

Teaching of the Vedas.

Referring to a work on this subject by the Rev. Maurice Phillips, published by Logmans, the *Chronicle* of the London Missionary Society says:

Mr. Phillips has done a most useful work in the production of this book, and we heartily congratulate him on his success. The Vedas are to the Hindu what the Bible is to the Christian, a divinely inspired book, the acknowledged source of his religious knowledge. Although they are declared to be the exclusive property of the high-caste people—the members of the lower castes being forbidden to read them—the later and more popular writings claim to be streams flowing from this source. Composed thousands of years ago in the sacred Sanskrit tongue—a language which has long ceased to be used in speech—of the privileged Brahmins, very few even of the most learned are able to read them. It is, therefore, largely owing to the efforts of European scholars that they are now becoming known; and it comes as a discovery even to the Hindus themselves that their present faiths and practices are, to a large extent, opposed to the teachings of these authoritative books.

Although the Hinduism of to-day is altogether different from the Vedic religion, in many respects the objects of worship are declared to be in some cases identical, in others to be developments of epithets or phrases employed in describing the deities of long ago. A knowledge of the Vedas secures a missionary the respect of his hearers, and, at the same time, is of great assistance as he endeavors to present the Christ to them in an intelligible and attractive form. To show a Hindu that in accepting some of the most important Christian truths, which are opposed to what he has hitherto believed, he is returning to the faith of his fathers, makes their acceptance far more easy than it would otherwise be.

Mr. Phillips has endeavored to fulfil a two-fold purpose—viz., to give the teaching of the Vedas in a systematic form and at the same time point out the bearing of the Vedic religion on the origin and development of religion in general. In successive chapters he has told us what these old writings have to say on the nature of the gods; on the creation, or, rather emanation of the world; on man, sin and immortality. He has given us an account of worship, sacrifice, prayer and praise.

And the conclusions he draws from the review of these old writings are as follows: That the development of religious thought in India has been uniformly downward, and not upward—deterioration, and not evolution: that the probability is that if we could go back far enough in time so as to reach the point where deterioration began we should find a monotheistic religion pure and simple; and, finally, that the higher and purer conceptions of the Vedic Aryans was the result of a primitive divine revelation—conclusions, by the way, almost identical with those which Dr. Legge draws from the careful study of the Chinese sacred books. And Mr. Phillips claims that whilst natural evolution cannot explain all the facts, the theory of a primitive revelation does.

Study of the Bible.

REV. JOSEPH HAMILTON.

In this week's issue of the PRESBYTERIAN REVIEW there is an article with whose title, by Rev. R. A. Torney. Despite the fact that nearly every suggestion he gives is negative rather than positive, the article ought to be very helpful. It is well up to date in indicating the methods of Bible study that ought to be avoided. There is one paragraph, however, which with all respect for the author, I venture to think needs to be modified. As it stands, it must be more or less discouraging to earnest, simple enquiring readers who have not the time nor the ability for a thorough and systematic study of the entire Word. And we must remember that such thorough, systematic study of the Word is still confined to the few; yes, I say, to the few, notwithstanding all our pretence of culture and education. It would be a great pity, then, to put anything like a discouragement in the way of the many.

The paragraph I refer to reads thus: "Any method of study that does not demand close thought and hard

work is a hopelessly vicious method. People are seeking for some easy method of Bible study. There is no easy method that is of any value. God never puts gold where it can be got without hard work. Any good method of study will demand time, close application and hard work."

Now, is not this too strong? Is every method of study "hopelessly vicious" that does not demand close thought and hard work? What about the millions of devout souls that quietly and serenely read a portion of the Word every day, and find it sweet to their taste? There are multitudes, I believe, who are not able to give the Word very "close thought," and who certainly do not find the study of it "hard work," but yet who are wonderfully helped and edified by reading it. Surely there are "babes" who have but a "desire" for the sincere milk of the Word; yet the desire is enough, for they "grow thereby"; yes, they grow, without "close thought" or "hard work." It is not hard work to grow. We grow unconsciously, and the more unconsciously the better. I imagine that Mary had not very much "hard work" when she sat at Jesus' feet, and heard His Word. She had to make no elaborate effort. She just heard His Word, and it dropped on her heart like rain on thirsty soil. So I think we have to beware of too much elaboration, or at least of imposing that as a necessity on all. Our author says that "God never puts gold where it can be got without hard work." Hard work again! Ay but God does sometimes put the gold where it can be found without hard work. It is sometimes found by accident, and in quantity too. To be sure, we have to dig for truth, as for hid treasure; that is the rule; but sometimes we find it, as we find gold, without digging. An open, earnest, spiritual mind I believe to be a better condition of success generally, than elaboration and hard work. "Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law." Just open my eyes, and I shall see. And humble, devout souls do see, and often see far more clearly than those who spend their time and strength in technique and elaboration. Let no one be discouraged by the pretentious education of the times from an earnest, devout, and simple reading of the wonderful Word of life. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God," yes they shall see Him in His Word.

"Divine Instructor, gracious Lord!
Be thou forever near;
Teach me to love thy sacred Word,
And view my Saviour there."

The End of the World*

BY REV. ADDISON F. FOSTER, D.D.

The interpretation of the 24th chapter of Matthew is determined by the two questions propounded by the disciples. They asked when should be the destruction of Jerusalem and what should be the sign of Christ's coming and the end of the world? Here were three separate events. Apparently they thought that all were to occur together and were practically the same. Yet they made a distinction, as well they might, between the destruction of Jerusalem and the other two events. This distinction Christ recognized and emphasized while acknowledging the synchronism of His coming with the end of the world. In reply to these two questions he gave three answers;—the first consisting of

GENERAL WARNINGS REGARDING THE FUTURE.

He would not have His disciples unduly disturbed by strange events and anticipate the end before its time. Before this present dispensation closes several things must occur,—the coming of false religious teachers, wars innumerable, persecutions, heresies, worldliness and backsliding, and, to a more marked degree, the end of the world. One other specially notable event should antedate the final coming of Christ, viz.—the preaching of the Gospel throughout all the world. Beyond doubt, all these portents, except the last, have already occurred. So far as these preliminaries are concerned we may reasonably expect Christ to appear for judgment at any moment. But apparently the Gospel has not yet been preached in the whole world. As yet, the interior of China, of Africa, Thibet and some other

*An Exposition based on (Matt. xxiv. 1-36); in the Bible Study Union Course on "The Teachings of Christ."