The Natural History of the Christian Religion. Being a Study of the Doctrine of Jesus as developed from Judaism and converted into Dogma. By WILLIAM MACKINTOSH, M. A., D. D. 8vo, pp. vii, 607. Macmillan & Co.: New York and London.

Supernaturalists, as well as anti-supernaturalists, will gladly read this earnest attempt to solve the problem which arises from the rejection of the supernatural element in Christianity — that is, to explain "the most epoch-making fact that the world has seen" as a natural development. The latter class will find themselves strengthened in their position by the study of a treatment of the subject which leaves scarcely an important point without thorough consideration, and the former cannot but be gratified with the fearlessness and consistency with which the author states and defends his thesis. The work is founded upon the results of the historico-critical study of the New Testament, and the author regards it as "an outcome of that great movement." It accordingly differs radically in its method from the able treatise of Prof. Edward Caird on "The Evolution of Religion," which is a speculative and philosophical discussion of the religious problem. For it was not written to show that "the intuitive utterances of Jesus . . . coincide with the profoundest moral views of modern philosophy," but rather to answer, so far as they are capable of being answered, the questions: "How did the ideas of Jesus evolve themselves in his mind? How did he advance beyond the views of the ancients, Jew and gentile? Or, how did he anticipate or discount the highest flights of modern thought?" This could not be, in Dr. Mackintosh's opinion, "by any form or faculty of mysticism," no tendency to which he thinks at all discernible in the teaching of Jesus, but must have been by "the reaction of his mind upon the inherited and environing conditions, social and spiritual, peculiar to Judea in his day," — a reaction effected without supernatural illumination.

Dr. Mackintosh disclaims the wish to unsettle the belief of those whose spiritual life is nurtured by orthodox supernaturalism in any form. Rather he writes for "the multitudes in the leisured and better educated classes throughout Christendom" whose belief in Christianity is already

unsettled, and who cannot be satisfied with the popular faith. Accordingly, he wishes his work, although written "on the lines of the great critical movement," to be regarded as "constructive, and, in the larger sense of the word, even apologetic." With this conviction, he undertakes to show that "Christianity took its rise in a great spiritual . . . movement among the Jewish people, or in a great transformation of Jewish ideas effected by Jesus and spreading from him to his disciples; and to find in that movement and in certain favoring circumstances and historical conditions, without looking beyond to any supernatural or transcendent causes, an explanation of the whole [all the] relative phenomena." He wishes to make apparent the truth of three propositions: First, that Judaism and Christianity denote the successive stages of one long evolution of religious thought and sentiment, — this evolution, however, not beginning with Judaism, since the religion of Israel was under obligations to that of Egypt, so that the religious development which culminated in Christianity was coeval in its origin with the earliest dawn of intelligence; secondly, that the phases of this evolution in its decisive moments have been largely recorded in the form of myth and dogma, so that a miraculous aspect has been imparted to the evolution, which in itself went on naturally and rationally; thirdly, that the myth and dogma have mingled as important factors in the evolution itself. From this point of view it would appear that two voices speak to us out of the New Testament, the one reporting the history of miracle and dogma, the other the underlying "secret history" of a natural religious development, which was "of secular duration," and of which the most important and fruitful expression is presented in this record. To interpret this second voice is the task of the "higher criticism," which "can be nothing short of tracing and following out the course of the underlying history, and of discovering, if not exactly, yet approximately, how those who took part in the salient or creative periods of the movement — or rather, perhaps, how those who came after — conceived of these as periods of special divine interposition, and handed down the memory of them in narratives which imparted to them their miraculous coloring."

In the course of his defense of the anti-supernaturalistic theory the author takes exception to the position of Huxley and Kuenen, who deny the miracles on the ground of the inadequacy of the historical evidence, while not denying the possibility of miracle in the abstract. To the former's remark that "objections to the occurrence of miracles cannot be scientifically based on any *a priori* consideration," he answers that the considerations in question are not *a priori* in the sense of being metaphysical, or in the sense of being *unvermittelt* — that is, independent of all previous knowledge or experience. For science shows the universal reign of order, and we have reason to believe "that what is called divine action never operates irrespective of such order, or otherwise than naturally." The Duke of Argyle proceeds upon this hypothesis, and main-

tains that miracles were wrought in accordance with law, but his reasoning is regarded as of the nature of an *argumentum ad ignorantiam* and as "in flat contradiction to the tenor of all Scripture, which everywhere implies that miracles were creative acts."

If the author's theory of the divine government be accepted, there is evidently no basis for the popular doctrines of the incarnation, atonement and resurrection, but Jesus must be regarded as "a member, pure and simple, of the human family," a teacher, whose mission it was to impart to men a higher view of their duty and of their relation to God. Dr. Mackintosh accordingly says with entire consistency that "we can accept of even Jesus as an authority only in so far as his doctrine and example appeal to reason and to conscience," and that "if he claimed a special and supernatural derivation for any part of his doctrine, we cannot . . . feel constrained, even by . . . reverence for his person, to accept such a claim on his authority." It is not, however, inconsistent with this judgment to acknowledge the real greatness of Jesus, to see in him the creator of a new epoch in religion and a preëminent religious genius, and to recognize that through his mission a new course was given to the history of the world. In fact, a reverent and sympathetic appreciation of the character and work of Jesus is characteristic of all that the author says of him. While not according to him absolute originality for the fundamental doctrine of his teaching, that the true value of an act is determined by the intention and motive, he says that "simply by giving due, i. e., absolute significance to elements which had never received a prominence commensurate to their importance, he brought into view the religion of the heart, and presented to the faith of man an ideal so plain that it could dispense with the aids of representation by symbol and ceremony, and find its legitimate and necessary fruit in a pure and ever purer form of the common life of man." The doctrine of Jesus as a consistent whole he affirms to be unique and novel. "To say that anything like the doctrine of Jesus as a whole, or anything approaching it, was ever promulgated before his time, is little short of an affront to human reason." "His moral standard and his conception of God are widely separated from every doctrine which preceded it, as well as from all that could be gathered from acquaintance with the best that men had thought or written in all previous ages." The idea of the divine forgiveness, dissociated from that of propitiation, with which it was connected both in the religion of Israel and in Paulinism, was "emphatically his own" and is nowhere found in its purity except in his teaching. While welcoming the thought that many of the ideas of Jesus had suggested themselves to the higher minds of our race, the author takes the position that those which underlie all his teaching, while they had germinated in many such minds, did in him alone coalesce and blossom into an ideal of humanity and a conception of God which were to become the basis of a new religion and a better form of society.

In treating of the conversion of the religion of Jesus into dogma, Dr. Mackintosh, with a right insight, sees in the great apostle to the gentiles the conspicuous agent of this transformation. In consistency with his general point of view he finds Paul's conversion to Christianity conditioned by certain psychological antecedents and a new synthesis of religion which had begun to declare itself in his mind. There is an apparent inconsistency in the opinions that the change in the apostle was effected when, convinced of the fruitlessness of the effort to propitiate the Deity by a fulfillment of the law, he came to believe from what he had learned of the teaching of Jesus that the effort was unnecessary, because God was propitious by nature and did not need to be propitiated, and that nevertheless "in order to explain to himself the revolution in his inner life, he re-introduced into his system of thought the very idea of atonement the abandonment of which had brought it about." Is it not more probable that the idea of atonement, which is fundamental in his teaching, was a factor in his conversion, and that his acceptance of a suffering Messiah was not dissociated at any time from an interpretation of the passion as propitiatory? The important fact, however, is that the autosoteric religious relation as taught by Jesus, in which atonement had no place, was transformed by Paul into a heterosoteric dogma, the central idea of which was that of a representative propitiation effected by Jesus himself on the cross. The relation of Paul to Jesus in this respect is elucidated by the author with great clearness and force.

One of the most interesting and important chapters in the book is that on the fourth Gospel, in which Dr. Mackintosh presents the *rationale* of this remarkable contribution to the development of Christianity by a great religious genius of the second century, who "supplied the missing keystone to the arch of Pauline dogma by bringing together in Christ the absolute essence of the divine nature with its historical manifestation in human form." Due importance is given to the relation of this Gospel, in its origin and ideas, to the Gnostic heresy, and its definition of the nature of Christ by the Logos-idea is regarded as in some sense a compromise between orthodoxy and Gnosticism.

No abler, more important and significant theological work than this has appeared in English since the publication of Dr. Martineau's "Seat of Authority in Religion." Written for "the multitudes in the leisured and better educated classes throughout Christendom" who do not believe in a supernatural Christianity, it may be compared in its significance and probable helpfulness to Schleiermacher's "Reden über die Religion," addressed at the beginning of this century to the cultivated among those to whom religion was a subject for ridicule and scorn.

ORELLO CONE.

BUCHTEL COLLEGE.