

sented the difficult problems of early Church life, and agree almost entirely with his critical conclusions, I regret extremely that he should have expressed himself to the effect that it was necessary for the "splendid dawn of Spirit-given illumination" to "fade into the light of common day." Dr. Sanday will remember in this connexion the preface to the *Acts of Perpetua*, in which we find it stated that "we reverence, even as we do the prophecies, modern visions promised to us, and consider the other powers of the Holy Ghost as an agency of the Church to which He was sent, administering all gifts to all, even as the Lord distributed to every one, that so no weakness or despondency of faith may suppose that the Divine grace abode only in the ancients, whether as regards the condescension that raised up martyrs, or that which gave revelations."

J. RENDEL HARRIS.

RECENT ENGLISH LITERATURE ON THE NEW TESTAMENT.

FOR some little time back there has been a cessation of hostilities between the camps of faith and unbelief. Sallies, "excursions and alarums," there have of course been; but these have been rather the skirmishing of outposts, or the sham-fights needful to maintain efficiency, than serious and critical warfare. Christianity has perhaps more to fear at present from Socialism than from the criticism of its documents by the Epigoni of the Tübingen school, or from the supercilious confidence of the followers of the *Zeitgeist*, or the earnest one-sidedness of science. An entirely new departure in attack would indeed be a windfall to the Christian apologist. And yet conscientious and thorough grappling with the ordinary problems reminds us that much remains to be done before we can look for the universal acceptance of fundamental truths. Dr. Bruce, in his volume on the *Miraculous Element in the Gospels*,¹

¹ *The Miraculous Element in the Gospels*. By A. B. Bruce, D.D., Prof. of Apologetics, Free Ch. Coll., Glasgow. (Hodder and Stoughton.)

goes over ground that has been much trodden, but leaves the distinctive impress of the original thinker. He does not tread in other men's steps, even when travelling on the same road with them, but carries forward the discussion on miracles into a healthier atmosphere, and brings to bear on many vexed questions a weight of candid and substantial reasoning which most readers will feel to be final. As a contribution to Apologetics, Dr. Bruce's work is of the very highest value, whether we judge it by the importance of its subject or the breadth and rationality of its treatment, by the candour and courage with which real difficulties are met, by the patience and thoroughness and fine spirit displayed throughout, or by the crispness, ease, and vigour of the style. We venture to say that those who have spent most thought on miracles will find in this volume many fresh and fruitful suggestions, and will discover a new charm in ground they have often traversed before. The secret however of the charm and success of Dr. Bruce's volume lies in the circumstance that his method is that of the investigator, and not of the apologist. He disposes of objections to the miraculous, not so much by counter-argument, as by more fully disclosing the real nature of the miraculous, and by throwing light on its connexion with the whole of Christ's work. It is essentially a constructive and positive, and not merely a polemical book. And accordingly Strauss, Renan, and some critics of even larger mould, are again and again, and quite unintentionally, made to look as foolish as a man who has been hanging in the dark by his hands from a seven-foot wall looks when the morning breaks, making extreme difficulty where really there is none.

Dr. Bruce's book is also opportune. By anticipation it has answered Dr. Abbott's very clever and stimulating, but most unsatisfying, *Kernel and Husk*.¹ The felicity of expression which appears in the title charms the reader in every chapter. But let no one who stumbles at the miraculous think that Dr. Abbott has found a better way for him. To become a disciple of Dr. Abbott we must believe that Jesus is the incarnate Word of God, we must worship Him, we must accept the miracles of healing (though we need not any longer call them "miracles"), we must believe that while on earth He could forgive sins and predict future events,

¹ *The Kernel and the Husk: Letters on Spiritual Christianity*. By the author of *Philochristus*. (Macmillan & Co.)

and that now He is in heaven He can answer prayer. There may possibly be one or two peculiarly constituted minds who find Dr. Abbott's position tenable, and his suggestions a relief to their sceptical anxieties; but most men will feel that they are asked to swallow the camel among whose hair the gnat of physical miracle would slide down unobserved. He grants that "it was necessary that the incarnate Word should manifest God's creative power as well as His love and righteousness." But this was accomplished by Christ becoming a life-giving Spirit to mankind. He is so fanaticized against physical miracle that he even occasionally mis-states the question. For example, on p. 115, he says: "Here at last we can come to an understanding. You look up to God as the Maker of the world, and are more ready to worship Him as such than to worship a non-miraculous Christ." But the positing of these as alternative beliefs is a serious distortion of the real issue. To accept the miraculous is not to worship physical marvels in preference to moral marvels, or to be drawn by what is material rather than by what is spiritual. It is only to acknowledge that the source of life and power in the material world is the same as in the spiritual. We do not more readily worship the Maker of the world than the loving and righteous and Divine Christ, but we more readily worship that Person who combines in Himself spiritual and physical supremacy.

Dr. Abbott cannot be accused of habitually underrating the difficulties of his position. On the contrary, he usually states them with admirable lucidity and force. He clearly apprehends that by accepting Jesus as Himself a moral miracle, he lays himself open to a charge of inconsistency. The manner in which he meets this charge is the weakest, as it ought to be the strongest, part of his book. His answer is: "We see in the best of men approximations to sinlessness, but no approximations at all to what spiritualists (I believe) call 'levitation.'" Approximations to levity, if not to levitation, we are fated to find where we least expect it. But this treatment of the core of the whole subject shows how much need there still is for such an exposition of the nature of miracles, and of their congruity with the work and character of Christ, as Dr. Bruce has given us. Dr. Bruce indeed says, "Believers could part with the physical miracles of the Gospels if science or exegesis demanded the sacrifice." Perhaps in making this concession he forgot his own just observation,

“From denial of the value of facts to the denial of the facts themselves there is but a step.” Perhaps it betrays that even Dr. Bruce, who has certainly shown the reasonableness and congruity of the Gospel miracles with more convincing force than any previous writer, does not yet so distinctly discern their place and function as to see that they are essential. But this hypothetical concession is made after he has proved that neither science nor exegesis demand the sacrifice; and it would be unfair to build upon it any serious conclusions.

While then there is much that is wise and much that is brilliant in Dr. Abbott's book, it is Dr. Bruce's we should prefer to put into the hands of any one who is stumbled by the miraculous element in the gospels. Under his skilful and trenchant treatment the miracles are freed from the excrescences with which hasty thinkers and too eager apologists have covered them, and they stand out once more as constituent and important elements in the revelation made by Christ. Their evidential function is minimised; and perhaps Dr. Bruce sometimes neglects to consider that a miracle which is not wrought *for the sake of* affording evidence may on that account be all the stronger evidence. But the footing on which he places the gospel miracles, as the utterance of Christ's love and as the impressive exhibition in act of the doctrine He taught, cannot but be most helpful to many minds. The perusal of his volume proves the truth of his own words: “To abandon, as antiquated, the artificial views of apologists as to the uses of the gospel miracles may be right and proper, but the miracles themselves can never be wisely treated as of little, or at most of only subordinate moment.”

That sermons should form so large a proportion of current literature can seem surprising only to one who does not consider that a preacher can “play upon every stop” in human nature and stir interest and emotion as effectually as poet or novelist, if he has the will and the power to do so. A natural orator can find no better opportunity than the pulpit gives him. Mr. Brooks is not an orator in the highest sense of the term, but he has the faculty of rivetting the attention of an audience and moving it to high ends. The volume of sermons¹ he has just published in this country is worthy of a place on the same shelf as those of Dean

¹ *Twenty Sermons*. By Phillips Brooks, Rector of Trinity Church Boston. (Macmillan & Co., 1886.)

Church or Stopford Brooke. They do not pioneer for us as the sermons of Frederick Robertson did; they do not lay foundations for belief and conduct as those epoch-making sermons did: but in lucidity and grace they are comparable to them. If not so intense in their earnestness, they are yet intensely earnest; and if not so crisp and sparkling in their style, they have yet the merit of pure and admirable English. Persons and their various experiences have greater attraction for Mr. Brooks than themes or articles of faith. Life, its joys, its hopes, its difficulties and sorrows, are his favourite subjects, and these are treated with a sympathetic and wise touch. There is no lack of strength in the volume, but fineness is the most obvious characteristic of the sermons. The ideas are never commonplace, and the spirit that breathes through the whole is tender and pitiful, full of hope and reverence. The significance which Mr. Brooks sees in baptism is very different from that which doctrinal theology requires or from that which Philip the Evangelist seems to have perceived.

*An Introduction to the Textual Criticism of the New Testament.*¹ This little book admirably fulfils the intention of the series to which it belongs, and justifies the claim of that series to be entitled "The Theological Educator." Professor Warfield is known on both sides of the Atlantic as an authority on all questions connected with New Testament scholarship; but nothing he has previously done gives a clearer idea of his mastery of facts and power of exposition. Even the professed student will find in this little volume an easier and more convincing introduction to a clear knowledge of the genealogical method than in Dr. Hort's own exposition. To bring it into use in colleges as a perfect text-book of the subject, a greater fulness of detail might in some of the chapters be desired; but as a masterly survey of the whole subject, in which details are so handled as to assist our clearer perception of the whole, nothing better can be desired or looked for. A book so full of information, so well-reasoned, so brightly written, has never before been put in the hands of theological students.

¹ *An Introduction to the Textual Criticism of the New Testament.* By Rev. Benjamin B. Warfield, D.D., Professor of New Testament Criticism, Alleghany, U.S.A. (Hodder and Stoughton, 1886.)