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Reviews.



An Introduction to the Creeds and to the Te Deum. By A. E. BURN, B.D.
London: Methuen. Price 10s. 6d.

THIS is in every way a valuable treatise, neither lightly to be read nor lightly to be criticised. All the Creed-forms usually studied have been edited here, and very carefully edited; and the result is that the book is likely to be, in its way, indispensable to serious students of doctrinal theology, despite the fact (and fact it is) that there is too large an element of hypothesis and ingenious theory throughout its twelve chapters. The following passage from p. 9 so aptly describes the author's aim in writing his book, that we deem it worth quoting *in extenso* :—

“To Christians the Cross was not the symbol of defeat, but of victory. They believed that the power of Christ's Resurrection gave them courage to seek the fellowship of His sufferings. I will endeavour to prove that this teaching was summed up in an act of confession of faith which was required from all the baptized, and possessed the character of a historic faith even in its most primitive and simple form, ‘JESUS IS THE CHRIST.’ Faith in the person of Christ alone leads to belief of His words in the baptismal formula (Matt. xxviii. 19). These simplest elements of Apostolic preaching are the seed-thoughts out of which grow the later creeds.”

The titles of the various chapters will afford a rough idea of the exhaustive nature of Mr. Burn's work: (1) Introductory; (2) “The Faith” in Apostolic Times; (3) The Historic Faith in the Second and Third Centuries; (4) The Theological Faith of the Fourth Century; (5) Our Nicene Creed; (6 and 7) The Athanasian Creed; (8) The Apostles' Creed in the Fourth Century; (9) Our Apostles' Creed; (10) Unsolved Problems; (11) The *Te Deum*; (12) Of the Use of Creeds. These chapters are supplemented by six appendices, viz.:

(a) List of parallels to the *Quicumque* in Augustine, Vincentius, Faustus, Eucherius.

(b) Vigilinus of Thapsus.

(c) Fulgentius of Ruspe.

(d) Early testimonies to the *Quicumque*.

(e) MSS. of the *Te Deum*.

(f) Creed of the *Didascalía*.

Not the least interesting section of this volume is that which deals with the *Te Deum*, the authorship of which Mr. Burn (following the suggestion of Dom C. Morin) attributes to Niceta of Remesiana. It is a theory which Mr. Burn works out with his accustomed brilliance and resourceful ingenuity; but we are hardly convinced. Yet nothing could be better than his explication and defence of the (so-called) Athanasian Creed, which, despite misconceptions and misconstructions, both the wilful and the foolish, possesses a positive and negative value which Christian Churchmen would be sorry to see obliterated.

We cannot close this brief notice without offering our cordial thanks to Mr. Burn for a work which he has enriched with the fruit of years of labour and research. It is worthy to take its place along with previous volumes in this excellent series of theological handbooks which Messrs. Methuen are issuing under the general editorship of Dr. Robertson. If this sounds high praise, we can only say we think it amply deserved.

E. H. B.

The Age of the Maccabees. By A. W. STREANE, D.D. London: Eyre and Spottiswoode. Pp. 278.

This period in the history of the chosen people is, from whatever point it may be regarded, of an extremely fascinating character. The gallant struggles of a warlike people, the wedding of Hebrew spiritual force to Greek culture in the literature, the dawn of clearer ideas on the Resurrection and the future life, mingled, too, with some inevitable decadence in religious externalism, are all topics that will interest their student. In short, it is the period in which the unity of God was being so firmly established that, to begin with, there was no danger of its being diluted by heathenism, and, secondly, that Christ could afterwards build on it newer and higher conceptions of God and morality.

It is all the more to be regretted that there is so little in England available for the general reader which concerns itself with this pregnant epoch. Some little manuals are too sketchy, other more serious books are not sufficiently modernized and interesting, or are too liberal in their treatment. Something in the nature of Renan's fifth volume of his "*Histoire du Peuple d'Israël*," written, of course, in accordance with English ideas, would prove very useful.

Dr. Streane's book will go some way towards meeting the deficiency. It embraces rather a larger space than the age of the Maccabees themselves, and extends from the return of the Jews in accordance with the decree of Cyrus to the accession of Herod the Great. But only about one third of the book is taken up with the actual history, political and social, of the Jews; the remainder is occupied with their literature, and that too mainly with questions of criticism. The historical part, pure and simple, is treated with great clearness and accuracy, but with a certain lack of sympathy (or so it seems to us), and with not enough attention to the social and everyday element—*e.g.*, there are only incidental allusions to the Essenes. Evidently the religious literature of the period is Dr. Streane's main objective, and his investigation will be of the utmost assistance to the theological student. He is especially clear on the important points of the Canon and its causation, the Septuagint, and the intercourse between Palestine and Egypt. Here his distinguishing feature is a conservative caution. For instance, speaking of Ecclesiastes, he writes (p. 191):

We may safely say that the hypothesis of a Hebrew original would never have found the smallest favour had it not been for the ascription of the book to Solomon. But probably even the writer never intended to be taken *au pied de la lettre*, and merely meant that his words were in consonance with those handed

down to his times as the utterances of the reputed parent of this kind of teaching in Israel.

He declares the date impossible to fix, inclining to some point between 200 and 100 B.C. (p. 193). A special appendix is devoted to the question of the date of the Book of Daniel, but Dr. Streane simply contents himself with giving a conspectus of the evidence for and against its composition in Maccabean times, and pronounces no opinion himself. A careful account of the origin of the Septuagint is given, and Dr. Streane thinks that "we may conclude that the LXX. as we now have it was nearly, if not quite, complete by the middle of the second century B.C." (p. 239).

An interesting view is given of the estimation in which the Apocrypha has been held at different times, and specially of the reasons which led the Reformed Church to reduce the amount of the Apocrypha publicly read (p. 102). Dr. Streane quite dismisses the notion that the so-called "Great Synagogue" had any share in the formation of the Canon, and proceeds to discuss very fully this important question. As an investigation of post-Exilic literature, this volume can be warmly recommended, and its treatment stands in pleasing contrast to the reckless theorizing and "reconstruction" which is sometimes indulged in. Like all the books of "The Bible Student's Library" Series, it is beautifully printed.
W. A. P.

ON A RECENT EXPOSITION AND DEFENCE OF SYNTHETIC PHILOSOPHY.

We live in an age in which any theory or doctrine bearing on religious belief and practice is sure to be tested in one or two most important directions. How does it agree with or oppose our Christian faith? What is the real outcome of reception or rejection? Now, it is well that "A Theory of Life deduced from the Evolution Philosophy" (by Sylvan Drey. London: Williams and Norgate) should not escape criticism.

There are some general sentiments and aspirations in this brochure with which the most earnest believer in Christianity will not be disposed to find fault. He will also, no doubt, be willing to make some allowance, in his estimation of the work, for peculiarities in the author's literary style, which sometimes seem to render doubtful his real meaning. There is considerable repetition with slight variations, and often a beclouding and mystifying of some statement or position, which the writer labours to set forth or defend in what he evidently believes to be the safest or most convenient way, but which, at the same time, is likely to irritate the reader, and create a prejudice against a theory or view which the author desires to render more acceptable. In fact, so far as the subject-matter is concerned, there are whole pages in this pamphlet which might easily be condensed, in each case, into a dozen lines. The whole bearing, however, of the real teaching of this pamphlet on the truths and character of Christianity is such as to take away any surprise that we might otherwise feel at the literary form in which it is written. Cloudland is certainly the most convenient sphere for some theories, and those of the "Synthetic Philosophy," as it is here represented, are eminently suited to that sphere. The very little in the teaching of this brochure that is definite and substantial is nothing compared with the amount of what is hazy, uncertain, and mere guess-work. The amazing consideration is that any rational being should be willing to discard Christianity in favour of "Synthetic Philosophy." The author certainly does not go so far as to assume that this philosophy knows everything and can answer all questions. but he quietly assumes throughout his work its superiority

over the greatest truths of Christianity. It is needless to say that he fails to prove that point, since he seems to be more than satisfied with the weakest reasons for assuming it. He at once informs us (p. 5) that the main teaching of his pamphlet is "identical with the cardinal teachings of Herbert Spencer's 'Synthetic Philosophy.'" From this standpoint he regards the whole "Evolution Philosophy"—that is, through and in entire agreement with Mr. Spencer's treatment of the subject. Then he takes two other important steps in the preliminary fortification of his argument. First, he affirms that "there is no completely elaborated unification of knowledge" based on Evolution, and meeting "the requirements of a system of philosophy other than Herbert Spencer's," under whose philosophical ægis he thus for the second time takes refuge. But still there remains the fact, which neither Mr. Spencer nor his follower in the school of the "Synthetic Philosophy" can deny—namely, that the "Evolution Philosophy" has other exponents whose treatment of the subject is far removed from Spencerism. Their teaching is more rational, more logical, and, in some instances, in full accord with a more Christian interpretation of the records of revelation. Hence, for the sake of Spencerism as the basis of his work, our author seeks, as far as possible, to gain credit for what he is about to unfold by asserting that "the terms 'Evolution Philosophy' and 'Synthetic Philosophy' are practically convertible," and that to expound the one is to interpret the other (p. 6). This statement, to anyone who knows anything of the different systems here referred to, and will compare it carefully with the teaching contained in this pamphlet, is nothing more than a *petitio principii*. No wonder that he is not anxious to claim originality for his conclusions, although he admits his responsibility for his "presentation of the subject and the method of its treatment," and consequently "for any errors in the premises."

We will now indicate as concisely as possible the real bearing of the teaching herein set forth on the revelation contained in Holy Scripture, on Christianity, and on some of the chief conclusions of other systems opposed to the "Synthetic Philosophy." First, then, and as a necessity of this philosophy, man's relation to even the inanimate part of the universe is over-emphasized; made in the image of God, he is nothing more than "a part of the great scheme of things." It is not only that his knowledge and all other powers are limited, that in some sense is true enough, but according to the "Synthetic Philosophy," any future existence after death is, to say the least, most uncertain, even if possible or desirable (pp. 17, 29). From what we experience of the limitation of our present powers of knowledge, we are to confidently assume that "the genesis and substance of things are not only unknown, but *absolutely unknowable*" (p. 8). We are so constituted that "we know, and can know, only phenomena and their relations." There is no known power that can make possible to us a higher knowledge than that which is recognised by this philosophy. This is, of course, very encouraging and edifying to those who have not mastered it, or who fail to do so. So far as the human intelligence is concerned, the attempt to rise from this low level to the consideration of absolute and noumenal existence is utterly vain and foolish. All that there is behind phenomena is persistent force, "infinite and eternal energy" ! This so-called "philosophy" loses sight of the Personal God in the consideration of the exercise of one of His attributes (p. 14). The author declaims against what he terms the "worship of an anthropomorphic God," and calls it "degrading God to the level of man," but he knows full well that this is a point on which intelligent believers are generally guarded, and that they do not base their conceptions of the Divine Being solely or chiefly on what is called by the name of Anthropomorphism, a term which in the mouth of

agnostics is intended to deny the reality of Purpose, Design, Will, Love, and other truths, as applied to God. It has been well said: "Is not the irony of this 'know nothing' philosophy complete when we find that the very men who tell us we are not one with anything above us, are the same who insist that we are one with everything beneath us!" It is not difficult to see the aim of such teaching as denounces Anthropomorphism in this connection when the author of this pamphlet adds: "When the first cause ceases to be an object of love and worship as at present understood, those instincts which prompted men to love and worship God will find a much more appropriate sphere of activity" (p. 15). Then, we are told, "the minister of the future will be chiefly a moral educator . . . who will have ample opportunity of ministering to spiritual needs by appropriate references to the mysteries" not of Christianity, God, or the human soul, but "of cosmology" (p. 16). How delightful all this must sound to those who are not, and never will be, initiated into the mysteries and literary circle of the "Synthetic Philosophy"!

Again, we are told (p. 18) that "religion concerns itself solely with that which lies outside the domain of knowledge." Indeed! And yet Job said, "I know that my Redeemer liveth" (xix. 25); and the Apostle, "I know whom I have believed," etc. (2 Tim. i. 12); "that I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection," etc. (Phil. iii. 10). Further, this author assumes that science alone deals with what is "knowable," and that it is this science that tells us "all that we can know about the subject-matter of religion" (p. 19). How absolutely necessary it is, then, that we should first of all be scientists, if it is science that must teach us religion! But, again, if we may not have any knowledge of a personal God, if we must not be so childish as to fall into the error of anthropomorphism, if we can have no conviction of a future state, and "the Christian doctrine of posthumous rewards and punishments" (p. 29) may prove to be no more substantial than a myth, and if it would not matter if "the blessings of heaven and the dread of hell" ceased to influence us (p. 29), what are we to think capable of regenerating mankind, according to the "Synthetic Philosophy"? An "ideal state" in which men are to enjoy "undisturbed peace," "an ideal society of perfect peace," "an age of complete peace," of "perfect justice and perfect beneficence" (p. 20 *et seq.*)—this is to be the great panacea for all our ills, for all the woes of the world. It is to issue in the "moralizing of the world" (p. 27). However high-sounding all this may be in a "theory of life," is it not in practice as far from attainable as heaven is from earth, or from things under the earth? But how is this happy state to be attained? By "the moral evolution of the human race (which) will continue" (p. 27). Already men are "so constituted nervously as to shrink from the thought of murder" (p. 28). This "will as certainly happen in other cases of wrong-doing," until the goal is ultimately reached, which is now set before us. Yet in that condition there is to be "the least possible State control and the greatest possible personal freedom" (p. 31). Further, this writer tells us that if such theories are "utterly false from the standpoint of absolute knowledge, they are all-sufficient for our guidance in the daily affairs of life, and are to be valued accordingly" (p. 33). Even if "utterly false," yet "all-sufficient in daily life"! Can it be that he is writing for sane adults? But what are the hopes worth that his "ideal state," which is to prove so much more efficient and blessed than Christianity, will ever be attained in this life? and if attained, that it will be maintained? He admits that "we may not positively assert that it will ever be attained," but it is "possible of attainment" (p. 24). What commendable caution in so vitally important a matter! But if ever attained, what of its precariousness? This, and nothing less likely: if "any one of the units should suddenly lapse from

a state of moral perfection, the total sum of happiness would instantly be diminished, and the society would of necessity cease *pro tanto* to represent the ideal state" (p. 26). And is that the goal of the "Synthetic Philosophy"? Well may this writer indirectly admit that it teaches "an altogether different moral theory" from Christianity (p. 30). For its theory is founded on nothing better, nothing higher, and nothing more substantial than simple, undisguised *naturalism*. "Other than this natural process of development whereby, through the influence which the ever-changing conditions of social life are continuously exerting upon the human nervous system, men, so to speak, grow into morality, somewhat as the sapling develops into a tree—other than this natural process of the moralization of the nervous system, the philosophical Evolutionist has no special theory of ethics, no particular scheme of moral reformation to advocate or defend" (pp. 27, 28). "The moralization of the nervous system" (p. 29), this is what is to take the place and fulfil the task of all the forces and spirit of Christianity! This is the mighty process which is to make possible for mankind the evolution of the "ideal state," on which everything ultimately depends, but which the sudden lapse of one of its units would shake to its foundation! Add to this the fact that the pamphlet before us concludes with the characteristic teaching of this know-nothing philosophy (p. 34), whose adherent is yet to be thought capable of "pointing to religion"—but observe what follows, "as he pictures her to himself." We can but express a firm conviction, which will no doubt be held by believers everywhere, that anything like a general acceptance of such teaching would be deplorable.

JOHN R. PALMER.

Short Notices.

The Romance of Christian Work and Experience. By the Rev. W. HAY M. H. AITKEN. J. F. Shaw and Co. Pp. 520. Price 5s.

THIS is an extraordinary title, but, as the book is a romance of Christian work and experience, we cannot find fault with it. Mr. Aitken presents his readers with something that many teachers will value, but his book is something very different from an indexed repertory of anecdotes designed to be dipped into for a teacher's emergencies. Nor have we here a mere string of stories, lacking in literary sense, a routine of *mirabile dictu*, breaking upon us with inconsequent surprises, and jading us with the incoherence, the express rushes, the sharp stops and starts, of "tit-bits" perusal. This book, with its dramatic quality, and spiritual insight, and human sympathy, and alleviating playfulness of occasional humour, is a striking testimony to Mr. Aitken's prowess as a mission-preacher and as a man of letters.

It is an extraordinary outcome of twenty-five years of special work of a kind to involve enormous emotional outlay. We marvel that, after this long period of strain and repeated experience, a great missionary should find unabated poetry and unhackneyed beauty in the responses and circumstances of men brought into contact with the story of the Cross; that his work should be surer, sweeter and fresher than a drama to him—rather a "Romance"—and that he should be its unexhausted artist. For