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Devotions from Ancient and Mediaeval Sources by Charles Plummer

Review by: C. P. Price

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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

those who are engaged on the problem of what is called prayer book enrichment. Mr. Plummer explains in his preface that he has abstained carefully from reproducing any of the matter used by Dr. Bright in his *Ancient Collects*, and also that he has confined himself exclusively to Western sources. The prayers here reproduced are classified carefully under ten heads; and in each case the origin is indicated. For sacred reasons, for saints' days, special and general intercessions, prayers for special blessings, for particular occasions, for the departed, and for the particular use of the clergy, form some of the sections which may be mentioned as indicating the wide range of this collection. A special feature is that for each celebration of Holy Communion Mr. Plummer provides an alternative Collect or a special Collect, where none such is at present provided, also Epistles and Gospels, a prayer to be used before the Consecration, another before the blessing, and an alternative form of blessing suitable to the commemoration of the day—thus imparting to the bareness of our office a much needed element of special application. Only such changes, apart from compression, have been made in the texts as to fit them for use in English Churches. We doubt, however, whether they would in all cases pass unchallenged in Irish Churches.

Mr. Plummer has well reproduced the sober dignity of Prayer Book English, but he has not avoided a certain stereotyped conciseness, which gives to many of these Collects an air of being machine-made formulæ. They are, like so many of the "office hymns" in Ancient and Modern, wooden. They introduce the correct address, and the correct ascription covering, like some of our Prayer Book Collects, a single conventional and perfunctory petition. All has been included that had to be got in, and in the fewest words. These prayers are eminently elements in a ritual—they lack for the most part the touch of unction which, perhaps, can only reach us through less conventional avenues. Mr. Plummer, however, is not to blame for this defect, it is inherent in his originals, or perhaps in us whose temperament has departed from them. We wish, however, that he had avoided harping so continually upon that ugly phrase, "the gibbet of the cross."

C. P. PRICE.

THE NESTORIAN MONUMENT IN CHINA. By P. Y. Saeki,
Professor at the Waseda University, Tokyo. (S.P.C.K.).
10s. 6d. net.

Professor Saeki in a laudatory preface speaks of this book as "one of the most important works ever written upon the history of the introduction of Christianity into the Far East, and of the still abiding influence of that early Christianity in the religious