

PANTHEOS.

That easy trust in a life immortal, such as our simple fathers knew,
Where is it now? To what dim ether, losing its essence, has it fled?
Call in vain, for your faith has vanished: swift on the wings of your
doubt it flew:

Beat on the ground like some Greek woman, calling the spirits of the
dead!

"Ah, if men knew," said once Lucretius, "Death for the end of all
their cares,

How could the wiles of priestcraft trick them, lure them on for its
sordid gain?"

Clasp thou my hand, O mighty Roman! See, they turn in the hidden
snares:

Soon will they beat their faint limbs from them, earn their peace
through their grief and pain!

But thou art gone: there is no more of thee: one thou art with
meadow and stream:

Last night thou didst shine in the drifting moonlight, sigh in the
wind that shuddered by.

O wind, O moon! Can you never tell him, the old world wakes from
its cheating dream,

Tell it to him who lives with nature, even as too one day shall I?

I shall ride forth on the crested ocean, I shall make part of the
noonday gold:

Hear me, brothers who drowse and slumber, trusting too long what
cannot be!

Hail that truth which is new each morning, old as no tale that has
yet been told:—

O dream-fed sleepers! Our good brown mother, she is your im-
mortality!

MISCELLANEOUS.

BOOK REVIEWS.

RELIGIOUS AND MORAL IDEAS IN BABYLONIA AND ASSYRIA. By *Samuel A. B. Mercer, Ph.D., D.D.* Milwaukee, Wis.: Morehouse Publishing Co.: London: A. R. Mowbray & Co. [1919]. Pp. xiv, 129. Price, \$1.50.

The present volume of the Biblical and Oriental Series contains, besides a chronological outline and a brief introductory essay, discussions of the ideas of God, of man, of mediation, of the future and of morality in Babylonia and

Assyria. The purpose of the book is evidently twofold: (1) to furnish an account of historical facts the significance of which for a proper understanding of the Bible can no longer be denied; (2) to suggest an interpretation of these facts consonant with the tenets of liberal theology. To be sure, the author has found it worth while, "in order to inspire due confidence" in his study, to note that "no assertion has been made, and no conclusion has been drawn, which cannot be thoroughly substantiated by reference to the original texts" (p. viii). Still, his view-point is neither that of the recording historian nor that of the philosopher of history, but rather reflects a man who deems himself in possession of the ultimate truth—"a universal religious standard," as he calls it (p. 4).

This standard is also applied, with doubtful results, to the Babylonian idea of a future life. While the author admits, speaking of the doctrine "of the great attainment, the belief in the lofty something which it is possible for man to become," that the Babylonians "shared with all mankind this lofty ideal," he deplors that "its power as a moral sanction was greatly limited, because of their inability to allow its extension into the idealism of a life beyond the grave" (p. 116). Elsewhere he complains, "Their best vision was confined to this world, and that was not very inspiring. The Hebrew dream of a Messianic Kingdom, of a city of God, was unknown to them," and finds that, "when we think of the dreariness in outlook of the Babylonians and Assyrians, of the absence of that power which could have consecrated their nationalism, their patriotism, their wealth, their glory and their individual sacrifices, it is a real wonder that they ever accomplished anything" (pp. 94f). In other words, the idea of tit for tat in the life to come is regarded as essential for the "consecration" of the individual, and national self-glorification as a worthy "stimulus and inspiration of a glorious spiritual future" (*ibid.*) for the people as a whole. Leaving aside the fact that the author here takes the national hopes of the Jews at their *highest* value, it does not seem fair to draw the comparison at all, if only for chronological reasons, and as regards individual survival (cf. p. 117), the ancient Hebrews of course had just as dreary a conception of life after death as their Babylonian and Assyrian contemporaries, cf. Is. xiv. 9-11 and Ezek. xxxii. 22-32, and even as late a writer as Ecclesiastes (ix. 10). The claim that the failure of the Babylonians to develop beyond this stage of thought, "contributed largely to their final decay and downfall" (p. 92, cf. also p. 124), entirely disregards, it seems to us, the sad example of Egypt whose religion comprised an elaborate doctrine of individual salvation, or, for that matter, the example of modern Mohammedanism and various other religions.

For all these reasons we regret that in this particular connection we cannot follow the author's mode of demonstration, while the fairness with which he has presented practically every other phase of Babylonian belief is conspicuous—there are wide circles to whom his account of Babylonian morality and piety will come as a revelation. The least satisfactory chapter is unfortunately the last one, which might easily have been condensed to half its present length without losing in substance.