

## Book Notices.

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"History of the Christian Church." By George H. Dryer, D.D. Five Vols. Cincinnati: Jennings & Pye. Toronto: William Briggs. Price, \$7.50.

The history of the Christian Church is one of the most august themes that can engage the attention of mankind. It is strange that while in our schools and colleges so much time is given to the study of secular history, so little is given to the still more important study of the history of Christianity. It is a record of sublimest heroism, of romantic interest, of dramatic unity. It is a great world movement that sweeps on in a tide of resistless conquest. Gibbon devoted his six great volumes to the tale of the Decline and Fall of that old Roman Empire which so long dominated the world. Dr. Dryer devotes nearly equal space to the sublimer story of the establishment and growth of that kingdom which shall abide for ever.

This comprehensive work he has achieved with remarkable success. It has been the labour and delight of many years. It is not in the least a dry-as-dust ecclesiastical chronicle, but a work of popular interest which holds one at times with the fascination of a novel. It is not a mere record of councils and synods, of doctrines and ecclesiastical conflicts. It gives a vivid picture of the times and peoples whose story is told, of the social order of the old Roman world, with the improved life and character of the new Christian society. It is not merely a philosophical grouping of the causes and trends of great movements; it makes us know the leaders of these movements and thus gives a living interest to the dead and buried ages.

Dr. Dryer has prepared himself for his colossal task by a very wide study of the literature of many lands and many tongues, which are the chief authorities upon the subject. Of these he gives an admirable bibliography in each volume, enabling the student to verify or further pursue the studies on these subjects. He recognizes the importance of epigraphic testimony and does us the honour to refer to our own book upon the Catacombs as an authority in these studies.

Each book covers some great period and is thus complete in itself, although

part of a connected whole. The book is admirably printed and indexed, and the marginal sub-titles facilitate study and review. The style is lucid and at times luminous, always interesting and instructive, and often picturesque to fascination. It is the ablest and most comprehensive work, so far as we know, which has proceeded from the pen of any Methodist writer, a work of which his own and all the Churches may well be proud. A number of excellent engravings and maps illustrate the work.

Volume I. treats of the Beginning of the Kingdom. It gives a graphic account of that old Roman world into which it was born, and traces a striking parallel between the Roman and the British Empires. As the drum-beat of Britain is heard around the world, so the supremacy of Rome rested on the valour of her legions. "As wealth and trade, government and civilization in the British Empire centre on the banks of the Thames, so, far more intensely, did that of the great Empire of Rome centre in its capital by the Tiber. In colonies, conquests, and government, Rome was easily chief in the ancient, as Britain is in the modern world. Her rule brought order, prosperity, and the arts and achievements of civilization. Law, equitable administration, improved social usages, and the best roads in the world followed in the train of the armies of Rome as they do to-day the conquests of Britain."

The conflict between Christianity and paganism for the possession of the world is grandly set forth. The evolution of the new nations of Europe out of the barbarians of the north under the moulding influences of the Christian religion, and the record of its martyrs and confessors, its preaching monks and missionary bishops, make a stirring story. The crystallizing of Christian doctrine into creeds through much discussion and some heresy is treated in the chapters on "The Truths that Won." "The New Rulers of the New World" describes the organization of the Church, its doctrine and discipline, lay and clerical life, its martyrs, saints and monastic orders, each duly set forth.

Volume II. describes the Foundation of the Mediæval Church, the influence of the Byzantine Empire, the rise of the Caliphate, the Empire of Charle-