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The Fourfold Gospel: Section III. The Proclamation of the New Kingdom. by Edwin A. Abbott

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In the chapter which treats of the teaching of Christ Himself there are many sensible remarks on the attitude of Jesus towards the current teaching of His day as regards the Messiah and Apocalyptic imaginations. We should wish to draw special attention to the chapter dealing with sin, the sense of which seems to be so much less vivid to-day than formerly. He quotes with effect Lord Morley's words, "that horrid burden which the Churches call Sin," and shows that the fact of sin cannot be ignored or explained away. Of course the crux of the argument lies in the significance of the terms which have been used to define the Atonement. What does it mean to say "Christ died for us"? We are sure that Canon Simpson himself would not say that he has solved the problem, all he does is to show that the Atonement or Reconciliation or Redemption or whatever we are pleased to call it does represent something which the Death of Christ brought to man, that in that Death there was brought about a change in the relationship between God and man. At times Dr. Simpson's argument may not be quite clear or we may not altogether agree with his treatment of particular subjects, but on the whole we can recommend his book most heartily, especially to those who wish to know how far the "Gospel Message" can still be believed even by those who accept modern criticism. It is a pity to issue a book like this without an index.

E. J. Y.

THE FOURFOLD GOSPEL: SECTION III. The Proclamation of the New Kingdom. By Edwin A. Abbott. (Cambridge University Press.) 12s. 6d. net.

The book part of this volume is a commentary on the first three chapters of St. Mark's Gospel, covering 484 closely printed pages. And when we state that the style is concise, not marked by any redundancies of expression, the prospective reader will have some notion of the minuteness with which the details are treated. The learned author himself "does not venture to hope that any but a few specialists will read it consecutively."

The present volume is the third section of the *Fourfold Gospel*, the earlier parts of which, "Introduction" and "The Beginning" have already been noticed in this Review.

The leading idea in Dr. Abbott's works on the Gospel record is the vindication of the Fourth Gospel, not as a literally accurate history, but as a portrait of Jesus. Moreover, he seems to regard St. John as having deliberately set himself to give the true meaning of St. Mark, when that evangelist had been misunderstood by St. Luke. St. Luke, indeed, in Dr. Abbott's view, is useful, because but for his wrong corrections of St. Mark, we should not have the right explanations of St. Mark by St. John. In such cases as these, Dr. Abbott would claim for the Fourth

Gospel a superiority over the Third in what we may call historical accuracy. But in the independent, purely Johannine narrative, Dr. Abbott finds a revelation of eternal truth coupled with complete disregard for conformity to facts. Thus, to take one instance: "Jesus is represented, for example, as saying, not only in effect but in word, 'I am the Way and the Truth and the Life,' and 'I am the Light of the World,' and the 'Good Shepherd,' and 'The Resurrection' . . . Few certainties can be more certain than that Jesus did not utter these exact words. Why then does the Evangelist, thus repeatedly and with obviously deliberate iteration, impute them to Him?"

"The best explanation is that he *knew* (or, as I should prefer to say, it was revealed to him) *that Jesus meant them* . . . He longed to impress upon his readers that this was their meaning; and by this longing he was induced to substitute, throughout his Gospel, the meaning instead of the word, and the spirit instead of the letter, and the Logos instead of Jesus."

This quotation from Dr. Abbott's Preface indicates very well one characteristic of his treatment of the Fourth Gospel. It is for him the most truly inspired of the Gospels and the least photographic.

It might seem, after this, inconsistent in Dr. Abbott to insist on the purposefulness of St. John in his choice of words. But he would say, perhaps, and with truth, that an inspired book or an inspired writer will combine, as God Himself does, attention alike to the infinitely small and to the infinitely great. It would be impossible here to give an example of Dr. Abbott's discussion of the infinitely small. It seems to us quite impossible to suppose that the writers of the N.T., St. John, for example, were conscious of all the implications involved in their use of one word rather than another. Some of Dr. Abbott's notes seem to suppose St. John to have had by him Hatch's Concordance to the Septuagint, and that he possessed an intimate knowledge of the Targum and Talmud. But the truth is that just as in the tissue of any organism the microscope reveals perfection all through, so the inspired Scriptures reveal under the minutest examination precious things of wisdom and beauty which we must not depreciate because they are small.

The title of this book is "The Proclamation of a New Kingdom"; but "one cannot see the wood for the trees." Where the subject is dealt with, Dr. Abbott betrays a want of sympathy with organized Christianity. Thus he says that "the object of Jesus was, from the first, not the establishment of what men would commonly call a Kingdom, but the diffusion of what we should rather call the atmosphere of a Family, a spiritual emanation spreading like a widening circle from a source within Himself as its centre, and passing into the hearts of all that were fitted to receive it, so as to give them something of His

own power or "authority"—a term defined in the Prologue of the Fourth Gospel as being "authority to become children of God." This is all quite true; but one must not forget that "the atmosphere of a Family" cannot exist without Family life, an organized thing, not the less organized because natural.

N. J. D. W.

THE HOLY COMMUNION, What mean ye by this Service?
By Ed. Sinker. (Longmans.) 2s. 6d.

Mr. Sinker has given us a useful book to be placed in the hands of our Communicants.

In his preface he states "that the book is not written for the theologian, but as a practical and devotional help for our thousands of regular and sometimes irregular communicants." We can recommend it as a work that will appeal to many who look for a combination of theological and purely devotional treatment of the Service of Holy Communion.

The aspects from which the author looks at the service are not new; but, here and there, he illustrates old truths in a very effective way so as to give the intelligent communicant a central thought which may lead him to see in the Service new ways and means of developing his spiritual life.

Mr. Sinker has the gift of happy illustration. When speaking of Holy Communion as the Feast of Reunion, he says, "We are one mighty army, and the thought of the presence of the Angels and Archangels and the whole company of Heaven at our Eucharists should be an inspiration and a source of strength to us. We are not standing alone. We are units of a vast multitude which no man can number. This thought at our Holy Eucharist always brings to my mind a great field of waving corn, swaying gently this way and that in the wind, where each stalk of corn, fragile as it is, is perfectly safe because it does not stand alone, but is supported and surrounded by countless others."

With regard to doctrine the author refuses to be called a partizan, but he is very definite in his opinions. In our view he is a strong Churchman, he fully realizes the historical setting of the Services of our Church, and he has made an earnest effort to give the "average Christian" (the phrase is his own) a reason for the faith that is in him.

E. H. F. C.

EVERY IRISHMAN'S LIBRARY. (Talbot Press.) 2s. 6d. each.

We have received three volumes, excellently turned out, of the Talbot Press Series "Every Irishman's Library"—*Legends of Saints and Sinners*, Douglas Hyde; *Irish Poetry*, Alfred Perceval Graves; *Wild Sports*, W. H. Maxwell. The first two volumes are anthologies. Dr. Douglas Hyde has gathered together a quantity of Irish folklore, orally and from manuscript, and publishes the

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