

The Historical Setting of the Early Gospel. By Thomas Cunning Hall, Professor of Christian Ethics in Union Theological Seminary, New York. Eaton & Mains, New York; Jennings & Graham, Cincinnati. 1912. 171 pages. Price, 75 cents.

There is here wealth of accurate scholarship and unusual sanity of judgment in the handling of the mass of details which are justly interpreted and related to each other. It would be difficult for the student to find in so brief a compass so much that is pertinent about the political, economic and religious conditions of the world of Jesus' day. Dr. Hall writes wisely about the "mystery religions," about which so much that is unwise has been written.

A. T. ROBERTSON.

IV. PRACTICAL THEOLOGY.

A History of Preaching; from the Close of the Reformation Period to the End of the Nineteenth Century. Vol. II. By Edwin Charles Dargan, D.D., LL.D., author of "A History of Preaching from the Apostolic Fathers to the Reformers," "Ecclesiology," etc., formerly Professor in the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary at Louisville, Ky. Hodder & Stoughton. New York. George H. Doran Company.

The first impression one receives on opening and glancing through this volume is that its preparation involved a vast amount of research. The scope and plan of the entire work—including the volume previously published and one yet to come—are so comprehensive and exhaustive that only a genuine delight in the work and sincere devotion to a great task could hold one to its accomplishment through the years. After its completion there will be little left to be done in this field of study, except to bring out specific phases of the history in greater relief or to work over certain periods of it more intensively.

The method of treatment pursued in this volume is different in important respects from that followed in the first. "The great movements of thought beginning about the time of the Reformation, together with the growth and world-wide expansion of Christian peoples, bring in a great variety of modifying circumstances, and make the history of preaching far more complex

than in any previous age. Furthermore, the variety of conditions—political, social, literary, and other—in the different countries of western Christendom has introduced other elements of diversity into the history.” In other words, life in the modern world has become extremely complex and varied, and preaching, which is an important form of that life, follows the trend, and reflects this vast differentiation which is so characteristic a feature of human activities in recent times. For that reason it is not practicable to divide the history of preaching into general periods marked by uniform characteristics in all countries. In fact, although general trends can be observed, it is difficult to make satisfactory generalizations as to uniform tendencies even in a single country. Hence the author adopts the somewhat artificial, but more convenient, method of dividing the history by centuries.

Dr. Dargan seeks to keep the emphasis upon the fact that preaching is always vitally related to the intellectual and social life of the period under discussion, both as to homiletical method and as to the particular phase of the gospel message which is stressed. The constant direction of the attention to this important fact is perhaps the chief excellence of the book, as indeed it is the chief value of a study of the history of preaching. The great message of the book, to this reviewer at least, has been the importance of properly relating one’s message to the life-problems and needs of one’s age.

If style were of as much importance as the matter of a book, I should be tempted to say that the style is its chief excellence. Certainly Dr. Dargan is able to lend an interest to many a series of facts, which otherwise would be dull, by a bright and elegant style.

The great host of the author’s friends will join in the sincere hope that he may be given health, strength and opportunity to bring to completion this great literary task which he set for himself during his professorship in the Seminary and which was interrupted and retarded by his return to the pastorate and the heavy drafts upon his energy in his great field of labor.

C. S. GARDNER.