

[NEW BOOKS AND OLD]

A Scholar's Testament : Meditations of Adolf Von Harnack.

Translated from the German. (Ivor Nicholson and Watson Ltd., London. 6s.)

The Sermon on the Mount : An Interpretation. By Pekka Ervast.
Translated from the Finnish. (T. P. H. London.)

The first author, a reputed German scholar and religious leader of Europe, faces with orthodox fervour the problems that confront the modern interpretation of Christianity. The second, a Finn, gives a liberal exposition of the teaching of Christ by a comparative study of texts in different languages. The authors, especially the former, are predisposed to their professed creed, and therefore have not been able to bring out the latent universality of Christian doctrines. The light of the Upanishads and the Sermons of Buddha would deepen their understandings. The Christ was an Oriental, and his teachings would be better understood in the light of the wisdom of the East. Pekka Ervast has, however, shown in his interpretation, both historically and logically, that the Eastern doctrines of Karma and Reincarnation are implied in the Sermon on the Mount. He says that during the first centuries the doctrines were accepted by various Christian sects and that later they were condemned as “dangerous” heresy, specially by the Synod of Constantinople convened by the Emperor Justinian in 553 A.D.; they were also anathematised by the medieval clergy in their councils.

Von Harnack has very wrongly condemned pantheism and deism. In his opinion Christian Theism alone can “satisfy a soul

with deep inward aspiration". It is a pity that a learned Divine like Harnack misunderstands the Indian doctrines. The strength of a religion lies not in its crude narrowness ; Christ's teachings are in reality synthetic but they have not been so far interpreted in such an universal way; for the first time, it was H. P. Blavatsky who showed this ; she was iconoclastic in her *Isis Unveiled*, but as logically constructive in her *Esoteric Character of the Gospels*. Christianity will shed unforeseen lustre when it will be explained in the light of Indian wisdom. This is perhaps the greatest task before the Christians in the new age.

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