianity and corrupted all the sources. The author allows nothing for a possible Jewish or Old Testament origin, despite the fact that there are Old Testament Messianic passages which represent the Messiah in terms justifying the designation "Lord."

After thus tracing Paul's use of the title to Gentile sources it was inevitable that the other leading ideas of Paul would be subjected to the same process. Hence atonement, redemption, justification and other elements in Paul's doctrine, including his Christology, generally are regarded as the reflection of his mental processes in his attempt to interpret the Gospel to Gentiles in terms of their own beliefs. The author rejects the Christ-worship, and the Christ-mysticism of Paul's teaching as an out-grown element of Christianity. These might have been temporarily useful in commending the Gospel to Gentiles, but are of no value to the "modern mind." There is a remainder of ethical teaching and worship of God the Father common to Paul and Jesus. This was the original Christianity which was so early corrupted.

We cannot criticize at length the type of opinion set forth in this volume. In some respects it is marked by striking ingenuity of surmise and inference. It is quite typical of the more recent phase of attack upon the Pauline theology and teaching generally. We may sum up the method pursued by saying it proceeds on the assumption that all the religious and theological ideas in the New Testament (in the Gospels as well as in Paul) which are out of harmony with what the author and his school conceive to be the "modern mind," can be found in a more or less crude form in the Gentile religions of the New Testament era. From this the inference is drawn that "original" Christianity has been corrupted and that which we have in the New Testament is the result of the corruption.

The most fatal objection to the method and result of this school of writers is that they attempt to reconstruct the Christian religion in terms of its "original" form without any historical or critical support whatever. According to their view there is no existent historical document which gives us the primitive religion of Jesus. Even the Gospel of Mark and the Logia source behind Matthew and Luke have been corrupted. When, where, and how the corruption took place is not indicated except in the most vague and general way. "It must have been so" or it was "natural" or "inevitable" that it should have been so,

represents the force of the argument. Of course to this group of scholars those who insist on historical and critical methods of handling the New Testament material and who allow the documents we have to bear their own witness, belong to an antiquated type of opinion which was in vogue a few years ago. The "modern" man has a serene and unwavering confidence in his ability to reconstruct the Synoptic Gospels and Paul's epistles in the light of the ethnic religions regardless of the trifling matter of historical and critical results completely at variance with his conclusions.

There are various possible ways of conceiving the relations of "original" Christianity to the surrounding religions if we are compelled to speculate on the subject at all. There are various ways of conceiving the possible attitude of Paul to the Gentile cults if we are shut up to *a priori* methods of finding out. But in the absence of historical and documentary proof to establish the view the world will be slow to follow a school of theology which insists that there is only one possible way of conceiving that relation and attitude. So long as men love history and facts more than speculative guesses they will prefer the view of Jesus expressed by Paul who lived close to Him in time and in vital union with Him by faith, rather than the conclusions of a limited school who mistakenly conceive of themselves as representing in some specific and superior way the "modern" man and the "modern" spirit. Meantime those of us who prefer history and sober criticism based on the scientific handling of the facts will follow the course of the new and most "modern" effort to neutralize the import of the New Testament. If the new effort succeeds it will have to strengthen its foundations at many points. Otherwise we anticipate that like many of its predecessors, we shall soon be compelled to wave it a farewell as it passes "down the ringing grooves of time."

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The Will to Freedom, or The Gospel of Nietzsche and the Gospel of Christ. By John Neville Figgis, D.D., Litt.D., of The Community of the Resurrection, Honorary Fellow of S. Catherine's College, Cambridge. New York, 1917: Chas. Scribner's Sons. xix-|-320 pp. \$1.25 net.