

The Author of 'The Cross and the Kingdom.'

BY THE REV. ALFRED E. GARVIE, M.A., B.D., MONTROSE.

THE hearty welcome which the first book of the Rev. W. L. Walker, *The Spirit and the Incarnation*, met with, is likely to fall to the lot of his second, *The Cross and the Kingdom*, as the latter, no less than the former, possesses two characteristics which should commend it to all serious and thoughtful men in the present day. On the one hand, the need of the gospel is keenly felt; on the other, as strong a desire for a restatement of the gospel in terms of modern intelligence is being experienced. The author of these books has wandered far and wide in the ways of contemporary thought to find truth, and he has at last found a home for his mind as well as his soul in a *liberal evangelicalism*, which accepts the facts of the Incarnation and the Atonement, but endeavours to give both such an interpretation as will be free from the objections many have been forced to recognize in regard to the traditional orthodoxy, and will answer such questions, speculative and practical, as present intellectual conditions are compelling us to face. The qualifying clause in each of his titles is most suggestive. In his first work he attempts to see 'the Spirit and the Incarnation in the Light of Scripture, Science, and Practical Need'; in the second he endeavours to present 'the Cross and the Kingdom as viewed by Christ Himself and in the Light of Evolution.' In all his theological thinking he has been greatly influenced by the critical and historical method of studying the Scriptures, the scientific doctrine of evolution, as expanded and elevated by the Hegelian philosophy, and the practical needs of men.

This last factor has been most potent in his theological development in the judgment of those who not only know the books, but also the man himself. He is a man intensely sincere and conscientious, gentle and modest, tenderly sympathetic to the sorrows and struggles of other men, as eager to lead others into the path of peace as he is intent to find the way of truth for himself. In his youth he witnessed the reality and blessedness of the Christian life in a Christian home, and under Methodist preaching passed through a definite

experience of conversion. When he became the minister of a Congregational Church in Glasgow, he took an active part in the formation of the Home Mission Union, and engaged largely in district visiting and open-air preaching. Even in his pastorate in a Unitarian Church he preached Christ 'as an abiding revelation and organ of God in the Holy Spirit,' although he thereby estranged some of his hearers for whom Christ had no such meaning or value. His aim in both his books, as any sympathetic reader will soon discover, is not simply to gratify an intellectual curiosity, but to be helpful in confirming Christian experience and forming Christian character. Whatever mental presentation of Christian truth may at any time have secured his acceptance, his own personal allegiance has always been given to faith in the grace of God in Christ.

In spite of this personal affinity with evangelicalism, he soon was driven into revolt against the traditional orthodoxy. The question asked by one of the members in his first charge at Hawick, whether he could be happy in heaven while a dearly-loved one was suffering eternally in hell, forced on his attention the doctrine of eternal punishment; and for a time he found relief from doubt in the doctrine of 'eternal life in Christ alone.' Dr. Dale's insistence on Christ's endurance of penalty first shook his confidence in the accepted theory of the Atonement; while the study of New Testament theology led him to recognize the importance of the conception of the kingdom of God, which has now such prominence in his theology. The moral difficulties which the Old Testament presents were relieved only by the abandonment of the current views of inspiration, and the acceptance of the critical position, as presented in the public lectures of Dr. W. Robertson Smith, which he attended in Glasgow.

It was a study of the teaching of Jesus Himself which made him begin to question the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity and the Person of Christ; and further study of some Unitarian literature to cherish the hope, that a reasonable and righteous evangelicalism could be built on a Unitarian basis.

When, however, he attached himself formally to Unitarianism, he was not long in discovering that neither intellectually nor spiritually could he hope for satisfaction in it. Its cold intellectualism, its practical impotence, and its indifference to the Person and Work of Christ, distressed him. He discovered that what was wanted more than mental lucidity was spiritual energy, and he desired to find out the secret of the power of the early Church. This inquiry led him back again to a recognition that it is the Divine in Christ that men need for their salvation; that it is the presence and power of the Spirit that the Church needs for the fulfilment of its task; and that the doctrine of the Divine in Christ and the doctrine of the Spirit are essentially related. In his first book he seeks intellectually to justify this hard-won conviction, that the Church can possess and exercise power for the saving of men only as Christ is personally present and active by the Spirit. To the further step, which he takes in his second volume, he has been led not merely by logical necessity, but by

the constraint of his own personal experience. The Christ who lives and works in the Spirit is the Crucified, and it is through His sacrifice that He has reached His supremacy. The writer gives us in the book his own recovery of the meaning of the Cross.

This brief sketch of the theological development, or the spiritual biography, of the author of two works of such unique interest and exceptional value, which the privilege and honour of an intimate friendship enables me to give with no violation of personal confidence, may appear to require justification. Two valid pleas can be advanced. The books will be better understood if the experience which makes them interesting 'human documents' is known. This experience is itself typical, and the record of it may prove helpful in showing that the revolt from traditional orthodoxy need not, should not, end in doubt or denial, but by the leading of the Spirit of truth may be followed by a recovery of a genuinely evangelical faith and theology.

'The Cross and the Kingdom.'

BY PROFESSOR THE REV. JAMES IVERACH, M.A., D.D., ABERDEEN.

The Cross and the Kingdom, as viewed by Christ Himself and in the Light of Evolution. By the Rev. W. L. Walker, Laurencekirk. Edinburgh: F. & T. Clark.

THE readers of Mr. Walker's former work, *The Spirit and the Incarnation*, will give a hearty welcome to his present volume. The generous welcome given by the critics and the public to the former volume, when the author was unknown, will surely be more than repeated, now that the author is known and has won his reputation as a thinker and a writer of no mean worth. We, at all events, are glad to welcome Mr. Walker again, and we may express our pleasure at the thought that a minister in a small country town should have taken so high a place among the thinkers and theologians of the day. In truth, the works of Mr. Walker are of the highest order; they show him to be a reader of enormous range, and a man who can make good use of his reading. Then his books are directed to the needs of the present time, and

the problems which agitate and perplex the people of to-day are precisely those with which Mr. Walker has grappled, and with which he has wrestled to such good purpose.

The volume before us is of varied interest. From one point of view it is a contribution towards the study of the Synoptic Gospels, and an attempt to answer the question whether we have any authentic record of the words of Jesus, and whether we can use the Gospel record of the sayings of Jesus with the assurance that they are His sayings, and not the product of the subsequent reflexion of the Church. We have also the theological interest strongly excited as we follow Mr. Walker in his description of the place and function of the Cross in the life of the individual and in the life of man. Ethically and spiritually we are enriched as we