

**THE FOURFOLD GOSPEL:
DIATESSARICA,
PART X, SECTION I**

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The Fourfold Gospel: Diatessarica, Part X, Section I by Edwin A. Abbott

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EDWIN A. ABBOTT

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THE FOURFOLD GOSPEL
INTRODUCTION

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Diatessarica ... pt. 10.

THE FOURFOLD GOSPEL

SECTION I

INTRODUCTION

BY

EDWIN A. ABBOTT

Honorary Fellow of St John's College, Cambridge

"What seek ye?"

St John i. 38

(compare Genesis xxxvii. 15)

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TO
THOSE WHO ARE WILLING TO UNDERTAKE THE STUDY
OF THE FOUR GOSPELS
AS IMPERFECT DOCUMENTS
IN THE BELIEF THAT THEIR VERY IMPERFECTIONS
WERE PERMITTED OR ORDAINED
TO DRAW US NEARER
THROUGH THE LETTER TO THE SPIRIT
OF THE PERFECT LIFE
WHICH THEY IMPERFECTLY DESCRIBE

PREFACE

PREVIOUS Parts (published in 1900-12) of the series of which this is the tenth have dealt mostly with words. This Part will attempt to elucidate thoughts with the help of the evidence extracted from the elucidations of words. The earlier volumes might perhaps be described as a letting down of nets. If so, this one might be called an attempt to draw them in.

The "nets" were, in fact, footnotes, which, in former volumes, were very many and very long. They were also often apparently digressive. The reason was that I mostly wrote them with a view to future investigations as well as, or more than, to the matter in hand. When fishermen let down their nets, the boats that row round a shoal of fish sometimes look as though they were rowing away from it; and my boats often (I dare say) presented the appearance of rowing away from that which they were attempting to surround and capture.

Now I fear that I may incur an opposite charge. The notes in the present volume may seem too few and too slight to justify the statements placed in the text above them. If they do, I must ask the reader to remember that fishermen cannot draw nets in, and let them down, at one and the same time.

PREFACE

It will be found (I think) that a brief note of a line or two in the present volume—beside giving references to original authorities—often refers the reader to a discussion extending to several pages in a previous Part of *Diatessarica*, where the earliest authorities on the point in question are fully and accurately quoted, with so much of the context as will enable the serious student to form a judgment of their meaning. Reject my conclusions he may. Perhaps he often will. But if he does, it will be because he finds them novel, or because they seem to him fanciful or mystical, or because he thinks the evidence I have myself alleged against my own views stronger than the evidence I have alleged in support of them—not because the evidence has been unfairly, or carelessly, or inadequately collected and classified, or because it can be convicted of any suppression of inconvenient truth.

Comparing the present volume with my articles on the Gospels in the *Encyclopaedia Biblica* (1901) and in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (1880) and with the earliest 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.

PREFACE

My thanks are due once more to Mr W. S. Aldis, Mr H. Candler, and Rev. J. Hunter Smith, for corrections of proof and valuable suggestions. To Mr Candler I am also indebted for trenchant criticisms of my refusal to admit that the Fourth Gospel is a mere poem. These have often been of great service by directing my attention to features in that Gospel, and to early authorities, especially in Jewish literature, which seemed to justify the position I had attributed to the Evangelist, where, without such justification, it might have incurred the charge of being "modern."

EDWIN A. ABBOTT.

*Wellside, Well Walk,
Hampstead, N.W.
12 May 1913.*