

**THE INCARNATION;
OR, PICTURES OF
THE VIRGIN HER SON**

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The Incarnation; Or, Pictures of the Virgin Her Son by Charles Beecher & Mrs. Harriet Beecher Stowe

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CHARLES BEECHER & MRS. HARRIET BEECHER STOWE

**THE INCARNATION;
OR, PICTURES OF
THE VIRGIN HER SON**

THE
INCARNATION;
OR,
PICTURES
OF THE
VIRGIN AND HER SON.

BY CHARLES BEECHER,
FORT WAYNE, INDIANA.

With an Introductory Essay.

BY MRS. HARRIET BEECHER STOWE.

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INTRODUCTORY ESSAY,

By Mrs. H. E. B. Stowe.

ONE of the principal difficulties realized by those who wish to bring themselves under the influence of the Bible, in commencing its reading, is that want of freshness and reality which is caused by early and long-continued familiarity with its language.

It is true that the Christian, in happy hours and with a mind magnetized by contact with the great inspiring mind of the book, often sees passages as it were illuminated like a transparency, behind which the light necessary for its development has been suddenly kindled. A mind imbued with poetic fervor, or a scholar with leisure to search out, and knowledge to elucidate, may both find means to rise above this obstacle, and read with ever-increasing interest.

But there are many who have, unhappily, yet confessedly, neither devotional fervor, nor communion with the inspiring mind, and are, furthermore, neither poetical nor learned, and

yet are desirous of reading the Bible that they may become spiritual; and they deeply lament when they find that its reading is to them but a wearisome task. In vain they ponder its pages; nothing is suggested; and while words known by heart from childhood pass under their eye, their mind wanders in dreamy vacancy. They start at the end of a chapter, and rise from it sighing and discouraged.

Even the true Christian, of an unimagina- tive temperament, suffers greatly from very much the same cause—the want of wing and fire to rise into the conceptions of the most fervent, the most ideal book that ever existed.

It has often seemed, therefore, to the writer, that no greater service could be done to a large class of the community than to reproduce the Sacred Narrative, under the aspects which it presents to an imaginative mind, with the appliances of geographical, historical, and critical knowledge.

The present work is the commencement of a series which contemplates such a presentation of the narrative of the Evangelists.

There may be some who at first would feel a prejudice against this species of composition, as so blending together the outlines of truth and fiction as to spread a doubtful hue of ro-

mance over the whole. They wish to know that what they are reading is true. They dislike to have their sympathies enlisted and their feelings carried away by what, after all, may never have happened.

To such we would suggest the idea, that no human being ever reads any narrative without some image and conception of what they read; and that the blank, cold, vague, misty images of an uninstructed mind are no *more* like the truth, than the conceptions of a vivid imagination chastened and guided by accurate knowledge of topographical and historic details respecting these distant scenes and events.

For example, no one ever hears of the Virgin Mary without forming some kind of an image or conception of her, it may be, borrowed from some antiquated engraving or old church painting, the fruit of monkish revery or of artistic inspiration; or it may be that there is only a kind of formless mist connected with the sound of that name. But neither the formless mist nor the antique effigy are a whit nearer to the reality than the conception of one who, knowing the strong national peculiarities of her race, and gathering all the intimations of Scripture touching her descent, character, and external position, should embody to himself,

as nearly as possible, the *probable* truth of the case. A reasonable probability, though not like certainty, is still worthy of a good degree of attention and confidence.

So, though incidents may be inserted into the narrative which, though probable by historic verisimilitude, are still confessedly conjectural, yet these are more like truth than a blank, void of any incident whatever; because *some* incident confessedly did occur over and above what is scripturally recorded, and there is, therefore, a large and legitimate field for combined imagination and critical ingenuity to fill up chasms in the most skillful and probable manner.

Thus much, however, being premised, it is due to truth to say, that the writer has endeavored to render the narrative precise and authentic, so far as attention to standard sources of information could avail.

As far as descriptions of scenery, localities, architecture, opinions, manners and customs, &c., are concerned, the writer has preferred, for the sake of accuracy, to risk the imputation of plagiarism, by weaving in expressions of standard authors or of eye-witnesses in ways incapable of being conveniently indicated by quotation mark or reference. For example, the journey

from Nazareth to Hebron is almost step by step the track of Professor Robinson reversed, as given in his *Researches*. In the descriptions of travelers, whenever there was a picture word or graphic epithet, the writer has unceremoniously seized hold of them, being more anxious to produce a truthful impression than to claim the merit of originality. Nor should we censure this while we praise the painter who seeks to transfer to his canvass the coloring of a Titian or Rubens, or the sculptor who seeks to inspire his marbles with the indescribable graces of the chisel of Praxiteles; we rather should applaud the design of throwing the coloring of imagination around the authentic details of a tome of travels or a dry encyclopedia.

In all cases where the Divine Subject of the narrative has been introduced as speaking, the language has been simply and only that of the Bible, without paraphrase, diminution, or addition; for the author could not hope to achieve what even Milton failed to accomplish, viz., to represent worthily, unassisted by the direct inspiration of the Holy Ghost, the words of one wholly divine. For the same reason, no description of the personal appearance of the Savior has been attempted, as it was believed to be a subject where all words, as well as all ar-