

The Princeton Theological Review

APRIL, 1922

DARIUS THE MEDE

It is about six years since my first volume of *Studies in the Book of Daniel* was published; and now that the second volume is about to appear, it seems like an opportune time to reply to some of the criticisms of the reviewers of the first. The most elaborate of the criticisms was one by Professor Kemper Fullerton of the Oberlin Graduate School of Theology which appeared in the Bulletin of my alma mater, the Western Theological Seminary, at Allegheny, Pa., for October 1918. Had Professor Fullerton's criticism been confined to myself, I would have forever held my peace; but inasmuch as I am merely the occasion for a violent onslaught on the veracity of the book of Daniel, I shall be excused for referring at length to his strictures. It is high praise, though intended as blame, to be spoken of by him as a "bringer-up-to-date" of the work of such men as Hengstenberg, Keil, Pusey and Green, with whom I am classed as a belated example of the same anti-critical animus and unscientific method.

And, first, let me say, that I do not deem it a reproach to have produced "a typical example of the harmonistic method," which is one of the most serious charges brought against me by Professor Fullerton; but that I fail to see that I have used this method as distinct from the "historical" method, whatever that means. Words break no bones, it may be; but since Professor Fullerton evidently aims to put me in the wrong at the very start and, by necessary implication, all through my studies, by affirming that in my method I am harmonistic as distinct from historical, it is well to pause just here in order to come to an understanding

Mark and between Luke and Q are then explained as due to changes effected by Luke for a variety of reasons, some of which are thought to have led the Evangelist into serious historical errors.

Dr. Cadbury has collected a large amount of interesting material. But, in company with many investigators, he has closed the way, we believe, to any full solution of the synoptic problem by rejecting the influence of oral tradition or personal recollection in the formation of the First and Third Gospels. If Matthew and Luke wrote at an early time, when the current of authentic information about Jesus' life was still running full and free, then their supposed changes in Mark and in the alleged second source might conceivably be explained. But those changes have never been satisfactorily explained as due to mere editing or to the anti-historical desire to avoid running counter to the beliefs of the Church. No matter what the literary relationships between the Synoptic Gospels may be, these Gospels cannot be understood unless all three of them be put within the period of the primitive tradition.

Princeton.

J. GRESHAM MACHEN.

The New Testament Today. By ERNEST FINDLAY SCOTT, D.D. Professor of Biblical Theology in Union Theological Seminary, New York. New York: The Macmillan Company. 1921. Pp. 92.

Professor Scott's little book is to be placed among the large number of popular treatises which have recently been written to show that the New Testament still possesses some value even for those who have accepted the principles of modern naturalism; and the skill of its author makes the book a good representative of its class. The whole supernaturalistic content of the New Testament is here given up, and of course also the uniqueness of its authority; yet the author believes that the books which compose the New Testament, because of their helpfulness, should still be given a preëminent place in the Church.

This *modus vivendi* between the New Testament and the modern world is established partly by a modernizing interpretation of the New Testament. But it is admitted, of course, that much of the New Testament is no longer useful. Even Jesus, it is admitted, employed forms of thought which are now obsolete—particularly apocalyptic ideas about the Kingdom of God and the Son of Man—and these forms, Professor Scott insists, can no longer be kept in the background in a presentation of Jesus' life and teaching or interpreted in any merely metaphorical sense. On the contrary, our author, somewhat after the manner of the "consistent eschatologists," connects even the ethic of Jesus with these obsolete notions. And if Jesus thus employed obsolete forms of thought, the same thing may of course be said about the New Testament writers.

Yet Professor Scott is nothing daunted by facts such as these. Even if Jesus did employ obsolete forms, he says, yet the forms may be distinguished from the content; and even if the New Testament is a product of its time, employing freely even elements derived from paganism, yet at the centre of the New Testament there is an "essential gospel" which is a permanent possession of the human race.

But what is this essential gospel? The question is certainly a fair question, yet it is never answered with any clearness. The essential gospel, according to our author, must certainly not be identified with any individual presentation of it, for Professor Scott supposes that the New Testament exhibits a wide diversity of thought. Thus "Paul," he says, "was the protagonist in a great conflict in which the chief Apostles took sides against him." At this point, Professor Scott apparently accepts in a thoroughly uncritical way the long-refuted Tübingen position with regard to the relation between Paul and the Jerusalem Church. And a large part of the New Testament, he says, is controversial. But, he insists, this diversity within the New Testament—a diversity which appears even in the teachings of Jesus themselves, which are thought to contain various disparate elements—is not to be regretted; for diversity is involved in liberty. The New Testament writers no doubt did engage in controversy, but, it is supposed, "the writers themselves, in their calmer moments, would have qualified not a few of their uncompromising statements" (p. 38). "Freedom of interpretation was encouraged, as one of the best evidences that men were truly following the guidance of the Spirit" (p. 45).

It is really astonishing that any historian, in this age of grammatico-historical exegesis, should suppose such assertions to have the slightest basis in the New Testament itself. If one thing is perfectly clear about the New Testament writers, it is that they were not pragmatists. They did not say certain things about God and Christ simply because those things were useful. On the contrary they believed, in a perfectly simple and straightforward way, that they were stating the facts, and it never occurred to them to suppose that a fact could be a fact for one man and not for another. Moreover they were tremendously interested in establishing the unity of the apostolic message. "Whether it were I or they," says Paul, "so we preach, and so ye believed" (I Cor. xv. 11).

The truth is, the fundamental thing about the New Testament seems scarcely to have occurred to Professor Scott. Fundamentally the message of the New Testament is an account of something that happened. In the teaching of Jesus, the happening lies still in the future; in the rest of the New Testament the first great act at least lies in the past. But everywhere the New Testament, far from being a mere setting forth of ideas or a mere enunciation of ideals, is an account of something that happened. If so, the essential thing is that the account be true; and it is no wonder that the New Testament writers refuse to be forced into the pragmatist mold applied to them by Professor Scott.

Regarding as unhistorical or unimportant the one great fact that lies at the basis of the New Testament—nothing whatever in the book, so far as we can remember, is said about the resurrection of Jesus—Professor Scott very naturally never succeeds in finding "the essential gospel." But what does he suppose "the essential gospel" to be? It is not at all easy to say. Professor Scott often speaks of "the gospel," and it is represented as something very valuable. But the way in which it is spoken of is always entirely vague, and the reader gets the

But, it is sometimes said, the error of modern liberalism—so persuasively represented by Professor Scott—is an error of the head, not of the heart, and in the realm of feeling there can subsist a Christian fellowship even in the midst of doctrinal controversy. Such considerations, however, we are obliged to confess, can bring us no comfort. On the contrary, the sharp separation between thinking and feeling is absolutely impossible. And as a matter of fact it is in the realm of the heart fully as much as in that of the head that Professor Scott seems to us to be wrong. As we read the graceful sentences of modern liberal writers—so calm, so devoid of any sorrow for the guilty soul of man, so unmindful of the stern realities of sin and death—we can only pray to God that there may come not only a change of mind but with it a change of heart. That change of heart may come sooner than we suppose; the times are in God's hand, and His arm is not too short to save. When the change does come, when the world has again been convicted of sin and been led to renounce its present complacent pride, then the hearts of men will melt at the foot of the cross, and the gospel that is really a gospel, the good news of Jesus and His love, will run like wildfire through the earth.

Princeton.

J. GRESHAM MACHEN.

The Variants in the Gospel Reports. The Alexander Robertson Lectures for 1917. By T. H. WEIR, B.D., M.R.A.S., Lecturer in Arabic in the University of Glasgow. With Prefatory Note by The Rev. Professor Milligan, D.D. Paisley: Alexander Gardner, Publisher by Appointment to the late Queen Victoria, 1920. Pp. 150.

In this little book, Mr. Weir has called attention to certain phenomena which he thinks prove that at least the first three gospels all go back to an original Semitic Gospel. Whether this original Gospel was written in Hebrew or Aramaic he regards as a matter of small consequence. By regarding the variations among the Gospels as due to different translations (or in some cases mistranslations) from the Hebrew or Aramaic he believes that problems which are quite insoluble on the basis of the customary view receive at last a satisfactory solution.

Mr. Weir admits that "in the present ploughing but a few stones have been turned over" and that "much awaits the scholar whose ploughshare will make a deeper furrow" (p. 150). It might have been well if this modesty had been allowed to appear throughout the body of the book. As it is, the most extraordinary assertions are made with a confidence rather surprising in view of the author's lack of familiarity with the apostolic age and with the history of the Church. For example, the author says on p. 30: "It was not until the end of the seventh or the beginning of the eighth century, partly as a result of the Mohammedan conquests of Syria, Persia, and North Africa, that the doctrines of the Church can be said to have taken their final form, and it was about the same time that both the canon of the Bible and