

historical judgement making the belief in the Virgin Birth 'almost intellectually indecent.'

The author has been most successful in his presentation of the indirect evidence and in revealing the full weight of tradition in favour of the doctrine and the insufficient historical sense of the critics who belittle that tradition. Curiously enough, there is no treatment of the actual birth, nor of Mary's virginity *in partu* and afterwards, while the question of pagan parallels seems inadequately dealt with by an attack on Dr. Creed for his suggestion, however reprehensible, that the Christian narrative was influenced by Hellenic or Hellenistic ideas of the virgin birth, Indian 'avatar' and Persian 'saoshyant' being equally ignored. However, these are minor omissions in a very excellent work.

BRUNO DONOVAN, O.S.B.

THE DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH IN THE NEW TESTAMENT. By George Johnston, M.A., B.D., Ph.D. (Cambridge University Press; 10s. 6d.).

This book was originally the author's Thesis for his Cambridge Doctorate of Philosophy. He remarks that 'no subject in the New Testament theology needs a comprehensive treatment more than the doctrine of the Church.' The position is adopted that '*no* particular order is believed to belong to the nature of the Ecclesia [author's italics], so that controversial problems are not exhaustively treated.'

The author first examines how far it is possible to discover any idea of a Church in the cults of the Graeco-Roman world and in Judaism. One would have expected here an account of the relation between the New Testament Ecclesia and the Old Testament Kingdom of God, at least in the section entitled 'The Fullness of Time.' The word Ecclesia—its Hebrew and Aramaic originals—is then discussed and the importance of the Septuagint recognised.

In the all-important chapters five and six on Pre-Pauline Conceptions the question of Jesus and the Church is dealt with. The author sees 'no good reason to doubt that He believed Himself to stand in a unique relationship with God' but that, though concerned with the Kingdom of God, Jesus was not concerned to found a Church, nor does the Kingdom imply a Church. It is only Matthew in his versions of the parables of the Tares and the Drag-net who identifies Church and Kingdom. The 'Ecclesiastical' character of Matthew's Gospel is recognised but disposed of, the conclusion being reached that in Matthew Ecclesia is an anachronism. This arbitrary treatment of the sacred text is typical of the later chapters on the Pauline and Sub-Apostolic doctrine. The author has selected the conclusions he requires from modern scholarship, the grounds not always being set out. The whole method of treatment is too summary and the book hardly fulfills its promise of being comprehensive.

BRUNO DONOVAN, O.S.B.