

CONTRIBUTIONS.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF DOCTRINE IN THE PRE-CHRISTIAN CHURCH.

IN "Christian Literature" for January, the premier article, on the above subject, is by the Rev. George G. Low, Rector of Almonte. Like all Mr. Lowe's writings, it is in sympathy with what is best in modern thought while in full accord with Catholic Christianity. Starting with Newman's seven tests of "true development" as distinguished from "corruption" of doctrine, he points out that these are even more applicable to the Old Testament Church, as it was an organic unity, than they can be to the Roman or any other single portion of the Christian Church, and that the principle of development is positively stated in the words of Elohim to Moses (Exo. 6: 2, 3), to the effect that He was known to the Patriarchs as Power, whereas He would now reveal Himself as Jehovah. In the childhood of the world, God is always known as Power, and generally destructive, that being more apparent and terrifying than constructive or immanent power. But in the process of Revelation, He whom Israel had long adored as Power came out into clearer light as the Eternal Lord of all, who was in a special sense the God of Israel. In due season they further realized that He was the Holy One, the inflexibly Righteous ruler, and so they attained—alone of all nations—to a pure, spiritual Monotheism. The highest ideal that "God is Love," with the truth of the Fatherhood of God and its corresponding truth of "the Kingdom," subjects of which we are invited to become, was made known by the Incarnation, Death, Resurrection and Ascension of Jesus, the only-begotten son. The slowness with which Israel grasped the evolution of truth is what might be expected, when we consider how slow the Christian Church is to see any progress in theology. "Even the primary truth of the unity of God, though taught persistently from the very beginning of their national life, was not fully learned by them till after the captivity in Babylon." The only fault we have to find with Mr. Low's article is its brevity.

CHRISTIANITY AND IDEALISM.

We who are students and have known something of Dr. Watson's true greatness are glad to see him coming out from the sphere of pure philosophy, and by applying his philosophical principles to the great practical problems of men, making himself known and helpful to others as he has been to us. The object of his new book, "Christianity and Idealism," is to show (1) that idealism is in its main principles an ultimate interpretation of the world; (2) that Christianity in the moral sense gives the ultimate

explanation of life, and is therefore the ultimate form of religion and never to be transcended; (3) that as a result Christianity and Idealism are essentially in harmony as the highest religion and the highest philosophical interpretation of life.

Such a book cannot but be of the utmost value. We have heard it said that it is time Christianity ceased to apologize for itself, and the statement is no doubt correct. Dr. Watson has made a step in the right direction in giving a positive apologetic for Christianity, an apologetic that to thinking minds is infinitely more valuable and convincing than a score of volumes taken up with answering petty little criticisms, that if left alone would die a natural death. He has a strong belief in the self-evidencing power of truth, and so has made it his aim, so far as possible, to present to the reader, not Christian theology, but Christianity itself in its naked purity. Such a presentation does much to free us from the trappings and incumbrances of mediaeval theology that still have no small place in our religion.

The author's manner in writing is worthy of notice, and will tend to a candid and an appreciative consideration of his views by every reader. It is not argumentative or debating. He does not flaunt his views boastfully in the face of those who might be regarded as opponents, but states kindly, clearly and sympathetically the positive truth, in the hope that it will do its own work and destroy what is untrue. He goes about his work with the patience and sympathy of the great teacher, showing thus that his object is not so much to prove that his own views are right as to lead others to the light. The following synopsis is given in the hope that it will be more suggestive than any comment the writer could make:

The author begins by giving the Christian conception of the human race as a single spiritual organism, in which each gains his own perfection by self-identification with all the rest. According to this conception morality is inseparable from religion; and the truth of this is seen by reference to the totemistic religions and also to the Greek and Hebrew. An examination of totemism, polytheism and monotheism shows that the moral and religious standards advance together. Neither Greek nor Jewish ideal as we shall see reached a satisfactory conception of God, man and the world; the question is whether Christianity is not another, though more splendid failure.

The Greek ideal is that of perfect manhood. Its fundamental defect is that it conceives of the highest life as simply an expansion of the natural life. It has no deep sense of the unity and spirituality of the divine, and consequently of the distinction between what man is and what he ought to be. There is a sort of instinctive transcendence of polytheism in