

The New Hegelianism in Britain.

For the Review.

The series of lectures on German Theology by the Rev. Dr. Orr of Edinburgh, which he recently delivered in Chicago and which he is now delivering in Winnipeg, is attracting considerable attention. Dr. Orr has already made a name for himself by his book "The Christian View of God and the World" and by the share he took in connection with Principal Rainy and Professor Flint, in issuing a joint volume in reply to the Gifford lectures recently delivered in Edinburgh by Prof. Pfleiderer of Berlin.

Dr. Orr's lecture last Tuesday was upon Heo-Hegelianism and a brief synopsis of the lecture is herewith appended. The chief recent representatives of the new Hegelian school in its German branch are Bedermann of Zurich who died about four years ago and Pfleiderer of Berlin. It calls itself the "liberal Protestantism" and is really a rally of the various rationalistic schools in opposition to the supernatural. It claims to be a Christianity without miracles and in accordance with the modern theory of the universe. The most serious objection to the position of these theologians is, that while they deny some of the fundamental truths of a scriptural form of Christianity, they persist in retaining the traditional forms of worship, and the traditional terms under which theological topics have for ages been discussed. One for instance finds Hartmann who regards existence as an evil, and creation as an inexpiable crime, lecturing through the whole course on theology and discussing it under such heads as revelation, inspiration, the prophetic, priestly and kingly aspects of Christ's work etc., although these names can mean for Him nothing like what we understand by them. "Let all worship" they say "be gone through." The philosopher knows its meaning and the people are edified.

The Oxford development of the Hegelian movement has attracted a considerable following, of which the leading representatives are the late T. H. Grun of Oxford; Edward Caird recently of Glasgow, now of Oxford; F. H. Bradley the author of "Appearance and Reality"; Nettleship, the biographer of Grun, and Jones the successor of Caird in Glasgow. In its philosophical aspects it is best represented by Grun's "Prolegomena to Ethics" and in its religious aspects by Caird's recent Gifford lectures on "The Evolution of Religion." Adopting the prevailing theory of evolution this view substitutes the conception of a thought or idea immanent in nature till it culminates in God. It identifies the divine life with the process of the world, and even when it attributes self-consciousness to God, it is merely in the sense of a unity of the world process. An eternal self-consciousness is realizing itself in man and the world and this development is a necessary one. God being such as He is, the world must be such as it is, as a necessary development from Him. This is a form of evolution of course, but very different from that of Darwin, it is Hegelian evolution. The point at which the theory needs to be dealt with is in merging God in the process of nature. It makes nature as necessary to God, as God is to nature. A god in process must necessarily be incomplete and as Lotze says, it leaves as little room for freedom in God as in man.

In the theological side of the theory there is much that is good, especially in the way of correcting the misconceptions of the advocates of previous theories. It is, especially when it comes to construct a theory of its own that its real tendency is fully apparent. Caird's book begins with begging the question. If you begin with the Hegelian idea of God as a necessary working out of the world idea, you have admitted one of the main things to be proved, for God is surely more than an eternal self-consciousness in nature and working under a law of necessity. He acts freely, not only in, but above nature.

The law of development according to this theory involves three factors (1) consciousness of external objects—the objective factor, (2) consciousness of self—the subjective factor (3) the unity of these two, which is, God. The child, for instance, first knows, say, its mother,—an object belonging to the external world, then knows itself, then, as the next step combines these two elements into absolute knowledge. The earliest religions, such as those of India and Greece are objective. In the next stage, there moves an inward spiritual soul, e. g. Buddhism, Stoicism, Judaism (a curious combination). Then comes the one absolute religion—Christianity—life in God, which results from a union of the objective and subjective elements. History does not bear out this theory of the evolution of religion. Neither in the case of the individual does experience pass through these three stages, nor in the whole history of the world is there any process such as this requires—indeed there are, it is worthy of note, but three monotheistic religions which the world has seen i. e. Christianity, Judaism and Mohammedanism, the latter founded in great part, on the other two.

Another objection to this school is that it has no plan for sin. Indeed in Caird's book so brief and incidental is the treatment of this subject that the words sin, evil and their cognates do not occur in the index at all. Evil, by this school as by the rest of the Hegelians is regarded as a necessary stage in the development of the world in realizing its eternal self-consciousness. Christ is a natural product in the development of the race. In Him the divine and the human are united, but He is divine only in the sense that He has a consciousness of His divinity which others have not. Here then is a new Christianity in which all that is miraculous is swept out and in which even when the old terms are used one is often far from recognizing the old doctrines.

The theory is not yet at a standstill but in the development which is now going on it shows signs of breaking up as Hegelianism itself did, and moving into two directions. On the left wing is Bradley, who in his recent "Appearance and Reality" goes further than in his earlier work, "Ethical Studies." He aims logically at the overthrow of religion and morality. The absolute being is neither good nor bad; ugliness and evil no less than other qualities contribute to his wealth. Neither thought, nor will, nor personality can be predicated of him. On the other hand Professor Seth, successor to Prof. A. C. Fraser in Edinburgh University, is coming out upon the right wing, and in the lectures which he delivered last year in the Oxford summer school advances to a theistic position.

Sincerity.

The origin of the word "sincerity" is profoundly interesting and suggestive. When Rome flourished, when her fame was spread the world over, when the Tiber was lined with noble palaces built of choicest marbles, men vied with each other in the construction of their habitations. Skilful sculptors were in request, and immense sums of money were paid for elaborate workmanship. The workmen, however, were then guilty of practising deceitful tricks. If, for example, they accidentally chipped the edges of the marble, or if they discovered some conspicuous flaw, they would fill up the chink and supply the deficiency by means of prepared wax. For some time the deception would not be discovered, but when the weather tested the buildings, the heat or damp would disclose the wax. At length, those who had determined on the erection of mansions introduced a binding clause into their contracts to the effect that the whole work from first to last was to be *sine cera*—that is, "without wax." Thus we obtain our word *sincerity*. To be sincere is to be without any attempt on our part to mislead, misrepresent, deceive, or impose on another; to be, and appear to be, what we are; to say what we mean, and mean what we say.