

For the Study of Comparative Religion.

Some Recent Literature.

If the next great controversy in which the Church of Christ has to engage is to be raised by the study of Comparative Religion, the Church should prepare for it. And there is only one way of preparing for it—to study Comparative Religion. Neither Comparative Religion nor any other science can do aught against the Truth, but for the Truth. The only weapon by which it can hurt us is Ignorance, and that weapon we hold in our own hands and turn against ourselves.

But the study of Comparative Religion should not be entered upon at once. It should be approached by the study, first of all, of certain separate religions. For it is not possible to compare things without the things that are to be compared. And it is best to begin with a primitive religion—the more primitive the better, if the knowledge that has been gathered of it is sufficiently full and reliable. A better religion to begin with could not be found than the religion of the Australian aborigines.

The Native Tribes of Central Australia.

The religion of all the aborigines of Australia is not equally primitive. In the south-east it is considerably more advanced than in the centre. This may be due to the greater ease with which life is supported there, or it may even be due in some degree to the influence of white men. In the central regions, where the soil is parched and barren, and where certainly no white man has had much influence in modifying the native superstitions, the religion is so primitive that scholars like Dr. J. G. Frazer doubt if it should be called religion at all. This is the region that has been explored by Professor Baldwin Spencer and Mr. F. J. Gillen. Their volume on *The Native Tribes of Central Australia*, published in 1899 by Macmillan, is probably the best account of a truly savage religion that exists in the English language, and the best introduction to the study of Religion. There are other great books on Australia. Mr. A. W. Howitt, the Rev. Lorimer Fison, and Mr. W. E. Roth are the best accredited authors. But for our present purpose they do not come into competition with Spencer and Gillen.

As has already been hinted, the book has more to do with Magic than with Religion. And to get the good of it one has to keep the distinction between Magic and Religion clear. Dr. J. G. Frazer defines Religion as 'a propitiation or conciliation of powers superior to man which are believed to direct and control the course of nature and of human life.' There is an earlier stage of belief than this—at least many call it earlier. It is the belief that men themselves can control the course of nature and of human life. When that belief is carried into practice it is called Magic. Thus when two men thrash one another in Java till the blood flows down their backs, in order to bring rain, they are practising Magic. They believe that the streaming blood will bring the rain pouring down also. But when the Hindu pours hot oil in the left ear of a dog for the same purpose, his act is called religious. For his hope is that Indra will hear the howling of the dog and send the rain in pity.

Hindu Manners, Customs, and Ceremonies.

The Hindus are religious. Yet even among the Hindus there are practices that scarce deserve that name. The step from the natives of Australia to the inhabitants of India is a distinct step, but it is quite a natural one.

In the year 1848 died the Abbé J. A. Dubois, who had laboured in India as a Christian missionary for thirty-one years. It seems that immediately upon his arrival in India he discovered that if he was to preach the gospel with power, he must understand the thoughts of the people to whom he was to preach it. 'Accordingly,' he says, 'I made it my constant rule to live as they did. I adopted their style of clothing, and I studied their customs and methods of life, in order to be exactly like them. I even went so far as to avoid any display of repugnance to the majority of their peculiar prejudices.'

Whether this manner of life is advantageous to the preaching of the gospel is a question that is at present under debate. The Abbé Dubois held that at any rate it was good for the purpose of understanding the people. 'By such circumspect conduct,' he says. 'I was able to ensure a free and hearty welcome from people of all castes and con-

ditions, and was often favoured of their own accord with the most curious and interesting particulars about themselves.'

The Abbé Dubois wrote down his observations in a book. The MS. was translated into English in the year 1816. But meantime the author had revised and enlarged it; and this revised edition was never translated into English until Mr. H. K. Beauchamp had it done, and got it published in a handsome volume at the Clarendon Press, with notes, corrections, and a biography. The second edition of Mr. Beauchamp's work was published in 1899. Its title is *Hindu Manners, Customs, and Ceremonies* (15s. net). There is a greater general work on the religion of the Hindus than this, but this is probably the work to begin the study of Hindu religion with.

The Cosmology of the Rigveda.

After the Abbé Dubois, and before passing from India, one may do a little special study. For that purpose an excellent book is *The Cosmology of the Rigveda* by Mr. H. W. Wallis. It was published some years ago by the Hibbert Trustees (Williams & Norgate), but it is certainly not out of date or in any sense superseded. In spite of its special nature, and the extreme difficulty of Vedic study of all kinds, it is intelligible and manageable.

The Religions of India.

Perhaps we had better now undertake a general survey of the religions of India. For this purpose it would be hard to find a more satisfactory book than the volume on *The Religions of India* in Professor Jastrow's series, entitled 'Handbooks on the History of Religions.' Professor Jastrow's series is worthy of all commendation, and we have read the volume on India with very great pleasure. It is written by Dr. E. W. Hopkins of Bryn Mawr College.

So immense is the field that no one would dream of looking for elaborate treatment of the religions of India in a single volume; and perhaps the one fault to be found with the book is that it attempts more detail than was necessary. Still the main purpose of the book is never lost sight of; that is to say, it gives a survey of the whole field; and certainly the interest never flags. There may be less originality (by which we do not mean less personal observation, but less originality of suggestion and speculation) than in M. Barth's

handbook; but undoubtedly Dr. Hopkins is in every way more suitable for the English reader. The section on the modern Hindu Sects gives some real comprehension of that subject; but that subject is complicated and comprehensive enough to demand a volume for itself as large as Dr. Hopkins' book.

The Lamaism of Tibet.

Dr. Hopkins gives fifty pages in his *Religions of India* to Buddhism. It does no more than whet the appetite. But, in any case, it is doubtful if the study of Buddhism should be begun in the land of its birth, where no pure Buddhist can now be found. Better turn to Tibet. The difficulties in Tibet are certainly great enough. One of the most formidable is the scantiness and uncertainty of the information regarding the Buddhism of Tibet as yet available. But, on the other hand, there is a great book on the subject, a book that can be mastered and can never be forgotten. It is Lt.-Col. Waddell's *The Buddhism of Tibet, or Lamaism* (Luzac & Co.; 25s. net).

Col. Waddell's *Lamaism* is one of the greatest books ever written on religion. The difficulties that had to be overcome could have been overcome only by a great traveller; the investigation could have been made only by a man of a true scientific temper; and the book could have been written only by a man of real literary ability. To take the last point first, we do not mean that the style is polished, but that it is often forcible, and always natural and suited to the subject. As to the second point, Col. Waddell was scientific enough to be careful that he did not suggest to the natives the things which he wanted to know, and yet he knew what he wanted to know. But the greatest worth of the book is in its uniqueness. Col. Waddell gathered his information for himself, taking joyfully the spoiling of his goods and the suffering of his person in the pursuit of it. Magnanimously he gives an immense list of works on Lamaism as an appendix to his book, but his book supersedes them all.

The Cult of Othin.

Pass from the Far East to the Far North. Already some account has been given of a comprehensive work on the religion of the early Teutons—Professor de la Saussaye's volume in Jastrow's series of handbooks. We now mention a little book by a scholar

of whom great things are expected. Mr. H. M. Chadwick, Fellow of Clare College, Cambridge, has taken the religion of the early Teutons for his special field of study, and as firstfruits of it has published an essay on *The Cult of Othin*. The work is original and thorough. Mr. Chadwick's special purpose is to attempt an answer to three questions: 1. What were the characteristics of the Othin or Woden Cult in the North? 2. Is the Cult identical with that of the ancient Germans? 3. When was it introduced into the North? The essay is published at the Cambridge University Press.

Bird Gods.

A curious and attractive book on *The Bird Gods in Ancient Europe*, written by Mr. Charles de Kay, is published in this country by Mr. Allenson. In a gossipy unscientific manner it offers the reader much attractive information on the place of birds in Religion and Folklore, which it must have cost the author considerable trouble to gather together. A feature of the book is its admirable index. But the most striking feature of it is a number of decorative designs by Mr. G. W. Edwards. If it is not severely scientific it is at anyrate quite artistic.

Studies in Eastern Religions.

After the study of separate religions comes the study of Comparative Religion. The great book is Dr. J. G. Frazer's *Golden Bough*. But if Mr. A. S. Geden's *Studies in Eastern Religions* is taken by the way, the transition to the science of Comparative Religion will be easier. Mr. Geden's book was published in 1900 (Charles H. Kelly). It is occupied almost entirely with Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism. Of these religions it gives a surprisingly clear account within its space, an account moreover that is thoroughly up to date and accurate. But the book has an additional value for our present

purpose. The consecutive study of Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism is a valuable training in Comparative Religion, the more valuable from the way in which these religions are related to one another. The similarity of doctrine and practice compels the reader to ask why the similarity is not identity.

The Golden Bough.

The great book in Comparative Religion, we have said, is Dr. Frazer's *Golden Bough*. The only other book that could be put in competition with it is Dr. Tylor's *Primitive Culture*. But the last edition of *Primitive Culture* was published in 1891, and in such a science as this twelve years is a lifetime. Moreover, we understand that Dr. Tylor is busy on a new edition. If we master *The Golden Bough*, we can afford to wait till the new edition of *Primitive Culture* is ready.

But who is able to master *The Golden Bough*? Its three immense volumes, published so handsomely by Macmillan (we speak of course of the latest edition, 1900), range over every department of the science of Comparative Religion, and in every department they enter into extraordinary detail. One's first thought, indeed, is that the book contains a mass of materials for the science of Comparative Religion, not an exposition of the science itself. But that is found to be a mistake. One thread runs through the whole—the golden thread of the Golden Bough—and even the parts are co-ordinated and proportionate; so that it may actually be said that he who masters this book masters the science of Comparative Religion as it now stands.

And into what a world of wonder is the reader introduced—into a world of wonder in every part of the world, in every hole and corner of it! And how deep and unanswerable are the questions that are raised as every new page is turned!

Recent Foreign Theology.

Archæology.

To students of Biblical Archæology no symbols are more familiar than *K.A.T.*² (= 2nd ed. of Schrader's *Keilinschriften und das Alte Testament*) or *C.O.T.* (= Whitehouse's translation, entitled

Cuneiform Inscriptions and the Old Testament). In future we shall possibly (but see below) become equally familiar with *K.A.T.*³, for what professes to be a third edition was published some little time ago.¹ Such a nomenclature, however, will be

¹ *Die Keilinschriften und das Alte Testament*. Von E.