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The Virgin Birth of Jesus: A Critical Examination of the Gospel-Narratives of the Nativity and Other New Testament and Early Christian Evidence, and the Alleged Influence of Heathen Ideas by C. H. Box

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the same direction. Take the following from Professor J. Arthur Thomson's *Introduction to Science*. He writes (pp. 162, 163), "Nature is full of illustrations, on an ever grander scale as we ascend the series, of the fact that the whole may be greater than the sum of its parts. Thus we feel sure that organisms reveal a deeper aspect of reality than crystals do, and that in this sense there is more in the plant than in the crystal, more in the animal than in the plant, more in the bird than in the worm, more in man than in them all." "Students of science," he continues, "would breathe more freely if they could rid themselves of the influence of the hypothesis . . . that there is but one science of Nature, and that the category of mechanism is the only one we need . . .

(1) There is the *physical* order of Nature—the inorganic world—where mechanism reigns supreme. (2) There is the *vital* order of Nature—the world of organisms—where mechanism proves insufficient. (3) There is the *psychical* order of Nature—the world of mind—where mechanism is irrelevant." Professor Thomson goes on to point out that in this series, the higher pre-supposes and uses the lower, but, as he says, "overlaps it." The truth is that, at the present time, philosophy and science are converging upon the same conception of the Universe, the great idea of *Degrees of Reality*.

Finally, let me say that Mr. Rogers accuses me of "Subjective Idealism." This is a charge brought against every Idealist. But how can it be sustained against one who holds that the Individual shares in the experience of the Universal, the Infinite and Eternal? "In Him we live and move and have our being."

CHARLES F. DOWN.

NOTICES OF BOOKS.

THE VIRGIN BIRTH OF JESUS: a critical Examination of the Gospel-narratives of the Nativity and other New Testament and Early Christian evidence, and the alleged influence of heathen ideas. By C. H. Box, (Pitman.) 5s. net.

Mr. Box has laid apologists under considerable obligation by marshalling the literary evidence for the Virgin Birth in this book. He recognizes very rightly the impossibility of irrefragable demonstration in such a matter as this, but he claims, with justice, that the evidence for the traditional view is exceedingly strong. He shows that even if the orthodox view has its difficulties, they are far outweighed by those which beset the rationalistic view. Mr. Box has drawn particular attention to the character of the Lukan Nativity-narratives, and has emphasized the archaic nature of these sources. He reminds us that we have in them a product of the primitive Palestinian Christian community, and that we find crystallized in them the type of thought and piety and Messianic expectation which prevailed when the Gospel was first preached

by our Lord. Hence, tendency and development in the interests of edification have not had time to modify the writer's materials; they retain their earliest form and colour. This, though not a new argument, is one of the most important. To such a circle of believers as that referred to, the idea of a Virgin Birth was far more likely to prove a stumbling-block than a help, and on pp. 174, 175 Mr. Box makes the useful point that the appearance of this idea in the most markedly Jewish parts of the New Testament, is a matter that requires to be accounted for by a somewhat more convincing method than that *e.g.* of "insertion."

We commend this book to those who wish to weigh for themselves the value of the documentary evidence. We may not be able to say that the Virgin Birth is a *sine qua non* of the Incarnation, for our ignorance is too profound, but we may certainly say that it is one of the safeguards of the doctrine. Granted an Incarnation, a Virgin Birth is altogether congruous with it: abandon the Virgin Birth, and the central doctrine of the Incarnation is immediately endangered.

JOHN A. F. OSSORY.

THE BOOK OF ENOCH. By R. H. Charles. With Introduction by W. O. E. Oesterley.

THE TESTAMENTS OF THE TWELVE PATRIARCHS. By R. H. Charles. With Introduction by W. O. E. Oesterley.

THE APOCALYPSE OF EZRA (4 Esdras). By C. H. Box. (S.P.C.K.) 2s. 6d. each.

These three volumes belong to the Series *Translations of Early Documents* which are being issued under the editorship of Dr. Oesterley and Canon Box. They deserve a wide circulation, as they bring within the reach of all documents which hitherto have been only accessible in expensive editions. The Introductions by Dr. Oesterley are excellent, they are suggestive and helpful, and indicate the main points of interest for the student. The text of the *Book of Enoch* and *The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* is that given by Dr. Charles in his editions. Dr. Box gives a translation of *The Apocalypse of Ezra* from the Syriac text, with some useful notes. We welcome these publications most heartily, and shall look with interest for the other volumes of the series.

E. J. YOUNG.

THE DIVINE PURSUER. By Rev. J. Spence Johnston. 1s. 8d.

Mr. Johnston was a distinguished graduate of Trinity College, and many who knew and valued him will be glad to have this little volume as a memorial of one who was much loved during his brief ministry in the Church Militant. The sermons are brief but pointed, and are full of thought clearly expressed. One which gives its title to the book is based on Francis Thompson's haunting poem, and another on the picture of Hope by Watts. The last sermon, on Easter Day, is an excellent example of what such a sermon ought to be.