

**A Fearless New Testament Scholar**  
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The death of Dr. Edwin Abbott, at the age of 87, one of the greatest of the many great Victorian schoolmasters, has led not a few to express in the press their admiration of his qualities, and gratitude for his services. Modern Churchmen owe him much. A brilliant classical scholar who added to his classical studies those of Shakespeare, Bacon, and the New Testament, he practically terminated his clerical career in the eighties by attacking Biblical and ecclesiastical miracles. This led to his inhibition and rendered promotion impossible, but it neither checked his teaching nor embittered his mind. He believed in a non-miraculous supernatural Christ. In this, we venture to think, he anticipated the whole course of modern Christological development. His conviction is best summarized in the following quotation from his *Apologia* published in 1907:

‘The new believer feels that he must supplement his knowledge of the Word incarnate as Christ on earth by an ever-growing knowledge of the Word pre-incarnate and post-incarnate — the Word manifested in all His works, but especially in the wonderful development of human nature from sinless animalism through sin to righteousness; and in God’s revelations of Himself to man from the first dawn of human consciousness up to the present day’ (p. 66).

In the same volume he asserts:

‘The real ”divergence” between the two pictures of the Saviour seems to me to be this. The former, the miraculous one, requires less faith than the latter, the non-miraculous. The former does not so greatly need to be supplemented by faith in the evolution of all things culminating in the evolution of a Son of Man seated at the right hand of God’ (p. 66).

The important results arising from the modern critical comparative study of the Gospels, in contrast to the ancient harmonizing comparative study of them, we owe in this country first and foremost to Dr. Edwin Abbott. It was his old pupil, W. G. Rushbrooke, Fellow at St. John’s, Cambridge, who in 1880 produced the sumptuous and invaluable Synopticon with this dedication:

To  
 Edwin Abbott Abbott, D.D.  
 The first suggester of this work  
 Who to suggestion added encouragement  
 And to encouragement counsel and assistance  
 These pages are now dedicated

By his former pupil.

Dr. Abbott himself in his eighteen volumes of *Diatessarica* or Gospel studies, with their remarkable combination of originality and exact and curious learning, did much to carry forward the impetus given by the publication of Rushbrooke's *Synopticon*. The ordinary readers will get most, not from *Diatessarica*, but from Dr. Abbott's delightful trilogy *Philochristus*, *Onesimus*, and *Silanus the Christian*. These three volumes were published at wide intervals of time, but their theme is one. They show in the first volume how a disciple of the Rabbis, in the second a poor debased Phrygian slave, in the third a noble Roman, a student in the lecture-room of Epictetus, could become Christian. The last may be usefully compared with Pater's *Marius the Epicurean*. Of *Diatessarica*, it may be said that it seems as learned as it is; but of the trilogy, it is more learned than it seems. What the unknowing reader might innocently regard as ingenious imagination is usually translation from ancient texts. Unfortunately *Onesimus* is hard to procure, and *Philochristus* has become very scarce. If the three could be republished in a light and handy volume, we believe they would command a wide circulation and do much amongst young men and women of the educated classes to present the Christian religion in a way which would not conflict with their historical and scientific studies.