

## REVIEWS OF BOOKS.

## CHRISTIANITY AND PSYCHOLOGY.

CHRISTIANITY AND PSYCHOLOGY. By F. R. Barry. *Student Christian Movement.* 5s.

The late Principal of Knutsford has written a characteristic work on the relation between the New Psychology and religion. He is well equipped for the task, for he knows human nature, has living faith, and is the possessor of an acute intellect. Here and there we find proofs of rather hasty writing: Bergson as the apostle of the *élan vital*, the law of Reversed Effort as expounded by Mr. Barry, will not win the support of all psychologists, and he quotes the Authorised Version where the Revised Version omits words on which he places emphasis. Mr. Barry would be the last to assert that he is a specialist—he is something more, for he brings an extraordinarily acute intellect to bear on practical problems as illuminated by recent advances in psychological research. Unlike most writers on the subject, he does not dwell on pathological cases: "It is the weakness of William James and Starbuck that the experiences which they relate are nearly always thoroughly abnormal. To make them normative is fatal." We wish that this were more generally recognized, for it has always seemed to us that popular New Psychology strives to effect in mental life what would be accomplished in ordinary life by sending normal healthy folk to the chemists for their food supplies. The outstanding merit of this book is its breezy common sense and its clear grasp of leading principles. It can never be forgotten that even the New Psychology does not provide us with a solution of the great problems of thought and experience. It helps us to understand certain intellectual and emotional processes. That is all its results up to now have attained, as far as the normal man is concerned. In certain pathological instances it has discovered a curative method for restoration to normal, but we are by no means sure that its advances have been so great as its advocates claim.

Mr. Barry says, "We have shown, I think, that if we start with the faith in a Personal God to explain the universe, psychology makes sense; but not without it. That is, so far as it goes, a positive result for the theologian." We believe that there is no exaggeration in this statement, and those who wish to find the grounds on which it is based will do well to study "Christianity and Psychology," which begins with a useful account of the main principles that underlie current psychological treatises. We are impressed by the root fact that the will is free, and, after doing our best to give due weight to the arguments on the other side, we do not believe that any recent advances have made the slightest change in the evidence for and against the truth of our experience. It is not too much to say that the difficulties that puzzled our fathers have not been

increased by the New Psychology. The determinists who undertake the study remain determinists, for they overlook what the supporters of free-will have always maintained to be the determining factor in arriving at our conclusion, namely the verdict of our own consciousness. The discussion of the danger of subjectivity in religion is one of the most impressive in the book: "We demand with a more imperious necessity a really vital standard of truth and goodness by which we can appraise our experiences, which can be the goal of our will and our desire, and its light a trusty lantern unto our feet." "It is vital that men's religious beliefs be true; equally vital that they be few and simple."

We recommend all who have the wisdom to buy this book to study carefully Mr. Barry's remarks on Confession. "Personally I stand out for confession. I refused to be terrorized by party slogans from a God-given method of spiritual help. But a dominant school in the English Church to-day seems to me to be seriously in danger of turning a real and sacred means of grace into a mechanical kind of fetish. To teach the necessity of frequent confession as a primary part of Christian duty would appear to be psychologically unsound. It serves to defeat its own object. It reminds one of the old-fashioned type of nursemaid who used to administer 'doses' once a week, regardless of whether the child needed them. And the child grew up with a weakened constitution. But the object of a spiritual adviser, whether friend, psychologist, or priest, should surely be to make himself unnecessary." Apart altogether from the moral evils associated with confession and the consequent weakening of the will, there is sound common sense in this contention. Is it too much to say that the whole tendency of confession from the psychological standpoint is to make imagination take the place of the exercise of the will and to place the will, which ought to be the predominant factor by throwing personality on its side, the slave of the Confessor? As Mr. Barry says, "Psychology here agrees with Christianity that deliverance or redemption is completed by losing ourselves again in eager service, rather than by a merely passive experience or a transaction performed outside ourselves." It will be seen that there are certain points in this book that are not in accord with our view of sound psychology, but they are comparatively few in number, and we have no hesitation in recommending a sane, suggestive, and wholesome work to those who wish to form right opinions on the range as well as the limitations of a form of investigation which by its novelty is apt to be over-estimated in its bearing upon problems of life and conduct.

#### DR. FINDLAY'S KERR LECTURES.

BYWAYS IN EARLY CHRISTIAN LITERATURE: Studies in the Un-canonical Gospels and the Acts. (Kerr Lectures.) By Adam Fyfe Findlay, D.D. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark. 10s.

The Kerr Lectureship has already produced some noteworthy books, of which Dr. Forrest's *The Christ of History and of Experience*

is perhaps the most widely known, and the reader will take up this, the latest series, with a sense of expectation which will not be disappointed. The ground which it covers, though it has been long worked over by scholars, has not been of great interest to the general reader, and it will be a convenience to have so much of the results of study and research presented in an accessible and popular form. The immense gap between the inspired writings of the New Testament and the uncanonical literature of the second and third centuries has inevitably tended to lessen interest in the latter and to obscure the historical and literary value which they undoubtedly possess. As the Rev. J. E. Tasker says in his article on the Apocryphal Gospels in Hastings' *Bible Dictionary*, "the manufacture of fanciful traditions is not always to be ascribed to the zeal of heretics, but sometimes to an eager desire to satisfy—without critical discrimination between the nucleus of fact and the embellishments of fiction—curiosity in regard to those periods in our Lord's life about which the four Evangelists tell us nothing."

In this volume Dr. Findlay deals only with documents which profess to have a historical character: apocalyptic literature, for example, falls outside its scope, and his treatment is mainly descriptive and expository. He has a style which is very lucid and interesting and free from technicalities. We learn from the writings he describes how very diverse was Christian thought in those early and formative centuries, before a settled tradition had been established, and can see how, from the very beginning of the Christian Church, the Gospel had to struggle with the moral and intellectual influences in which the converts from Judaism and Paganism had been reared. It is saddening to note how the same influences are at work in our own day, as indeed they have been through the whole history of the Christian Church. Dr. Findlay selects three in particular: the craving for the miraculous, the legalistic conception of the Christian life, the influence of Hellenistic thought on Christian truth. He does not write with an apologetic tendency: he is mainly concerned with the documents which he describes with so much freshness and force and with full knowledge of the best scholarship on the subject; yet we can hardly leave these Lectures without having gained a deeper appreciation of what Dr. Findlay describes as the "incomparably rich inheritance we have in the New Testament books."

W. G. J.

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*Daughters from Afar.* By Rose White (Bangalore). *Partridge*. 2s. 6d. The first section of this book tells the story of the Bangalore Jubilee Home in eight chapters: and an interesting story it is—of high ambition, brave endeavour and persevering continuance. The second, and by far the larger section, tells three life stories. This book will form a welcome addition to a parochial Missionary Library, and might be read with profit at "Working Parties," and such-like.