

Irish Church Quarterly

The Fourfold Gospel, Introduction by Edwin A. Abbott

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The Irish Church Quarterly, Vol. 6, No. 24 (Oct., 1913), pp. 342-343

Published by: [Irish Church Quarterly](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/30067563>

Accessed: 17/06/2014 13:03

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Tyndale, was adhered to in subsequent translations, in the Douai as well as in the Authorized and Revised. We are glad that this is so—that, in this respect as in others, we may claim the Westminster Version as kindred with our own. We wish every success to this new undertaking.

J. G. C.

THE FOURFOLD GOSPEL, INTRODUCTION. By Edwin A. Abbott, Honorary Fellow of St. John's College, Cambridge. (Cambridge University Press). 2s. 6d. net.

The Church and the World will never, in all probability, arrive at a satisfying definition of inspiration; we shall never, it seems, be able to formulate with logical preciseness the qualifications that are necessary to make intelligible the statement that God inspired the Bible. But the fact of its inspiration, of its unique quality as literature, is proved by its inexhaustible capacity to interest the acutest intellects of every civilized land.

Yet once again the world of religious thought welcomes with gratitude a volume from the veteran scholar, E. A. Abbott; and we rejoice to see that his critical eye is not yet dim, nor his natural force of exposition abated.

The interest of this book is manifold. In the first place, it is significant as indicative of the reaction in the direction of traditional views which has set in amongst scholars and thinkers not of the conservative school. Dr. Abbott in his Preface calls attention to the distance he himself has moved in the last few years.

"Comparing the present volume with my articles on the Gospels in the *Encyclopaedia Biblica* (1901) and in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (1880) and with the earlier Parts of *Diatessarica*, I find that the Fourth Gospel, in spite of its poetic nature, is closer to history than I had supposed. The study of it, and especially of those passages where it intervenes to explain expressions in Mark altered or omitted by Luke, appears to me to throw new light on the words, acts, and purposes of Christ, and to give increased weight to His claims on our faith and worship."

The passage we have cited from the Preface hints at two lines of thought or research to which the student of the Gospels is invited: the detection of three or four Gospel witnesses in many cases where the ordinary reader sees only two or three, and the "poetical" nature of the Fourth Gospel.

As Dr. Abbott acutely points out, there are not only three Gospel accounts of the institution of the Eucharist, but a fourth veiled behind the silence and the allusions and the eucharistic teaching of John. It is this line of thought which will be found most helpful and suggestive by the careful student.

It has been often suggested that the peculiarities of Mark, in passages found in all three Synoptists, are due to the omission

by Matthew and Luke independently of expressions or sentiments which they felt to be offensive, or capable of being misunderstood. Dr. Abbott maintains that in many of these cases, John supplies a defence or explanation of the Marcan expression to which exception has been made.

Another point, which is plausible, but which will, we think, meet with less favour, is a comparison of the relation between John and the Synoptists to that between Chronicles and the earlier historical books. The parallel holds good in two respects: in Chronicles and in the Fourth Gospel everyone speaks in the same style, the author's style; both works are supplemental in intention; but there the parallel ends. Few critics believe that the Chronicler's additional matter is historical; while even Dr. Abbott feels compelled to grant the historical value of "John."

N. J. D. W.

ST. PAUL. A Study in Social and Religious History. By Adolf Deissmann. Translated by L. R. Strachan. (Hodder and Stoughton.) 10s. 6d.

Professor Deissmann has given us a volume of surpassing interest. It is a fascinating study of St. Paul from an unusual standpoint. Too often we have sought in vain to gain some idea of the individuality of the Apostle himself, but the man has been lost in the theologian. Many books have been written about Paulinism and the relation of Pauline to Evangelic Christology, and we have wondered sometimes what would St. Paul himself have thought of it all. Dr. Deissmann has taken a different line, he tries to bring Paul the man before us as he lived and moved. He strives to connect him with the country in which he lived, he shows him to us as he must have been influenced by the various tendencies, national and religious, that made up his world. For him St. Paul is not a logical theologian who evolves an elaborate system from well thought out premises, but a man who grew in the knowledge of the living Christ and expressed his experience in letters to his friends. We cannot but think that the Professor is right and that this view will help us to see more clearly the purport of the Apostle's writings. The main contention of the book is that the Pauline Epistles are not treatises logically constructed, but the outpouring of the Apostle's thoughts and feelings in friendly letters. The Epistles are compared with the examples of everyday correspondence which have been unearthed and published of late years, rather than with the formal literary letters which were a favourite mode of composition with many writers. Dr. Deissmann allows of no exception to this, even the Epistle to the Romans must be read in this way, though he somewhat