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The Fourfold Gospel, Section IV., The Law of the New Kingdom by Edwin A. Abbott

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and when, as in this case, the practice is continued throughout the book, it becomes a grievous **mistake**, calculated to detract very considerably from the value of the work. This defect is all the more to be regretted, because the book is in every other way worthy of attention. It is well furnished with explanatory maps, genealogical tables, and a copious index.

To two classes of readers we would specially recommend this book as helpful; to those who are already well acquainted with the period and who desire an epitome of the knowledge they have gathered, and those who require reliable information in a convenient and concise form. General readers, too, will find a study of it in the highest degree profitable and interesting. The book is well printed and presents a sketch of European History from about 1100 to 1600 A.D.

G. V. JOURDAN.

THE FOURFOLD GOSPEL, SECTION IV., THE LAW OF THE NEW KINGDOM. By Edwin A. Abbott. (Cambridge University Press). 12s. 6d. net.

This is a book of which it is quite impossible to give a detailed criticism, it is so large and deals with such an innumerable number of minute points. It is right, though hardly necessary, to state at the outset of our remarks that Dr. Abbott's researches cannot be ignored by any serious student of the Gospels of St. Mark or St. John. This is not to say that Dr. Abbott's conclusions are likely to win general acceptance among scholars; but he is a veteran of world wide repute; his industry is portentous and his ingenuity amazing; and, whether we agree with him or not, one cannot read a page that he has written on the Synoptic matter of the Gospel without learning something. It may be a small thing; but to the lover of the Bible small points are as the diamond fragments that are carefully gathered up and treasured by a jeweller.

The critical assumption underlying Dr. Abbott's discussion of the Fourfold Gospel is that St. Mark's account of our Lord's sayings was not fully understood in primitive times by the Evangelists who made use of the materials collected by him, or even by St. Mark himself. St. Matthew and St. Luke, each in his own way, re-edited what St. Mark had written; and as Dr. Abbott maintains, with a consequent obscuration of our Lord's real meaning, or, shall we say, his more profound meaning. It is, of course, notorious that the Second Gospel was neglected by Christian commentators, for the natural reason that it seemed at first sight to contain nothing that could not be found in the fuller and smoother narratives of SS. Matthew and Luke.

But, according to Dr. Abbott, there was one Christian interpreter of primordial antiquity and great authority, who set himself "to justify the ways of Mark to men"; and that was the author of the Fourth Gospel, who "intervenes" in every case in

which St. Matthew or St. Luke, or both, have misunderstood what St. Mark had written.

Dr. Abbott finds everywhere in the Fourth Gospel something—a word, a phrase, an incident—which was intended expressly to throw light on that in St. Mark, which had baffled the other Evangelists. To take only one example:—In Mark iv. 33,34, we read, “And with many such parables spake he *the word unto them, as they were able to hear it.* And without a parable spake he not unto them: *but privately to his own disciples he expounded all things.*” Now, here St Matthew omits the italicized words, and St. Luke omits the whole passage. This proves that there was something in the words that did not appeal to either of them, as we might say. Dr. Abbott indicates “Johannine intervention” in this case by maintaining “that in the Fourth Gospel all Christ’s teaching is regarded as having been of the nature of parables, proverbs, or dark sayings, to His disciples, until the Holy Spirit was given to them after His death and resurrection. According to this view, Mark’s tradition needed to be placed later.” In this case, then, John “intervenes” to correct the three preceding documents in various ways.

The prospective reader of this work will have some notion of the minuteness, not to say meticulousness, of the commentary, when we state that 526 large octavo pages, closely printed, are devoted to 5 chapters of the Second Gospel, Mark iv. 1 to ix. 1.

The labour has not been wasted; but it seems to point to a conclusion somewhat different, and possibly more natural, from that assumed—rather than reached—by Dr. Abbott. We feel that the teaching of our Lord is so profoundly and intimately true, so closely in correspondence with all spiritual facts, that His teaching as recorded in the Fourth Gospel has natural affinities of the most subtle nature with His Divine teachings as recorded in the Synoptic narrative. In short, we rise from a perusal of one of Dr. Abbott’s sections with an increasing conviction of the inspiration of the Gospels, even though in many cases the twentieth century scholar’s conclusion may seem fanciful and unnatural.

N. J. D. WHITE.

DEVOTIONS FROM ANCIENT AND MEDIAEVAL SOURCES.

Translated and arranged by the Rev. Charles Plummer, M.A.,
Fellow and Chaplain, Corpus Christi Coll., Oxford. (B. H.
Blackwell). 5s. net.

This volume, a collection of devotions taken exclusively from ancient sources, is intended to bring within the reach of English church people some examples of the wealth which lies hidden from them in mediaeval service books. The compiler also hopes that the materials thus accumulated may prove serviceable to