

From Jerusalem to Nicæa. The Church in the First Three Centuries. BY PHILIP STAFFORD MOXOM. Boston : Roberts Brothers. 1895.

The author in his preface says: "It scarcely needs to be said that scholars will find in the lectures nothing new ; but I dare to believe that the general reader will find here, in intelligible form, much which he shall look for elsewhere in vain, save in more or less voluminous and sometimes not easily obtainable church histories." This statement sets forth very truthfully the character and real excellence of this book. It is not a book specifically for scholars. It does not attempt a critical treatment of those points in early church history that are now being so earnestly discussed by historical students. Yet the writer shows that he has considered these questions and has come to some definite judgment concerning most of them. The book is based on a wide survey of the whole period, including the latest researches and discoveries. It is indeed remarkable that a minister with all the cares of a large parish upon him should have been able to give his theme so thorough and comprehensive an investigation. The author's survey of the first three centuries of church history is, on the whole, true and just. The book is also written in a clear and popular style ; it is just the volume to put

into the hands of any intelligent person who desires to obtain a clear understanding of the development of Christian organizations, customs and dogmas from the beginning. I know of no book that is on the whole better adapted to this end. The second chapter, on "The Organization of the Early Church," is particularly valuable for all such readers. The biographical features of the work illustrate its popular character. The chapter on "The Apostolic Fathers" is in this view one of the best. The volume thus meets a want that is rapidly growing. The interest that scholars have come to take in the subject of Christian origins is extending to our more intelligent people generally, and the time has come when the best and latest results of scholarly criticism should be given to the larger public in a readable and popular form.

That the author should have given his judgment on some questions that have long been and still are *sub judice* is not to be regarded as a defect of the book, even when the judgment may be open to criticism. In fact this feature of the book makes it interesting to scholars. These judgments display a large degree of historical candor. Attention is here called to a few of them which seem to the writer to need modification or to be wrong. On page 69 it is suggested that "the Episcopate *may* have had its beginning under the eye and even with the initiative of St. John, though it must be admitted, of this there is no evidence." True, there is no evidence, and therefore the suggestion is out of place. On page 126, it is said that in the *Didache* Christ "is apparently identified with the Jehovah of the Old Testament." This is more than doubtful. On page 142 "the seven shorter letters" are held to be "the true work of Ignatius." In this our author follows Lightfoot. But the truth is that the whole Ignatian question is still involved in doubt. Even if Lightfoot's conclusion be accepted, for which the writer is not yet prepared, it must be allowed that interpolations have crept in, so that it is impossible to rely upon the shorter recension as good historical evidence for any fact of early history. On page 224 our author has fallen into the traditional misconception that the early Latin Fathers were the true predecessors of Augustine. Exception must also be taken to the statement on page 245 that "the four canonical gospels are evidently identical with the 'Memoirs' to which reference is made by Justin Martyr." This is by no means certain. On page 277 Dr. Moxom refers to the Apostles' Creed as "an outcome of the struggle" between the church and Gnosticism. But of this there is no evidence. Dr. Moxom corrects himself when he says: "The Apostles' Creed had its origin probably in the primitive baptismal confession." If Dr. Moxom had referred to the Nicene Creed instead of the Apostles' as being influenced by Gnosticism, he would have been nearer the truth. Gnosticism had much to do with the introduction of the speculative element into Christian theology. Dr. Moxom shows his acquaintance with the most recent historical researches in his full discussion of the Gnostic

sects, and of the influence they exerted upon the age; but he again falls into the traditional mistake of making the Platonic dualism and transcendence which Gnosticism exaggerated unduly a determining factor in Augustine's theology. These and other instances prove how boldly Dr. Moxom has faced the most delicate critical questions connected with his subject, and, notwithstanding some points that are open to criticism, his contributions in this line, in my view, enhance the value of the volume. A passage, in the closing paragraph of the book, states clearly and well the theological result of the period under survey. "Under the influence of Augustine, the Latin theology soon dominated the Western Church, and gradually excluded or suppressed the richer and nobler thought of the Greek Fathers. The Latin theology to some extent obscured, and, while seeming to affirm, almost denied the fundamental and structural doctrine of the Incarnation, the enunciation and persistent defense of which was the chief merit of Athanasius."

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