

**JOHANNINE VOCABULARY: A
COMPARISON OF THE WORDS
OF THE FOURTH GOSPEL WITH
THOSE OF THE THREE**

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Johannine Vocabulary: A Comparison of the Words of the Fourth Gospel with Those of the Three by Edwin A. Abbott

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EDWIN A. ABBOTT

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WITH THOSE OF THE THREE

BY
EDWIN A. ABBOTT

"*Oratio imago animi*, Language
most shews a man."

BEN JONSON, *Sylva*.

332391
21. 10. 36.

LONDON
Adam and Charles Black
1905

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TO
MY DAUGHTER
BY WHOM THE MAIN MATERIALS FOR THE WORK
WERE COLLECTED AND CLASSIFIED
AND THE RESULTS CORRECTED AND REVISED
THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED

PREFACE

ABOUT eight or nine years ago, when writing or revising for the press a commentary on the Fourth Gospel, I attempted—among other preparations for so manysided a task—to construct a key to certain verbal difficulties somewhat on the lines of a work that I wrote nearly forty years ago, called *A Shakespearian Grammar*. My "Johannine Grammar" never went beyond a rough draft: but, rough though it was, it decided me against publishing my commentary, by helping me to understand a great deal that I had never understood before, and by forcing me to perceive that a great deal more remained to be understood.

Studied with the aid of this rudimentary Johannine Grammar, the author of the Johannine Gospel revealed himself in a new light—as a prophet and yet a player on words; one of the most simple of writers yet one of the most ambiguous; with a style, in parts, apparently careless, parenthetical, irregular, abrupt, inartistic—an utterer of after-thoughts and by-thoughts putting down words just as they came into his mind, according to Mark Antony's profession, "I only speak right on"—but, in general effect, an inspired artist endowed with an art of the most varied kind, not metrical, not

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rhetorical, never ornate, yet conforming to rules of order, repetition, and variation, that suggested, at one time the refrains of a poem, at another the arrangements of a drama, at another the ambiguous utterances of an oracle, and the symbolism of an initiation into religious mysteries.

At the same time the problem presented by the divergence of the Johannine from the Synoptic vocabulary began to seem more difficult to explain in accordance with old hypotheses but more capable of new solutions. Biographers, though differing in the style and vocabulary of their comments, cannot lawfully differ in their reports of conversations. Yet the fourth or latest of these biographers appeared to differ in this unlawful manner from the three, and this to an extent that seemed amazing unless deliberate, and, if deliberate, only justifiable on the ground that he knew his divergences to be substantially in accordance with what he conceived to be the essential truth. Perhaps (I reflected) the Fourth Evangelist might be in the right: but, if so, what about the Three? Did, or did not, Jesus of Nazareth use, and use repeatedly, such words as "faith," "repentance," "forgiveness"? Did He condemn "hypocrisy"? Did He bid men "watch" and "pray"? Did He hold up to His disciples the example of "little children" in order to answer their questions about "the greatest"? If He did, as assuredly He did, how was it possible that a Fourth Gospel—even a supplementary Gospel—could give a fair and truthful account of Jesus and set down at great length His discourses, both to the disciples and to

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others, without so much as mentioning (1676 *b*) one of these fundamental words?

In order to answer these questions I began to construct a list of Synoptic words rarely or never used by John, and a list of Johannine words rarely or never used by the Synoptists: and I found that these—when compared and illustrated by quotations—shewed that in many cases John was in reality neither so silent nor so divergent as I had supposed. Where he had appeared to be taking up entirely new ground, he was sometimes saying the same thing as one or more of the Synoptists, only in a different way.

These conclusions were brought home to me more forcibly than ever when I recently began to prepare for the press a treatise on what might be called *The Fourfold Gospel*, that is to say, the passages where the Fourth Gospel intervenes in the Tradition of the Three. For the purposes of that treatise it seemed desirable to refer to a "Johannine Grammar" and a "Johannine Vocabulary" in print, instead of embodying large extracts from a manuscript. I therefore decided on printing those two volumes at once.

The "Johannine Grammar," which will form the Second Part of this work, could hardly be made intelligible to a reader unacquainted with Greek. But the "Johannine Vocabulary" stands on a different footing. There is nothing to prevent an "unlearned" reader from understanding, for example, that a difference is intended (as Origen says there is) when the Fourth Gospel describes some as "believing *in*" our Lord, and others as "believing *in His name*"; and