

mutually exclusive. The language of some of the passages considered implies that the action of the Son and of the Spirit is embraced within the action of the Father. Other passages in the New Testament indicate that in each of the three stages of human destiny each of the three divine Persons has a share. Particular functions again imply different spheres of operation,—creation concerns the world, sanctification the Church. But nowhere is there a suggestion that the entire sphere of action of the Son or of the Spirit is less extensive than that of the Father. That doubtful and dangerous inference begins and ends with the peculiar teaching of Origen and his disciples, which lies beyond the scope of this article.

L. B. RADFORD.

NOTES ON RECENT NEW TESTAMENT STUDY.

IN the *North American Review* (June, 1906, pp. 861–874) Dr. C. A. Briggs discusses the relations of criticism and dogma with regard to the Virgin Birth. The accounts in Matthew and Luke are held to be derived from a common source, poetical in form, from which Luke has extracted more than Matthew, the editorial work of both being, however, “limited to translation and prose settings.” The poems of which this primitive source consisted originated in the Palestinian community prior to 70 A.D., i.e. during the lifetime of James and Jude, the half-brothers of Jesus. They are therefore “credible to as high a degree as any other document in the New Testament.” This nearness to Joseph and Mary guarantees the reliability of the tradition. The testimony of such witnesses, even to so unique a fact, must be admitted. Besides, “it is altogether improbable that any one in the first Christian century could have

thought of the Incarnation in any other way than by Virgin Birth. . . . It would be difficult to show that any one in the time of Jesus would have thought it possible that God could be born of a woman by the ordinary method of human generation. If any one really thought of the mode of Incarnation, the only mode thinkable in the first Christian century was Virgin Birth." Historical criticism, Dr. Briggs continues, cannot either verify the fact or dispute the doctrine. And the dogma has been vital in the Church from the beginning, nor does it lie within the province of physical science to do more than say that the Virgin Birth "is beyond the realm of Science, and that it is in the realm of Dogma ; and that the dogma must not be stated in any form that will contravene the laws of nature." Dr. Briggs then argues that the dogma is essential to the integrity of the Incarnation, i.e. "to the system of doctrine and the Faith of the Christian Church." As a dogma, the Virgin Birth must be retained at all costs ; the authority of the Church and the coherence of Christian doctrine alike demand its retention. "The Church can no more dispense with that doctrine than it can dispense with the Incarnation or with Christ Himself. It is not, however, essential to the faith or Christian life of individuals. The doctrine may for various reasons be so difficult to them that they cannot heartily accept it. They may content themselves with the doctrine of the Incarnation, and refuse to accept any doctrine as to its mode. They may even go so far as to deny the Virgin Birth, and hold to the theory of ordinary generation without accepting the legitimate consequences of that doctrine. Theologians are not always consequential. . . . The Church may, and in the present situation and circumstances of Christian theology, ought to, tolerate opinions which it cannot endorse."

On the other hand, Spitta comes forward afresh, in

Preuschen's *Zeitschrift* (1906, pp. 281 f.), to side with the large number of critics who believe that the allusion to the Virgin Birth in the first chapter of Luke, at any rate, is secondary. He brings forward the usual argument to show that, either in part or (as he himself believes) in whole, Luke i. 34-37 represents "an addition made by the editor of the göspel, based on stories of the birth of Jesus which, like that of Matthew i. 18-25, imply that Mary conceived by the Holy Spirit." Most scholars, who adopt this theory of interpolation or editorial expansion, are content to confine it to verses 34, 35 (so recently J. Weiss, in his *Schriften des NT*. ii. p. 387). But Spitta holds that verses 36, 37 must also go. "For the destiny sketched in verses 30, 33 for Mary, the allusion to Elizabeth becoming pregnant in her old age by Zacharias, would possess no meaning," whereas an announcement like that of verse 17 would have excited strong Messianic expectation in Mary's soul. "As such reflections, however, do not occur in 36, 37, and as these verses serve to explain verses 34, 35, we must regard the whole section, 34-37, as a later addition from the hand of the editor of the Gospel."

JAMES MOFFATT.