
The four volumes, which appear in the Studies in American Religion series, contain roughly 170 essays of F. E. Abbot, which is about a fourth of those listed in the bibliography. All but a few of the essays that are reprinted here are taken from The Index, of which Abbot was the founding editor.

The order in which the papers are presented is alphabetical: Volume 1 contains Ace-Dem; volume 2 Des-Is; volume 3 Jes-Pub; and volume 4 Pur-Wor. Volume 4 also contains a letter from Max Müller and one from Mr. Wasson. Given that the set is clearly composed to stimulate the sale of separate volumes (each volume is individually priced, and contains copies of the introduction and the bibliography), the choice for an alphabetic order is peculiar. What sense does it make to buy a single volume, unless one is specializing in, say, Abbot's Jes-Pub papers? A thematic or chronological order would be clearly preferable and would have done fuller justice to Abbot's thought. The reader who considers buying a single volume, or borrowing one through interlibrary loan, should further beware that Peden takes the alphabetic order literally to the extreme. Abbot's "The Book of Daniel," for instance, should be looked for under the letter B of "Book of Daniel," his "John Stuart Mill" under the J of John, and his "A. J. Davis and the Hyde park Library" under A, that is between "Aim" and "Alexander Von Humboldt."

The first volume contains a 21-page poorly written non-proofread introduction to Abbot's life. This introduction is reprinted in each subsequent volume. There is no direct connection between the introduction, a chain of fragments taken from Peden's recent biography of Abbot (Peter Lang, 1992) and the papers reprinted here. Tucked away in volume 2, however, under the F of "Francis," one can find a very interesting account of Abbot's relation with the Free Religious Association. This is a reprint of chapter 25 of Sidney Ahlstrom's doctoral dissertation "Francis Ellingwood Abbot: His Education and Active Career (1836-1903)" (Harvard, 1951)—a chapter that is unfortunately left out in the published version of this dissertation, which appeared as The Scientific Theist; a Life of
Francis Ellingwood Abbot (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1987).

The bibliography, which is also reprinted in each volume, and which is moreover identical to the one Peden gives in his 1992 biography, does not show the hand of a true scholar. For most of the entries Peden fails to provide the page numbers. Not only is this quite embarrassing when requesting items not included in the volumes through interlibrary loan, it also makes it impossible to judge their length, which would provide at least some indication as to their significance. (No criteria for inclusion or exclusion in the volumes are given.) Although the bibliography is fairly comprehensive, it is not complete. Lacking are, for instance, Abbot's "The Relativity of Knowledge" (The Index 5 [1874]: 606-7), and his "Psychology and Philosophy" (Mind 28 [1882]: 462-95). The latter is reprinted as the introduction to Scientific Theism.

This collection would have gained much with brief introductions, perhaps no longer than a paragraph, introducing each essay and citing its original publication. An excellent example of this approach is that of Kenneth Ketner and James Cook in Charles Sanders Peirce: Contributions to The Nation (Lubbock, 1975-87). To give an example, of the already mentioned "The Book of Daniel" it is not altogether clear what text is reprinted here. The bibliography gives two entries under this name: one of an article that appeared in The Index, the other of an article that appeared in The Radical. A footnote to the title refers to neither of these, however. Instead it mentions that it concerns a lecture delivered in Dover City Hall on January 30, 1869.

This edition fails to do justice to Abbot's essays, and the editors and publisher should be seriously scolded for it. However, despite its abundant shortcomings, The Collected Essays of Francis Ellingwood Abbot makes an important part of Abbot's articles readily available.

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