

# The Princeton Theological Review

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## THE PRESENT CRISIS IN ETHICS\*

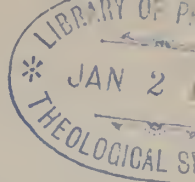
"It is a fact worth weighing," says one of the most learned and judicial of our present day writers on Christian ethics,—  
"it is a fact worth weighing that for some two hundred years or more after the Reformation and the rise of modern philosophy no one ever questioned the supremacy of the Christian ethic, though from every other quarter inroads were being made upon the received traditions."<sup>1</sup>

So recently, indeed, as 1873 Mr. John Stuart Mill, the ablest as well as the fairest of modern unbelievers, wrote as follows: "About the life and sayings of Jesus there is a stamp of personal originality combined with profundity of insight, which, if we abandon the idle expectation of finding scientific precision where something very different was aimed at, must place the Prophet of Nazareth, even in the estimation of those who have no belief in his inspiration, in the very first rank of the men of sublime genius of whom our species can boast. When this preëminent genius is combined with the qualities of probably the greatest moral reformer, and martyr to that mission, who ever existed upon earth, religion can not be said to have made a bad choice in pitching on this man as the ideal representative and guide of humanity."<sup>2</sup> Nor are such testimonies exceptional. Unbelievers in dogmatic Christianity from widely different standpoints have united in exalting its ethics. When the charge was brought by Christians that the bitter attacks on Christian dogma must issue in the overthrow of Christian morality, it was hotly resisted by scientists and by litera-

\* An Address delivered in Miller Chapel on September 26, 1918, at the Opening of the One Hundred and Seventh Session of the Seminary.

<sup>1</sup> Thornton, *Conduct and the Supernatural*, p. 3.

<sup>2</sup> *Three Essays on Religion*, p. 253.



to the former it is contended that "splendor" is not the constant nor characteristic element in Paul's view of the δόξα. Δόξα and τιμή are not clearly separated. In 2 Cor. iii. 18, and iv. 16 δόξα is associated with and consists in γνῶσις. The combination of light and δόξα with the future life needs no concrete accounting for, being the common property of all nations and religions. As to the σῶμα πνευματικόν, the view that this idea represents a compromise between the Jewish resurrection-hope and the Hellenic immortality-belief is rejected. In Judaism there are already traces of an approach towards spiritualization of the resurrection-body and that even in Ap. Baruch usually quoted in proof of the materialness of the resurrection body as the ordinary Jewish view. Jesus also rejected the grosser Jewish expectation.

Enough has been said to convince the reader that in this by no means ordinary dissertation he will find a wealth of instruction on the complicated subject of the Pauline eschatology. Dr. Ubbink is a well-informed and, on the whole, safe guide. The notes appended to the text are copious and omit very little of importance in their references to the literature.

Princeton.

GEERHARDUS VOS.

*The Acts of the Apostles.* The Greek Text Edited with Introduction and Notes for the Use of Schools. By W. F. BURNSIDE, M.A., Headmaster of St. Edmund's School, Canterbury, Author of *Old Testament History for Schools* and *St. Luke in Greek*. Cambridge: at the University Press, 1916.

In this serviceable brief commentary on the book of Acts, Mr. Burnside maintains the Lucan authorship and general trustworthiness of the book, though his estimate of certain portions of the narrative is hesitating and unsatisfactory, notably in connection with the coming of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost. The discussion of the relation between the narrative in Acts and that in the Epistle to the Galatians is scarcely adequate. Mr. Burnside is inclined to identify the event of Gal. ii. 1-10 with the "famine visit" of Acts xi. 30, xii. 25. A somewhat fuller discussion of the question would have been desirable even in a book intended for the use of schools. The note on προσήλυτοι (Acts ii. 11) is misleading to say the least. "Proselytes", says Mr. Burnside (p. 88), "were not Jews by birth, but were attracted by the Jewish religion, and obeyed the Jewish law in certain particulars, but they were not circumcised. The Jewish nation did not admit of naturalization; it always has remained exclusive in its peculiar nationality." This note is erroneous at almost every point, and erroneous in a manner particularly unfortunate for the understanding of the book of Acts. An inaccuracy in detail may be noticed on p. xlvi, where it is said that the Codex Alexandrinus contains the whole of the Old and New Testaments.

Such defects diminish, though they do not destroy, the usefulness

of the commentary. The book appears in very attractive form, and is enriched by interesting facsimiles of manuscripts and by photographs.  
*Princeton.* J. GRESHAM MACHEN.

*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 G. H. Box, M.A., Lecturer in Rabbinical Hebrew, King's College, London; Hon. Canon of St. Albans. With a Foreword by The Lord Bishop of London. Milwaukee: The Young Churchman Co. [London: Sir Isaac Pitman Sons, Ltd., 1 Amen Corner, E. C., and at Bath, New York and Melbourne, 1916].

In an interesting article published in the *Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft*, 1905, pp. 80-101, Mr. Box sought to establish the thoroughly Jewish character of Matt. i, ii by comparing that narrative with the Jewish Midrashic literature.<sup>6</sup> In the present volume a similar argument is extended to the whole New Testament account of the birth of Jesus, and is enriched by a comprehensive treatment of the historical questions involved. The author believes, with Dr. Briggs, that the basis of our canonical infancy narratives is to be found in certain Jewish Christian poems, which, however, he is inclined to believe were written in Hebrew rather than in Aramaic, a comparison with the Psalms of Solomon being adduced at this point (see especially pp. 43-48). The Midrashic character of Matt. i, ii is still strongly maintained. Despite the poetical form which is attributed to the infancy narratives, they are by no means regarded as mere legend; on the contrary, what we have in the first two chapters of Matthew and Luke, according to Mr. Box, is throughout a poetic and idealizing expansion of actual fact. Indeed, the factual element is found to include all the important details of the narratives, the journey to Egypt, for example (though with some slight hesitation), as well as the virgin birth itself. With regard to the census of Quirinius, Mr. Box defends the essential correctness of the Lucan narrative, though he is somewhat inclined to look with favor upon a suggestion of Professor Burton that Luke has "confused the names of Saturninus and Quirinius." In considering "the alleged heathen sources," our author passes over the Greek parallels rather lightly, believing that they are deprived of all possible significance by the Jewish character of the canonical infancy narratives; and devotes his attention chiefly to the views of Gunkel, Gressmann and Cheyne, who find the basis for the Christian idea of the virgin birth in certain mythical representations which they suppose had already been naturalized in Palestinian Judaism in the pre-Christian period. The baselessness of such hypotheses is ably demonstrated, there being no evidence whatever for any pre-Christian Jewish belief in a virgin birth of the Messiah.

Despite certain concessions with regard to the historicity of the Gospel narratives in detail, Mr. Box is firmly convinced of the central