

the ugly duckling of the brood, but the creator of new scientific knowledge now holds the material destiny of the world in the hollow of his hand as completely as his prototype in literature, art, music, or abstract thought dominated the future of its mental and moral destiny, though in neither case does their work mature in their own generation. In his reforming zeal Sir James Barrett would storm their last dug-out. The Royal Society is bidden to say good-bye to the relics of medievalism, and to admit to its membership successful organisers of transport, pioneers in public health improvement, and serious statesmen whose obvious services to mankind are at least the equal of those rendered by the dissection of earthworms, the discovery of a capsule on a bacillus, or recon-dite investigations into rare elements. The Royal Society, like the universities, no doubt has outgrown its original functions, which are being atrophied in competition with the claims of urgent and more practical affairs. Yet if one could go to sleep for fifty years and wake up, the importance of what is being more and more sacrificed might be seen in truer perspective.

FREDERICK SODDY.

NATURAL SCIENCE AND RELIGION.

The Next Step in Religion: An Essay toward the Coming Renaissance. By Dr. R. W. Sellars. Pp. 228. (New York: The Macmillan Co.; London: Macmillan and Co., Ltd., 1918.) Price 1.50 dollars.

WHAT is to be the religion of the future? How far will traditional beliefs be affected by the view of the universe which modern science sets before us? Such are vitally important questions which in the present volume an American author tries to answer. The man of science takes for his postulate the uniformity of Nature. It has served him well, for upon it the physical and biological sciences have been built. But are man's ethical and æsthetic faculties, which dominate human life, conditioned by inexorable law? Could we, if we knew completely a man's history and environment, predict his every action? The man of science is tempted to answer "Yes," and his creed is, then, extraordinarily like the Stoic determinism to be found, for instance, in Marcus Aurelius. Most of us, however, are certain that we have free-will. As we make the admission, the chains of necessity cease to bind us. We find ourselves forced to make an idealist, or spiritual, interpretation of the universe, and many hold Christianity to be the most persuasive consequential position.

Dr. Sellars, in his book, begins by showing that primitive cosmologies, such as are to be found in the Bible, have been finally discredited. Copernican astronomy and the doctrine of evolution have radically altered the setting of Christianity. Next he shows how the study of comparative religion reveals the genesis of much of the myth and ritual legislation of the Old Testament.

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He then proceeds to discuss the origins of Christianity. He admits Jesus of Nazareth to have been a historical character, but finds in St. Paul's teaching more affinities with the mystery-religions of the Roman Empire than with the faith of which Jesus made Himself the centre. A rapid sketch of the evolution of Christianity brings us to the conflict of science and religion in modern times. Throughout the earlier chapters of his book Dr. Sellars shows wide, though at times superficial, reading; some of his conclusions authoritative scholars would reject. He later argues against miracles, denies the existence of the soul and of personal immortality, finds the problem of evil a fatal obstacle to the Christian idea of God, and ends with a plea for a religion, purged of supernaturalism, which will mean "the valuing of experiences and activities, the striving for their realisation, the loyalty to their call." An obvious criticism presents itself. If man is a product of natural laws which have made him and which he cannot modify, what is the use of his "striving" and "loyalty"? The laws will work themselves out: man is their creature: the end is determined.

The theologian will say that Dr. Sellars has not got to the kernel of traditional Christianity. He chips off bits of the husk and announces that there is nothing inside. Of certain degenerate types of Protestantism it may be that nothing is left when Bibliolatry has gone. But Christian theology is first of all rational. It is founded upon the belief that we can reach absolute truth and upon a determination to succeed in the quest. Arising out of the attempt to find truth are the spiritual interpretations of the universe made by Jewish prophets and by 800 years of Hellenic speculation which began with Socrates and ended with Plotinus. A synthesis of these blends with Christ's teaching, and is constantly associated with the mystical experience of humanity. Modern natural science has nothing to do with the essentials of this massive structure. It can ignore it all; but, in so doing, it will fail to explain man to himself. Dr. Sellars's "religion" is a set of exhortations empirically derived from his social and political environment. We believe that, because its metaphysical basis is defective, it cannot satisfy men, though it may inspire some to live worthily in a democratically organised society.

E. W. BARNES.

THE PASSING OF THE OLD ORDER.

- (1) *The Neo-Platonists: A Study in the History of Hellenism.* By Thomas Whittaker. Second edition, with a Supplement on the Commentaries of Proclus. Pp. xv+318. (Cambridge: At the University Press, 1918.) Price 12s. net.
- (2) *On Society.* By Frederic Harrison. Pp. xii+444. (London: Macmillan and Co., Ltd., 1918.) Price 12s. net.
- (3) *The Psychology of Conviction: A Study of Beliefs and Attitudes.* By Prof. J. Jastrow.