

Book Reviews.

Studies of the Portrait of Christ. By REV. GEORGE MATHESON, D.D. New York: A. C. Armstrong & Son. Vol. I, second edition, 1900. Pp. x + 326. Vol. II, 1901. Pp. xii + 357. \$1.75 a volume.

Dr. Matheson has produced in these volumes a work which is in some respects unique—a devotional life of Christ which is really devotional. Its general plan is suggested by its title—to attempt to present the striking characteristics of the features of Jesus' life for contemplation, rather than for discussion, and to follow each of the studies by a short prayer suggested by the topic treated. In our estimation these prayers are the most valuable portion of the book.

It would be unjust to estimate the book from the point of view of biography or history. It shows the exegetical imagination which we have learned to associate with the author of *The Spiritual Development of St. Paul*, as well as the remarkable ability to follow suggestive interpretations. In many cases, however, these interpretations approach dangerously near the fanciful, as when he says Jesus left Galilee in order that he might be unseen by his disciples. In other cases they are full of insight. Dr. Matheson makes no attempt to study Jesus in connection with his times, and his conception of Jesus is the traditional one of devotional dogmatics. His chief work is considered to be that of the sacrifice on the cross, and his agony in Gethsemane to have consisted largely of his fear lest he should be the means of bringing the sin of the world to a culmination by allowing it to kill him. Yet, although thus dominated by a theological conception of Jesus, Dr. Matheson in some of his passages is remarkably happy. His discussion, for example, of Jesus in Samaria could hardly be improved. His conception also of the disciples as constituting a "league of pity" is very suggestive. In many ways it seems as if the first volume is superior to the second—doubtless because in it Dr. Matheson is more dominated by objective considerations than by theological. Indeed, one cannot help feeling in the second volume that the author's insistence upon the fact that he is dealing with the human, as distinct from the divine, side of Christ, has emphasized a dichotomy.

Yet, taken as a whole, the volumes are to be cordially recommended to every student of the life of Christ who wishes to use the gospel narratives for the quickening of his religious life. S. M.

The Messages of the Prophetic and Priestly Historians. By JOHN EDGAR MCFAYDEN, M.A., Professor of Old Testament Literature and Exegesis in Knox College, Toronto. ("Messages of the Bible Series," edited by Professors Sanders and Kent.) New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1901. Pp. xx + 362. \$1.25, *net*.

The praiseworthy purpose of combining criticism with edification, characteristic of this series, is faithfully pursued in this scholarly volume, which covers the historical books of the Old Testament. Three general divisions are made, according to writers: I, "Prophetic Historians (Genesis, Exodus, and Numbers);" II, "Prophetic-Priestly Historians (Joshua to Second Kings);" III, "Priestly Historians (Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Ruth, and Esther)." The books are carefully analyzed according to the present positions of the "critical" school. Differences of sources are indicated by varieties of type. Minor divisions, according to subject-matter, break the paraphrases of the contents of the books into helpful rubrics, and introductory chapters describe the character and purposes of the various writings. All this somewhat minute organization, while thoroughly useful in dealing with this difficult portion of the Scripture, will, we fear, be found somewhat confusing for the average reader. However, only one who has entered on the thorny paths which this book traverses can conceive the amount of careful planning and hard labor required to put into shape the materials that are here so thoroughly organized. If one will give the necessary time and study to master the contents of this volume, he will be amply repaid. For it is pre-eminently a student's book. In the ground it covers and in the manner of treatment it has no rival. Every teacher of Hebrew history will find it indispensable.

Of course, there are some things with which the individual critic will disagree. For ourselves we wish that the author had added a documentary analysis of what he calls the "older historical records," edited by the Deuteronomic historians. Indeed, it is not clearly brought out that the bulk of what these editors handle remains substantially as they found it, and is *prophetical* material, of which they