

He must have lived about 570 years before Christ, whereas the Book which bears his name was almost certainly written in the time of Antiochus Epiphanes, 110 years B.C. Some English Commentators¹ and Divines have endeavoured to escape from the obvious and manifold difficulties of the Book, by conceiving part of it to be genuine and part spurious.—But De Wette has shown² that we have no reason for believing it not to be the work of one hand. It is full of historical inaccuracies and fanciful legends; and the opening statement is an obvious error, showing that the Writer was imperfectly acquainted with the chronology or details of the period in which he *takes his stand*. The first chapter begins by informing us that in the *third* year of King Jehoiakim, Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon, besieged and took Jerusalem, and carried the King (and Daniel) away captive. Whereas, we learn from Jeremiah that Nebuchadnezzar was not King of Babylon till the *fourth* year of Jehoiakim, and did not take Jerusalem till *seven* years later.³ It would be out of place to adduce all the marks which betray the late origin of this Book;—they may be seen at length in De Wette. It is here sufficient that we have *no proof whatever of its early date*, and that the most eminent critics have abandoned the opinion of its genuineness as indefensible.

III. *Thirdly*, We have already had ample proof that the Jewish Writers

¹ “I have long thought that the greater part of the book of Daniel is most certainly a very late work, of the time of the Maccabees; and the pretended prophecy about the Kings of Greece and Persia, and of the North and South, is mere history, like the poetical prophecies in Virgil and elsewhere. In fact you can trace distinctly the date when it was written, because the events up to that date are given with historical minuteness, totally unlike the character of real prophecy; and beyond that date all is imaginary.”—Again, he thinks that criticism “proves the non-authenticity of great part of Daniel: that there may be genuine fragments in it is very likely.”—“Arnold’s Life and Cor.” ii. 188.

² De Wette, ii. 499.

³ See the whole argument in De Wette, ii. 484 (note).

not only did not scruple to narrate past events as if predicting future ones—to present History in the form of Prophecy—but that they habitually did so. The instances are far too numerous to quote;—we will specify only a few of the most remarkable:—Gen. xxv. 23; xxvii. 28, 29, 39, 40; xlix. *passim*; Numb. xxiv.; Deut. iv. 27; xxviii. 25, 36, 37, 64.

We anticipate that these remarks will be met by the reply—“Whatever may be established as to the uncertainty which hangs over the date of those prophecies which refer to the temporal fortunes of the Hebrew Nation, no doubt can exist that all the prophecies relating to the Messiah were extant in their present form long previous to the advent of Him in whose person the Christian world agrees to acknowledge their fulfilment.” This is true, and the argument would have all the force which is attributed to it, were the objectors able to lay their finger on a single Old Testament Prediction clearly referring to Jesus Christ, *intended by the utterers of it to relate to him*, prefiguring his character and career, and manifestly fulfilled in his appearance on earth. *This they cannot do*. Most of the passages usually adduced as complying with these conditions, referred, and were clearly intended to refer,¹ to eminent individuals in Israelitish History;—many are not prophecies at all;²—the Messiah,

¹ “We find throughout the New Testament,” says Dr. Arnold, “references made to various passages in the Old Testament, which are alleged as prophetic of Christ, or of some particulars of the Christian dispensation. Now if we turn to the context of these passages, and so endeavour to discover their meaning, according to the only sound principles of interpretation, it will often appear that they do not relate to the Messiah, or to Christian times, but are either expressions of religious affections generally, such as submission, love, hope, &c., or else refer to some particular circumstances in the life and condition of the writer, or of the Jewish nation, and do not at all show that anything more remote, or any events of a more universal and spiritual character, were designed to be prophesied.”—“Sermons on the Interpretation of Prophecy.” Preface, p. 1.

² “The great prophecies of Isaiah and Jeremiah are, critics can now see, not strictly

the Anointed Deliverer, expected by the Jews, hoped for and called for by their Poets and Prophets, was of a character so different, and a career so opposite, to those of the meek, lowly, long-suffering Jesus, that the passages describing the one never could have been applied to the other, without a perversion of ingenuity, and a disloyal treatment of their obvious signification, which, if employed in any other field than that of Theology, would have met with the prompt discredit and derision they deserve.¹ There are, no doubt, scattered

predictions at all; and predictions which are strictly meant as such, like those in the Book of Daniel, are an embarrassment to the Bible rather than a main element of it."—*Literature and Dogma*, p. 114, by Matthew Arnold.

¹ This disingenuousness is obvious in one point especially: the Messianic Prophecies are interpreted *literally* or *figuratively*, as may best suit their adaptation to the received history of Jesus. Thus that "the wolf shall lie down with the lamb, and the lion eat grass like an ox," is taken figuratively: that the Messiah should ride into Jerusalem on an ass, is taken literally. The following passage, written five and twenty years subsequent to the text of this volume, may be quoted in confirmation. "And what were called the 'signal predictions' concerning the Christ of popular theology, as they stand in our Bibles, had and have undoubtedly a look of supernatural prescience. The employment of capital letters, and other aids, such as the constant use of the future tense, naturally and innocently adopted by interpreters who were profoundly convinced that Christianity needed these express predictions and that they *must* be in the Bible, enhanced, certainly, this look; but the look, even without these aids, was sufficiently striking. That Jacob on his death-bed should two thousand years before Christ have 'been enabled,' as the phrase is, to foretell to his son Judah that 'the sceptre shall not depart from Judah until *Shiloh* (or the Messiah) come, and to him shall the gathering of the people be,' *does* seem, when the explanation is put with it that the Jewish kingdom lasted till the Christian era and then perished, a miracle of prediction in favour of our current Christian theology. That Jeremiah should have 'been enabled' to foretell, in the name of Jehovah; 'The days come when I will raise to David a righteous Branch; in his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely; and this is the name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS!'—*does* seem a wonder of prediction in favour of that tenet of the Godhead of the Eternal Son, for which the Bishops of Winchester and Gloucester are so

verses in the Prophetic and Poetical Books of the Hebrew Canon, which, *as quotations*, are apt and applicable enough to particular points in Christ's character and story;—but of what equally voluminous collection of poems or rhetorical compositions may the same not be

anxious to do something. For unquestionably Jehovah is often spoken of as the *saviour* of Judah and Israel: 'All flesh shall know that I the Eternal am thy *saviour* and thy *redeemer*, the mighty one of Jacob'; and in the prophecy given above as Jeremiah's, the Branch of David is clearly identified with Jehovah. Again, that David should say: 'The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand until I make thy foes thy footstool,'—*does* seem a prodigy of prediction to the same effect. That he should say: 'Kiss the Son, lest he be angry and so ye perish,' *does* seem a supernaturally prescient assertion of the Eternal Sonship. And so long as these prophecies stand as they are here given, they no doubt bring to Christianity all the support (and with the mass of mankind this is by no means inconsiderable) which it can derive from the display of supernatural prescience. But who will dispute that it more and more becomes known that these prophecies cannot stand as we have here given them? Manifestly, it more and more becomes known, that the passage from Genesis, with its mysterious *Shiloh* and the gathering of these people to him, is rightly to be rendered as follows: 'The pre-eminence shall not depart from Judah *so long as the people resort to Shiloh* (the national sanctuary before Jerusalem was won); *and the nations* (the heathen Canaanites) *shall obey him.*' We here purposely leave out of sight any such consideration as that our actual books of the Old Testament came first together through the piety of the house of Judah, and when the destiny of Judah was already traced; and that to say roundly: '*Jacob was enabled to foretell*, The sceptre shall not depart from Judah,' as if he were speaking of a prophecy preached and published by Dr. Cumming, is wholly inadmissible. For this consideration is of force, indeed, but it is a consideration drawn from the rules of literary history and criticism, and not likely to have weight with the mass of mankind. Palpable error and mistranslation are what will have weight with *them*. And what, then, will they say as they come to know (and do not and must not more and more of them come to know it every day?) that Jeremiah's supposed signal identification of Christ with the God of Israel: 'I will raise to David a righteous Branch, and this is the name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS,' runs really: 'I will raise to David a righteous branch; in his days Judah shall be saved and

said?¹ Of the references made by the Evangelists to such passages, we shall speak hereafter.

The state of the case appears to be this:—That all the Old Testament Prophecies have been *assumed* to be genuine, inspired predictions; and when falsified *in their obvious meaning and received interpretation* by the event, have received immediately a new interpretation, and been supposed to *refer to*

Israel shall dwell safely; and this is the name whereby they shall call themselves: *The Eternal is our righteousness?* The prophecy thus becomes simply one of the many promises of a successor to David under whom the Hebrew people should trust in the Eternal and follow righteousness; just as the prophecy from Genesis is one of the many prophecies of the enduring continuance of the greatness of Judah. ‘The Lord said unto my Lord,’ in like manner—will not people be startled when they find that it ought to run instead: ‘the Eternal said unto my lord the king,’—a simple promise of victory to a prince of God’s chosen people?—and that: ‘Kiss the Son,’ is in reality, ‘Be warned,’ or ‘be instructed;’ ‘lay hold,’ according to the Septuagint, ‘on instruction?’—*Literature and Dogma*, pp. 110–113. See also pp. 91–106.

¹ Perhaps none of the Old Testament prophecies are more clearly Messianic than the following passage from Plato:—Οὕτω διακείμενος ὁ Δίκαιος μαστιγώσεται, στρεβλώσεται, δεδήσεται, ἐκκαυθήσεται τῷ φθαλμῷ, τελευτῶν πάντα κακὰ παθῶν ἀνασχιδυλευθήσεται. Plato, de Republicâ, i. ii. p. 361, E.

Speaking of this teacher of Mankind whom he expected, he says, “This just man will scarcely be endured by them—but probably will be scourged, racked, tormented, have his eyes burnt out and at last, having suffered all manner of evils, shall be *imtaled*”—or as the original term will signify, “*Crucified*.”

some other event. When the result has disappointed expectation, the conclusion has been, not that the prophecy was false, but that the interpretation was erroneous. It is obvious that a mode of reasoning like this is peculiar to Theological Inquirers.

From this habit of assuming that Prophecy was Prediction, and must have its fulfilment—which was perhaps prevalent among the Jews as among modern Divines—appears to have arisen the national expectation of a Messiah.—A Deliverer was hoped for, expected, prophesied, in the time of Jewish misery (and Cyrus was perhaps the first referred to); but as no one appeared who did what the Messiah, according to Prophecy, should do, they went on degrading each successive Conqueror and Hero from the Messianic dignity, and are still expecting the true Deliverer.—Hebrew and Christian Divines both start from the same assumed and unproven premises, viz.:—that a Messiah having been foretold, must appear;—but there they diverge, and the Jews show themselves to be the sounder logicians of the two:—the Christians, assuming that Jesus was the Messiah intended (though not the one *expected*), wrest the obvious meaning of the Prophecies to show that they were fulfilled in him;—while the Jews, assuming the obvious meaning of the Prophecies to be their real meaning, argue that they were not fulfilled in Christ, and therefore that the Messiah is yet to come.

CHAPTER IV

THEISM OF THE JEWS IMPURE AND PROGRESSIVE

IT is an assumption of the popular theology, and an almost universal belief in the popular mind, that the Jewish nation was selected by the Almighty to

preserve and carry down to later ages a knowledge of the One true God;—that the Patriarchs possessed this knowledge;—that Moses delivered and en-

forced this doctrine as the fundamental tenet of the national creed;—and that it was, in fact, the received and distinctive dogma of the Hebrew people. This alleged possession of the true faith by one only people, while all surrounding tribes were lost in Polytheism, or something worse, has been adduced by divines in general as a proof of the truth of the sacred history, and of the divine origin of the Mosaic dispensation, and forms, indeed, one of the standard arguments of Theologians in the present day. Paley, the actual text-book of one of our Universities, writes of it thus:—

“Undoubtedly our Saviour assumes the divine origin of the Mosaic Institution; and independently of his authority, I conceive it to be very difficult to assign any other cause for the commencement or existence of that Institution; especially for the singular circumstance of the Jews adhering to the Unity, when every other people slid into polytheism; for their being men in religion, children in everything else; behind other nations in the arts of peace and war, superior to the most improved in their sentiments and doctrines relating to the Deity.”¹

Milman² speaks of the pure monotheism of the Jews in a similar strain:

“The religious history of this people is no less singular. In the narrow slip of land inhabited by their tribes the worship of one Almighty Creator of the Universe subsists, as in its only sanctuary. *In every stage of society, under the pastoral tent of Abraham, and in the sumptuous Temple of Solomon, the same creed maintains its inviolable simplicity.* . . . Nor is this merely a sublime speculative tenet; it is the basis of their civil constitution, and of their national character. As there is but one Almighty God so there is but one People under his special protection, the descendants of Abraham.”

Now, the passage we have italicised is surely an extraordinary over-statement of the case. Without going so far as Bauer

(Theol. des Alt. Test. i. 4) who thinks that the Jews *as a nation* scarcely became true monotheists till after the Captivity, it seems difficult not to recognise that they did not believe in the *exclusive* existence of one sole God in the earlier times—perhaps not till a comparatively late period of their history;—that their early and popular notions of the Deity were eminently coarse, low, and unworthy;—that among them, as among all other nations, the conceptions of God formed by individuals varied according to their intellectual and spiritual capacities, being poor and anthropomorphic among the ignorant and coarse-minded, pure and lofty among the virtuous and richly-gifted;—and, finally, that these conceptions gradually improved and became purified and ennobled, as the Hebrews advanced in civilisation—being, generally speaking, lowest in the Historical Books, amended in the Prophetical Writings, and reaching their highest elevation among the Poets of the Nation.

In its progress from Fetichism to pure Theism, the human mind generally passes through three stages—or to speak more correctly, man's idea of God passes through three forms of development. We have him represented first as the *God of the individual or family*; then as the *God of the nation*; lastly as the *God of the human race*.—Now we find all these three views of Deity in the Old Testament—sometimes, it is true, strangely jumbled together, as might be expected in books written by different persons at different times—but on the whole bearing pretty distinct marks of the periods at which they respectively prevailed.

The representations of God in the history of Abraham appear to imply that the God whom he worshipped was a *family God*, selected, probably, by him for some reason unknown to us, out of a number of others who were worshipped by his fathers and his tribe. We are expressly told that the father and grandfather of Abraham “worshipped other

¹ Paley's Evidences of Christianity.

² History of the Jews, i, 4.

Gods";—and the representations given of the God of Abraham, and of his proceedings during the lives of the three Patriarchs, are so mean and material that it is difficult to conceive how a knowledge of the One true God, Maker of Heaven and Earth, could have been ascribed to them. God appears to Abraham with two angels in the form of men—(they are spoken of as "three men")—sits at the door of his tent—partakes of his repast—is angry at the laughter of Sarah, and an altercation takes place between them; after which He discusses with him the case of Sodom and Gomorrah, and informs him that He is going down thither to see whether the reports which have reached him are correct. "Your fathers dwelt on the other side of the flood in old time, even Terah, the father of Abraham and the father of Nachor: and *they served other Gods.*" (Joshua xxiv. 2). "The God of Abraham and the God of Nachor, the God of their father, judge betwixt us" (Gen. xxxi. 53). There are not wanting traces of Polytheism in the earlier portions of Hebrew History. The expression *Jehovah Elohim*, "The God of Gods," may, perhaps, be taken as an indication. Bauer thinks that "the Elohim, who were probably at one time worshipped as equal Gods, are in Genesis recognised as subordinate deities, with whom Jehovah, the highest Eloah, enters into council" (Theol. des Alt. Test. i. 3). It will be remembered that Laban, a near relative of Abraham, whose sister he had expressly selected as his son Isaac's wife, pursued Jacob for having "stolen his Gods" (Gen. xxxi. 30). He therefore worshipped fetiches. In Gen. xxxv. 2-4. we find Jacob collecting the strange Gods worshipped by his household, and hiding them under an oak. It is certainly remarkable that both Abraham and Isaac should insist upon their sons marrying into an idolatrous family, if they had really believed their own God to be the only one.

Jacob's ideas of God are, as might be

expected from his mean and tricky character, even lower than those of Abraham. He makes a *condition*, on which he will *select* Jehovah to be *his* God, and will give Him a tithe of all his possessions (Gen. xxviii. 20);—he represents Him as his confidant in cheating Laban, and wrestles with Him bodily to extort a blessing. Who, after reading such passages can for a moment accept the belief that Jacob and Job entertained the same conceptions of God.

In process of time the descendants of Abraham multiplied and became a numerous people, and naturally continued the worship of that God who had done so much for their forefathers. Thus the *family God* of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob gradually enlarged into the *national God* of the Israelites, to whose worship they adhered with greater or less tenacity, with greater or less exclusiveness, during their residence in Egypt. As the history proceeds the conceptions of this God seem to become purer and loftier, till, in the mind of Moses, an intellectual and highly-educated man, versed in all the learning of the Egyptians, they often (as far as we can guess what came from him) reached to a sublime simplicity of expression rarely surpassed. Still, there is no distinct proof that Moses disbelieved in the existence of other Gods:—the God whom he serves is still "the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob";—He is not asserted to be the *only* God; the existence and power of rival Deities is not denied, but is even admitted by implication. All that Moses claims for Jehovah is, not that he is the *Sole* God, but that he is superior to all others, "Who is like unto Thee, Jehovah, among the Gods?" (Ex. xv. 11¹). And he represents him to Pharaoh, by Jehovah's own command, as the "God of the Hebrews," not as the Supreme Lord of Heaven and Earth. Even in

¹ Jethro says; "Now I know that Jehovah is greater than all gods: for in the thing wherein they dealt proudly, he was above them all."—(Exod. xviii. 11.)

the delivery of the Commandments, the great foundation of the Law, it is not said, "There is no God but Jehovah," but only "I am the Lord thy God, which brought thee out of the House of Bondage; *thou shalt have* no other Gods beside Me (or before Me)." The whole of the xxivth chapter of Joshua confirms this view; he there urges the Israelites to choose Jehovah, not as the only God, whom to desert would be to become Atheists, but as a God whose bounties to them had been so great that it would be black ingratitude not to prefer Him to all others. The whole history of the lapses of the Jewish Nation into idolatry also discourages the idea of their having been really monotheists. The worship of the golden calf and the Canaanitish gods was quite natural on the supposition of Jehovah being merely a paramount and preferred God:—monstrous, if they had believed Him to be the only one. Moreover, their idolatry is always spoken of as *infidelity*, not as *atheism*.

As civilisation advanced, prophets, sages, and poets arose among the Hebrews, to whom the limited and anthropomorphic conceptions of the Deity, prevalent among the people, were painfully inadequate and revolting;—and they endeavoured by nobler representations of the object of their worship to convert the national religion into a pure theism; in which, however, it is thought by many that they did not succeed till after the Captivity. After this idea had once taken root, the nation never showed any disposition to relapse into idolatry. And even to the latest period of the Canonical writings we find representations both of the nature and attributes of Jehovah so utterly discrepant as to leave no doubt that among the Jews, as among all other nations, the God of the wise and the God of the ignorant—the God of the Priests and the God of the Prophets—were the embodiment of two very different classes of ideas. Let anyone compare the partial, unstable, revengeful, and deceit-

ful God of Exodus and Numbers with the sublime and unique Deity of Job and the nobler Psalms, or even the God of Isaiah with the God of Ezekiel and Daniel—and he can scarcely fail to admit that the conception of the One living and true God was a plant of slow and gradual growth in the Hebrew mind, and was due far less to Moses, the Patriarchs, or the Priests, than to the superiority of individual minds at various periods of their history. Compare the following representations which we have arranged in parallel columns.

And Jehovah spake to Moses, saying—Let them make me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them—And thou shalt put the mercy-seat above upon the ark, . . . and there I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee.—Exod. xxv. 8, 21–22.

And it came to pass, as Moses entered into the tabernacle, that the cloudpillar descended, and stood at the door of the tabernacle: and Jehovah talked with Moses.—And Jehovah spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto a friend.—Exod. xxxiii. 9, 11.

For they have heard that thou Jehovah art among this people, that thou Jehovah art seen face to face.—Numbers xiv. 14.

And Jehovah said, Behold there is a place by me, and thou shalt stand upon a rock. And it shall come to pass, while my glory passeth by, that I will put thee in a cleft of the rock, and will cover thee with my hand while I pass by! And I will take away mine

But will God in very deed dwell on the earth? Behold the Heaven, and the Heaven of Heavens, cannot contain Thee; how much less this House that I have builded! —1 Kings viii. 27.

Whither shall I go from thy Spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence?—Ps. cxxxix. 7–10.

Lo, he goeth by me, and I see him not; he passeth on also, but I perceive him not.—Job ix. 11.

Behold, I go forward, but he is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive him: on the left hand, where he doth work, but I cannot behold him: he hideth himself on the right hand, that I cannot see him.—Job xxiii. 8, 9.

O Jehovah my God, thou art very great; thou art clothed with honour and majesty: Who coverest thyself with light as with a garment; who stretchest out the Heavens like a curtain; who layeth the beams of his chambers in the waters; who maketh the clouds

hand, and thou shalt see my back parts; but my face shall not be seen.—Exod. xxxiii. 21-24.

And Moses returned to the Lord, and said, Lord, wherefore hast thou so evil entreated this people? Why is it that thou hast sent me? For since I came to Pharaoh to speak in thy name, he hath done evil to this people; neither hast thou delivered thy people at all.—Exod. v. 22, 23.

And Jehovah said, Who shall persuade Ahab, that he may go up and fall at Ramoth-Gilead? And one said on this manner, and another said on that manner. And there came forth a spirit, and stood before the Lord, and said, I will persuade him. And Jehovah said unto him, Wherewith? And he said, I will go forth, and I will be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets. And he said, Thou shalt persuade him, and prevail also: go forth, and do so.—1 Kings xxii. 20-23.

And they went in unto Noah in the ark, and the Lord shut him in.—Gen. vii. 16.

And Jehovah came down to see the city

his chariot; who walketh on the wings of the wind.—Psalm civ. 1-3.

Then Job answered and said, I know it is so of a truth; but how should man be just with God? If he will contend with him, he cannot answer him one of a thousand.

For he is not a man, as I am, that I should answer him, and we should come together in judgment.—Job ix. 2, 3, 32.

For the word of the Lord is right, and all his works are done in truth. He loveth righteousness and judgment.—Ps. xxxiii. 4, 5.

Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord: but they that deal truly are his delight.—Prov. xii. 22.

The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good.—Prov. xv. 3.

Jehovah looketh from Heaven: he beholdeth

and the tower which the children of men builded.—Gen. xi. 5.

And Noah built an altar unto the Lord, and offered burnt offerings on the altar. And the Lord smelled a sweet savour; and the Lord said in his heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake.—Gen. viii. 20, 21.

But ye shall offer the burnt-offering for a sweet savour unto the Lord.—Num. xxviii. 27.

And ye shall offer a burnt-offering, a sacrifice made by fire, of a sweet savour, unto the Lord, thirteen bullocks, two rams, and fourteen lambs of the first year; they shall be without blemish.—Num. xxix. 13, 36.

all the sons of men.—Psalm xxxiii. 13.

I will take no bullock out of thy house, nor he-goats out of thy folds. For every beast of the forest is mine and the cattle upon a thousand hills. If I were hungry, I would not tell thee; for the world is mine, and the fulness thereof. Will I eat the flesh of bulls, or drink the blood of goats? Offer unto God thanksgiving.—Ps. 1. 9-14.

For thou desirest not sacrifice, else would I give it: thou delightest not in burnt-offering.—Ps. li. 16.

Wherewith shall I come before Jehovah, and bow myself before the high God? Shall I come before him with burnt-offering, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousand rivers of oil? Shall I give my first-born for my transgressions, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth Jehovah require of thee, but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?—Micah vi. 6-8.

CHAPTER V

ORIGIN OF THE GOSPELS

THE current idea respecting the nature of the Gospel History is, that the four Evangelists were eye-witnesses (or the amanuenses of eye-witnesses) of the

events which they relate; and that we have, in fact, embodied in their narratives, four independent and corroborative testimonies to the words and deeds of

Christ. Their substantial agreement is appealed to in proof of their fidelity, and their numerous and circumstantial discrepancies are accepted as proof of their independence.¹ Let us examine what foundation can be discovered for this current opinion. Have we any reason to believe that all the Evangelists, or that any of them, were companions of Christ—eye- and ear-witnesses of his career? And if not, what does critical Science teach us of the probable origin of the four gospels?

The first Gospel has come down to us under the title of the Gospel of, or according to, St. Matthew: and the tradition of the Church is that it was written (probably about A.D. 68) by Matthew the publican, one of the twelve apostles, the same who was called by Jesus while "sitting at the receipt of custom." This is distinctly stated by several of the Early Fathers, as the received opinion or tradition—as by Papias (A.D. 116), Irenæus (A.D. 178), Origen (A.D. 230), Epiphanius (A.D. 368), and Jerome (A.D. 392).² All these fathers, however, without exception, expressly affirm that Matthew wrote his Gospel in the Hebrew language, whereas the Gospel which we receive as Matthew's

¹ Thus, Lardner says, "I have all my days read and admired the first three Evangelists, as independent witnesses, and I know not how to forbear ranking the other opinion among those bold as well as groundless assertions in which critics too often indulge *without considering the consequences.*"—Dr. Lardner, like many other divines, required to be reminded that critics have nothing to do with consequences, but only with truths, and that (to use the language of Algernon Sydney), "a consequence cannot destroy a truth."

² Papias, whose information on this as on other matters seems to have been derived from John, who is called "the Presbyter," an elder of the Church at Ephesus, simply says, "Matthew wrote the divine oracles (*τα λογια*) in the Hebrew tongue, and every man interpreted them as he was able."—Irenæus says, "Matthew, then, among the Jews, wrote a Gospel in their own language, while Peter and Paul were preaching the Gospel at Rome."—Origen and Jerome both state that (according to the tradition come down to them) the first Gospel was written by Matthew the publican in Hebrew.

is written in Greek; and not only have we no account of its having been translated, and no guarantee of such translation being a faithful one, but learned men are satisfied from internal evidence that *it is not a translation at all*, but must have been originally written in Greek.¹ Our present Gospel, therefore, cannot be *the* Gospel to which the fathers above cited refer. It would appear simply that Matthew did write a history, or rather *memorabilia*, of Christ (for the expression *τα λογια* says no more), but that this was something quite different from our Gospel.² This notion is confirmed by the fact that the Ebionites and Nazarenes, two Christian sects, possessed a Hebrew Gospel, which they considered to be the only genuine one, and which they called the Gospel according to Matthew.³ It appears, however, to have been so materially different from our first Gospel as entirely to negative the supposition of the latter being a translation from it.

The only external testimony, then, which exists to show that Matthew the apostle wrote a gospel, shows at the same time that our first Gospel is not the one which Matthew wrote. External evidence, therefore, gives us no reason

¹ Hug, in a most luminous and learned essay, has succeeded in rendering this, if not certain, at least in the highest degree probable; and his views are supported by Erasmus, Webster, Paulus, and De Wette.—The only critic of equal eminence who adopts the opposite opinion is Eichhorn.

² It seems to us very probable, however, as Hennell suggests, "that someone after Matthew wrote the Greek Gospel which has come down to us, incorporating these Hebrew *λογια* (and perhaps mainly framed out of them), whence it was called the Gospel according to Matthew, and in the second century came to be considered as the work of the Apostle."—Hennell's *Origin of Christianity*, p. 124. [Schmiedel, art. *Gospels*, Ency. Bib., bluntly says that "for the authorship of the first Gospel the Apostle Matthew must be given up."]

³ Hug, *Introd.* part ii. § 7, pp. 317, 320, 392.—Jerome allows that many considered it to have been the genuine original Gospel of Matthew.—Thirlwall's *Introd.* to Schleiermacher, 48-50, and notes.

to believe that it was the production of an eye-witness; and it is worthy of remark that the author nowhere names himself, nor claims the authority of an eye-witness. Internal evidence goes further, and we think effectually negatives the notion.

1. In the first place, many events are recorded at which we know from the record that Matthew was not present—some, indeed, at which none of the disciples were present; and yet all these are narrated in the same tone and with the same particularity as the other portions of the narrative—sometimes even with more minute circumstantiality. Such are the Incarnation (c. i.), the story of the Magi (ii.), the Temptation (iv.), the Transfiguration (xvii.), the Agony and the prayer in Gethsemane (xxvi.), the denial of Peter (xxvi.), the dream of Pilate's wife (xxvii.), the conversation between Judas and the Priests, and that between Pilate and the Priests (xxvii.), and, finally, that between the Priests and the Soldiers about the missing body of Jesus (xxviii.).

It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that if the writer was not present at the colloquy of Pilate with the Chief Priests about the security of the grave of Jesus, neither was he present at the feeding of the five thousand, or the calming of the waves.

2. Secondly, the abruptness of the transitions, the fragmentary style of the narrative, and the entire absence of all those details as to the mode and object of the frequent journeys indicated,¹ which we should expect from a companion, and which we find in Luke's account of Paul's travels—all point to the conclusion that the writer was a compiler, not an eye-witness.

3. The same conclusion is drawn from the circumstance that his frequent double narratives of the same events indicate the confusion of a man who was compiling from fragmentary materials, rather than the fulness and clearness of personal

recollection.¹ De Wette and Credner dwell much upon this argument.

4. If, as the great majority of critics imagine, Mark and Luke had Matthew's Gospel before them when they wrote their own, it is certain that *they* could not have regarded him as either an eye-witness or a very accurate authority, as they do not hesitate both to retrench, to deviate from, and to contradict him. Moreover, the proem to Luke's Gospel must, we think, by all unbiassed minds be regarded as fatal to the hypothesis of the authors of any of the gospels then in existence having been either disciples or eye-witnesses. It is clear from that, that although many histories of Christ were then extant, none of them had any peculiar or paramount authority.

5. The author of the first Gospel scarcely appears to have been acquainted with any portion of Christ's Ministry, except that of which Galilee was the scene.

The second Gospel, like the first, bears no author's name; but by Papias, and Irenæus,² and (following them) by the

¹ *Ex. gr.*, the cure of the blind men—the feedings—the demand of a sign—the accusation regarding Beelzebub.

² Papias, our earliest source of information on the matter, was Bishop of Hieropolis, and must have been intimate with many contemporaries of the Apostles, and perhaps had conversed with the Apostle John. His works are now lost, with the exception of a few fragments preserved by Eusebius. "Nothing (says Dr. Middleton) more effectually demonstrates the uncertainty of all tradition, than what is delivered to us by antiquity concerning this very Papias. Irenæus declares him to have been the companion of Polycarp, and the disciple of St. John the Apostle. But Eusebius tells us that he was not a disciple of St. John the Apostle but of John the Presbyter, who was a companion only of the Apostle, but whom Irenæus mistook for the Apostle. Now from Papias, through Irenæus, came most of the early traditions, some of them relating to the millennium, of the most monstrous character, which Irenæus does not scruple to ascribe to our Saviour, and which fully dispose us to credit the account of Eusebius, who says, 'Papias was a weak man, of very shallow understanding, as appears from his writings; and by mistaking the meaning of the Apostles, imposed these silly traditions upon Irenæus and

¹ Hennell, p. 121.

universal tradition of the Church, is attributed to Mark, a friend and fellow-traveller of Peter, Barnabas, and Paul, who is several times mentioned in the New Testament.¹ Papias says expressly that he was neither a hearer nor a follower of Christ, but compiled his Gospel from information obtained from Peter, whose "interpreter"² he is said to have been. Papias gives "the Presbyter John," supposed to have been an elder of the Ephesian Church, as his authority. Mark, then, it is certain, was not an eye-witness. Nor have we any reason, beyond the similarity of name, to believe that the writer of the second Gospel was the same Mark who is men-

the greatest part of the ecclesiastical writers who, reflecting on the age of man, and his near approach to the Apostles, were drawn by him into the same opinions." In another passage, indeed, Eusebius speaks of Papias in a much more respectful manner, as remarkable for eloquence and Scriptural knowledge; but this passage is not found in the older copies, and is supposed to be spurious. It is obvious, therefore, that little reliance can be placed on any traditions which are traced to Papias. Irenæus, our next earliest authority, derives weight from his antiquity alone. His extreme childishness goes far to discredit many of his statements, and no reliance can be placed upon such of them as are at variance with the conclusions of critical science. His traditions of what John had related to the elders regarding the millennium are worse than anything in the Koran, yet he gives them as "testified by Papias." The following passage will induce us to receive with great caution any evidence he gives regarding the origin and authenticity of the Gospels:—"As there are four quarters of the world in which we live, and four chief winds, and the Church is spread over all the earth, but the pillar and support of the Church is the Gospel and its breath of life, plainly the Church must have four columns, and from them must come forth four blasts," &c., &c.—*Adv. Hæres.* c. iii. It would be melancholy to reflect that through such sources our only surviving testimony on these matters is derived, had these matters the supreme importance usually ascribed to them.

¹ Acts xii. 12, 25; xiii. 5-13; xv. 37. Col. iv. 10. Phil. 24. 1 Peter v. 13.

² What this could mean, as applied to a man who "spoke with tongues," it is for the Church to explain. ["All that can be said to be certain is this, that it is vain to look to the Church fathers for trustworthy information on the origin of the Gospels"—Schmiedel, *loc. cit.*]

tioned in the Acts as the companion of Paul and Barnabas (*not* of Peter, by the way), nor the same who is mentioned in 1 Peter v. 13 as his son. Mark was one of the commonest of Roman names; and it is probable that the idea of the identity of the *three* Marks was an imagination of Papias merely.

Neither was the author of the third Gospel an eye-witness. His proem merely claims to set forth faithfully that which he had heard from eye-witnesses. Irenæus is the first person who distinctly mentions Luke as the author of this Gospel; but little doubt appears to exist that he wrote both the Gospel and the Acts of the Apostles, and was the companion of Paul in many of his voyages.¹

The authorship of the fourth Gospel has been the subject of much learned and anxious controversy among theologians. The earliest, and only very important, external testimony we have is that of Irenæus (A.D. 178), who says, that after Luke wrote, "John, the disciple of the Lord, who also leaned upon his breast, likewise published a Gospel while he dwelt at Ephesus in Asia." The last chapter of the Gospel contains an attestation of its having been written by John (verse 24); but as this attestation obviously does not proceed from John himself,² and as we do not know from whom it does proceed, its authority can have little weight. It is generally believed that the Gospel and the first epistle proceed from the same pen, but if the second and third epistles are genuine,³ it is very questionable whether this pen was that of John *the Apostle*; for though, in the first chapter of the first epistle, the writer declares himself

¹ [The author's opinion must be set aside in the light of recent research: "If Luke cannot have been the author of Acts, neither can he have been the author of the third Gospel." Schmiedel, *loc. cit.*]

² De Wette doubts the genuineness of the whole chapter, and internal evidence is certainly against it.

³ Their genuineness, however, is doubted both by Eusebius and Origen.—See De Wette, i. §§ 23, 24.

to have been personally acquainted with Jesus, yet in the second and third epistles he calls himself "the Elder." Now there was a John at Ephesus (from whom Papias derived all his information, and who, he says, was also a disciple of Jesus), to whom the title of "Elder" (*πρεσβύτερος*) was given, *to distinguish him from the Apostle John.*

The balancing of the internal evidence for and against the supposition that the Apostle John was the author of the Gospel, is a matter of extreme difficulty. The reasons adduced in behalf of each opinion are very strong. Hug entertains no doubt that the decision should be in the affirmative;—Bretschneider almost proves the negative;—De Wette finds it impossible to decide;—while Strauss, who in his earlier editions had expressed himself satisfied that the Gospel was not genuine, writes thus in the preface to the third edition: "With De Wette and Neander in my hand, I have recommenced the examination of the fourth Gospel, and this renewed investigation has shaken the doubts I had conceived against its authenticity and credibility;—not that I am convinced that it is authentic, but neither am I convinced that it is not." In his *New Life of Jesus*, however, written thirty years after his first great book, he finally and confidently decides *against* its authenticity. Renan, in the first edition of his *Vie de Jésus*, accepted the fourth Gospel as genuine, and largely maimed the completeness and beauty of his estimate of Christ by doing so. In the thirteenth edition (1867) he entirely discards his previous assumption, and decides after long investigation that it was *not* the work of the Apostle John. In the same year was published Mr. J. J. Tayler's *Character of the Fourth Gospel*, in which the writer, after an exhaustive examination of the whole question, indisputably, as it seems to us, establishes the same negative conclusion.¹

¹ [Unquestionably the trend of present-day criticism is on the negative side.]

One argument against the supposition of John having been the author of the fourth Gospel has impressed my mind very forcibly. It is this: that several of the most remarkable events recorded by the other Evangelists, at which we are told by them that only Peter, James, and John were present, and of which, therefore, John alone of all the evangelists could have spoken with the distinctness and authority of an eye-witness, are entirely omitted—we may say, ignored—by him. Such are the raising of Jairus's daughter, the Transfiguration, the agony in Gethsemane. Now, on the assumption that John was the author of the fourth Gospel,—either he had *not* seen the works of the other Evangelists, in which case he would certainly not have omitted to record narratives of such interest and beauty, especially that of the Transfiguration; or he *had* seen them, and omitted all notice of them because he could not confirm the statements: for we cannot imagine that he did not record them in consequence of finding them already recorded, and seeing nothing to alter in the relation;—as an eye-witness, he would certainly, had they been true, have given them at least a passing word of confirmation, and we find that he does, on more than one occasion, relate events of less moment already recorded in the other Gospels, as the feeding of the five thousand, the anointing of Jesus's feet, &c. But all the events said to have been witnessed by John alone, are omitted by John alone! This fact seems fatal either to the reality of the events in question, or to the genuineness of the fourth Gospel.—Thus much, however, seems certain, and admitted;—that, if the Gospel in question were the genuine composition of the Apostle John, it must have been written when he was at least ninety years of age—when his recollections of events and conversations which had passed sixty years before had become faint and fluctuating—when ill-digested Grecian learning had overlaid the simplicity of his fisherman's character, and

his Judaic education—and the scenes and associations of Ionia had overpowered and obscured the recollections of Palestine. It therefore becomes, as we shall see hereafter, an inquiry of only secondary moment. An almost identical conclusion has been expressed many years later by a critic incomparably more competent than I can pretend to be. Renan says:—“L'esprit de Jésus n'est pas là; et si le fils de Zébédée a vraiment tracé ces pages, il avait certes bien oublié en les écrivant le lac de Génésareth et les charmants entretiens qu'il avait entendus sur ses bords.”—*Vie de Jésus*, Introd. xxxi.

Of the first three (or, as they are commonly termed, the Synoptical) Gospels, we *know* that two, and we *believe* that all three, were not the productions of eye-witnesses.¹ The question then arises, in what manner, and from what materials, were they composed? This subject has for a long period exercised the minds of the most acute and learned divines of Germany, as Eichhorn, Credner, Bretschneider, De Wette, Hug, Schleiermacher, and Strauss; and the results of their investigations may be thus briefly summed up.

The numerous and irreconcilable discrepancies observable in the three Evangelists preclude the supposition of their having all drawn their information from one and the same source—while the still more remarkable points of similarity and agreement, often extending to the most minute verbal peculiarities, entirely forbid the idea of their having derived their materials from independent, and therefore mutually confirmatory, sources.

Three different hypotheses have been formed by competent judges to account for those marked characteristics of the first three Evangelists. Eichhorn (and, following him, Dr. Marsh) adopted the idea of an original document, now lost, written in the Hebrew or Syro-Chaldaic

¹ [As we have seen, none of the Gospels are the work of eye-witnesses.]

language (the Aramaic Gospel, as it is called by some), from which all three Evangelists copied their accounts, with additions and omissions peculiar to themselves. With many divines this hypothesis is still the favourite one;—but, in addition to the difficulty arising from the fact that we can nowhere find any allusion to the existence of such a document, more minute criticism discovered so many peculiarities inexplicable on this theory that its credit was much shaken, and its principal supporter, Eichhorn, was driven, in order to maintain it, to admit modifications which have made it almost unintelligible. The hypothesis appears to us to have been since completely demolished by the reasonings of Hug, Thirlwall, and Schleiermacher.¹ An ingenious modification of this theory by Giesler, *who substitutes an oral for a written original*, is explained and controverted by Dr. Thirlwall, in the admirable treatise we have already quoted (p. cxvi). The proem to Luke's Gospel, moreover, tacitly, but effectually, negatives the supposition that *he* was acquainted with any such original and paramountly authoritative document.

The second hypothesis is the prevalent one—that one of the Evangelists wrote first, and that the others copied him, with alterations, additions, and omissions, dictated by their own judgment or by extraneous sources of information. Matthew is generally considered to have been the earliest writer; but critics differ in the relative order they assign to Mark and Luke—some, as Mill, Hug, and Wetstein, conceiving that Luke copied both from Mark and Matthew; and others, as De Wette and Griesbach,

¹ “For my part (says this latter) I find it quite enough to prevent me from conceiving the origin of the Gospel according to Eichhorn's theory, that I am to figure to myself our good Evangelists surrounded by five or six open rolls or books, and that too in different languages, looking by turns from one into another, and writing a compilation from them. I fancy myself in a German study of the 19th century, rather than in the primitive age of Christianity.”—Schleiermacher, “Crit. Essay on Luke,” Intr. p. 6.

arguing that Mark was the latest in order of time, and made use of both his predecessors. Mr. Kenrick, in a masterly analysis (*Prosp. Rev.* xxi.), has, however, we think, succeeded in making it more than probable that Mark's Gospel was both first in order of time and in fidelity of narration.¹

This theory has been much and minutely examined, and to our minds it appears unsatisfactory. It accounts for the agreements, but not for the discrepancies, of the Gospels; and Dr. Thirlwall, in his translation of Schleiermacher, has succeeded in showing that it is highly improbable, if not wholly inadmissible.

The third hypothesis, which was first propounded by Lessing, and has since been revived and elaborated by Schleiermacher (one of the highest theological authorities of Germany), seems to us to have both critical evidence and *a priori* likelihood in its favour. These writers presume the existence of a number of *fragmentary narratives*, some oral, some written, of the actions and sayings of Christ, such as would naturally be preserved and transmitted by persons who had witnessed those wonderful words and deeds. Sometimes there would be two or more narratives of the same event, proceeding from different witnesses; sometimes the same original narrative in its transmission would receive intentional or accidental variations, and thus come slightly modified into the hands of different Evangelists. Sometimes detached sayings would be preserved without the context, and the Evangelists would *locate* them where they thought them most appropriate, or provide a context for them, instances of which are numberless in the Gospels.² But all these materials would be fragmentary. Each witness

¹ [The priority of Mark is now generally recognised. On this question and the interdependence of the gospel writers the best authority is Abbott in his article *Gospels*, in the *Ency. Brit.*]

² "The verbal agreement is generally greater in reports of the discourses of Christ than in relations of events; and the speeches of other

would retain and transmit that portion of a discourse which had impressed him most forcibly, and two witnesses would retain the same expressions with varying degrees of accuracy.¹ One witness heard one discourse, or was present at one transaction only, and recorded that one by writing or verbally, as he best might. Of these fragments some fell into the hands of all the Evangelists—some only into the hands of one, or of two:² and in some cases different narratives of the same event, expression, or discourse would fall into the hands of different Evangelists, which would account for their discrepancies—sometimes into the hands of one Evangelist, in which case he would select that one which his judgment (or information from other sources) prompted, or would compile an account from them jointly. In any case, the evangelical narratives would be *compilations from a series of fragments of varying accuracy and completeness*. The correctness of this theory of the origin of the Gospels seems to be not so much confirmed as distinctly *asserted* by Luke: "Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us, even as they delivered them unto us which from the beginning were eye-witnesses and ministers of the word."

"The first step (says Schleiermacher)³ towards a Christian History was a natural and reasonable desire on the part of those who had believed on Jesus, without having a knowledge of his person. These

persons are often given in the same terms, though the circumstances which led to them are differently described."—Thirlwall, cxvi.

¹ The habit of retaining and transmitting discourses orally was much more common then than now, and the practice carried to great perfection. The learning of the Jews was transmitted exclusively by oral tradition from one generation to another, and we entertain little doubt that the fragments both of narratives and discourses which formed the materials of our Evangelists were almost entirely oral.—(See Thirlwall, cxviii. Norton, i. 287.)

² Thus the materials of the first three Evangelists were evidently collected chiefly in Galilee; those of the fourth came principally from Judæa.

³ "Crit. Essay on Luke," Introd. 12-14.

individuals would undoubtedly be glad to learn some particulars of his life, in order to place themselves as nearly as possible on an equality with their elder and more fortunate brethren. In the public assemblies of the Christians this desire was of course only incidentally and sparingly gratified, when a teacher happened to refer to memorable sayings of Christ which could only be related together with the occasion which had called them forth: more copious and detailed accounts they could only procure in familiar intercourse upon express inquiry. And in this way many particulars were told and heard, most of them, probably, without being committed to writing; but, assuredly, much was very soon written down, partly by the narrators themselves, as each of them happened to be pressed by a multiplicity of questions on a particular occurrence, respecting which he was peculiarly qualified to give information. Still more, however, must have been committed to writing by the inquirers, especially by such as did not remain constantly in the neighbourhood of the narrators, and were glad to communicate the narrative again to many others, who, perhaps, were never able to consult an eye-witness. In this way detached incidents and discourses were noted down. Notes of this kind were at first, no doubt, less frequently met with among the Christians settled in Palestine, and passed immediately into more distant parts, to which the pure oral tradition flowed more scantily. They, however, appeared everywhere more frequently, and

were more anxiously sought for, when the great body of the original companions and friends of Christ was dispersed by persecutions, and still more when that first generation began to die away. It would, however, have been singular if, even before this, the inquirers who took those notes had possessed only detached passages; on the contrary, they, and still more their immediate copiers, had undoubtedly become collectors also, each according to his peculiar turn of mind: and thus one, perhaps, collected only accounts of miracles; another, only discourses; a third, perhaps, attached exclusive importance to the last days of Christ, or even to the scenes of his resurrection. Others, without any such particular predilection, collected all that fell in their way from good authority."

The work from which the above is a quotation is a masterly analysis of Luke's gospel, with a view to test the correctness of the author's hypothesis as to the origin of the evangelical histories; and the success is, we think, complete. His conclusion is as follows (p. 313):—

"The main position is firmly established, that Luke is neither an independent writer, nor has made a compilation from works which extended over the whole course of the life of Jesus. He is from beginning to end no more than the compiler and arranger of documents, which he found in existence, and which he allows to pass unaltered through his hands. His merit in this capacity is twofold—that of arrangement and of judicious selection."¹

CHAPTER VI

FIDELITY OF THE GOSPEL HISTORY.—NATURE AND LIMITS

HAVING in our last chapter arrived at the conclusion that the Gospels are compilations from a variety of fragmentary narratives, and reports of discourses and

conversations, oral or written, which

¹ [The synoptical problem is a very complicated one, and none of the hypotheses, taken apart, affords a satisfactory solution. They must

were current in Palestine from thirty to forty years after the death of Jesus—we now come to the very interesting and momentous inquiry, how far these narratives and discourses can be accepted as accurate and faithful records of what was actually said and done?—whether they can be regarded as thoroughly and minutely correct?—and, if not, in what respects and to what extent do they deviate from that thorough and minute correctness?

It is clear at first view that the same absolute reliance cannot be placed upon a narrative compounded from traditionary fragments, as upon a consecutive history related by an eye-witness. Conceding to *both* faithful intention and good, though imperfect, powers of memory, there are obvious elements of inaccuracy in the one case which do not appertain to the other. To the corruptions, lapses, and alterations inseparable from transmission, especially when oral, is added the uncertainty arising from the *number* of the original sources of the tradition, whose character, capacity, and opportunities of knowledge are unknown to us. If Luke had recorded only what he had seen, or Mark only what he had heard from Peter, we should have comparatively ample means of forming a decision as to the amount of reliance to be placed upon their narrations; but when they record what they learned from perhaps a dozen different narrators—some original, others only second-hand, and all wholly unknown—it becomes obvious that causes of inaccuracy are introduced, the extent of the actual operation of which on the histories that have come down to us, it is both extremely important and singularly difficult to estimate.

This inquiry we consider as of paramount interest to every other question of criticism; for on the conclusion to which it leads us depends the whole—not of Christianity, which,

be combined, the sources-hypothesis and the borrowing-hypothesis, supported by an oral tradition prior to them both.]

as we view it, is unassailable, but—of *textual* or *dogmatic Christianity*, *i.e.*, the Christianity of nine-tenths of nominal Christendom. We proceed, therefore, to ask what evidence we possess for assuming or impugning the minute fidelity of the Gospel history. || note

There are certain portions of the Synoptical Gospels the genuineness of which has been much disputed, *viz.*, the first two chapters of Matthew—the first two of Luke—and the last twelve verses of the xvth chapter of Mark.¹ Into this discussion we cannot enter, but must refer such of our readers as wish to know the *grounds* of decision to Norton, Hug, De Wette, Eichhorn, and Griesbach. The *result* of critical inquiry seems to be, that the only solid ground for supposing the questioned portions of Luke and Matthew not to be by the same hand as the rest of their respective gospels, is the obviously insufficient one of the extraordinary character of their contents;²—while the spuriousness of the last twelve verses of Mark is established beyond question;—the real Gospel of Mark (all of it, at least, that has come down to us) ends with the 8th verse of the xvth chapter. In our subsequent remarks we shall therefore treat the whole of the acknowledged text of these gospels as genuine, with the exception of the conclusion of Mark;—and we now proceed to inquire into the nature and limits of the fidelity of Matthew's record.

In the first place, while admitting to the fullest extent the general clearness and fulness with which the character of Jesus is depicted in the first Gospel, it is important to bear in mind that—as Hug has clearly³ proved—it was written with a

¹ See Norton, i. 16, 17.

² Strauss, i. 117, 142. Hug, 469-479. See also Schleiermacher. Norton, however, gives some reasons to the contrary, which deserve consideration, i. 209.

³ “All Matthew's reflections are of one kind. He shows us, as to everything that Jesus did and taught, that it was characteristic of the Messiah. On occasion of remarkable events, or a recital of parts of the discourses of Jesus, he refers us to the ancient scriptures of the Jews

special, we might almost say a polemical, object. It was composed, less to give a continuance and complete history of Jesus, than to prove that he was the expected Messiah; and those passages were therefore selected out of the author's materials which appeared most strongly to bear upon and enforce this conclusion. The remembrance of this *object* of Matthew's will aid us in forming our judgment as to his fidelity.

According to the universal expectation, the Messiah was to be born of the seed of Abraham, and the lineage and tribe of David. Accordingly, the Gospel opens with an elaborate genealogy of Jesus, tracing him through David to Abraham. Now, in the *first* place, this genealogy is not correct:—*secondly*, if the remainder of the chapter is to be received as true, it is in no sense the genealogy of Jesus; and, *thirdly*, it is wholly and irreconcilably at variance with that given by Luke.

1. In verse 17, Matthew sums up the genealogy thus:—"So all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations; and from David until the carrying away into Babylon are fourteen generations; and from the carrying away into Babylon until Christ are fourteen generations."—Now (passing over as unnecessarily minute and harsh the criticism of Strauss, that by no way of counting can we make out fourteen generations in the last series, without disturbing the count of the others), we must call attention to the fact that the number fourteen in the second series is *only obtained by the deliberate omission of four generations*, viz., three between Joram and Ozias, and one between Josiah and Jeconiah—as may be seen by referring to 1 Chron. iii. There is also (at verse 4-6) another apparent, and we think, certain, error. Only four generations are reckoned

in which this coming Saviour is delineated, and shows in detail that the great ideal which flitted before the minds of the Prophets was realised in Jesus." Hug, *Introd.* 312. These references are twelve in Matthew, two in Mark, and three in Luke. Again, he says (p. 384), "Matthew is an historical deduction; Mark is history."

between Naasson, who lived in the time of Moses, and David, a period of four hundred years. (Compare Num. i. 7, Ruth v. 20).

2. The genealogy here given, correct or incorrect, is the genealogy of *Joseph*, who was in no sense whatever the father (or any relation at all) of Jesus, since this last, we are assured (verses 18 to 25), was in his mother's womb before she and her husband came together. The story of the Incarnation and the genealogy are obviously at variance; and no ingenuity, unscrupulously as it has been applied, can produce even the shadow of an agreement; and when the flat contradiction given to each other by the 1st and 18th verses are considered, it is difficult for an unprejudiced mind not to feel convinced that the author of the genealogy (both in the first and third Gospels) was ignorant of the story of the Incarnation, though the carelessness and uncritical temper of the evangelist—a carelessness partially avoided in the cases of Luke, by an interpolation¹—has united the two into one compilation.

3. The genealogy of Jesus given by Luke is wholly different from that of Matthew; and the most desperate efforts of divines have been unable to effect even the semblance of a reconciliation. Not only does Matthew give 26 generations between David and Joseph where Luke has 41, but they trace the descent through an entirely different line of ancestry. According to Matthew, the father of Joseph was named Jacob—according to Luke, Heli. In Matthew, the son of David through whom Joseph descended is Solomon;—in Luke it is Nathan. Thence the genealogy of Matthew descends through the known royal line—the genealogy of Luke through an obscure collateral branch. The two lines only join in Salathiel and Zoro-

¹ Luke iii. 23, "Jesus . . . being, as was supposed (ὡς ἐνομιζέτο), the son of Joseph,"—a parenthesis which renders nugatory the whole of the following genealogy, and cannot have originally formed a part of it.—The 16th verse of Matthew also bears indications of a similar emendation.

babel; and even here they differ as to the father of Salathiel and the son of Zorobabel. Many ingenious hypotheses have been broached to explain and harmonise these singular discrepancies, but wholly in vain. One critic supposes that one evangelist gives the pedigree of the adoptive, the other of the real father of Joseph. Another assumes that one is the genealogy of Joseph, and the other that of Mary—a most convenient idea, but entirely gratuitous, and positively contradicted by the language of the text. The circumstance that any man could suppose that Matthew, when he said "Jacob begat Joseph," or Luke, when he said "Joseph was the son of Heli," could refer to the wife of the one, or the daughter-in-law of the other, shows to what desperate stratagems polemical orthodoxy will resort in order to defend an untenable position.

The discrepancy between Matthew and Luke in their narratives of the miraculous conception affords no ground for suspecting the fidelity of the former. Putting aside the extraordinary nature of the whole transaction—a consideration which does not at present concern us—the relation in Matthew is simple, natural, and probable; the surprise of Joseph at the pregnancy of his wife (or his *betrothed*, as the words may mean); his anxiety to avoid scandal and exposure; his satisfaction through the means of a dream (for among the Jews dreams were habitually regarded as means of communication from heaven); and his abstinence from all conjugal connection with Mary till after the birth of the miraculous infant,—present precisely the line of conduct we should expect from a simple, pious, and confiding Jew.

But when we remember the dogmatic object which, as already mentioned, Matthew had in view, and in connection with that remembrance read the 22nd and 23rd verses, the whole story at once becomes apocryphal, and its origin at once clear. "All these things were done," says Matthew, "that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the Prophet, say-

ing, Behold a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son," &c., &c. Now this is one of the many instances which we shall have to notice in which this evangelist quotes prophecies as intended for Jesus, and as fulfilled in him, which have not the slightest relation to him or his career. The adduced prophecy¹ is simply an assurance sent to the unbelieving Ahaz, that before the child, which the wife of Isaiah would shortly conceive (see Isa. viii. 2-4), was old enough to speak, or to know good from evil, the conspiracy of Syria and Ephraim against the King of Judæa should be dissolved; and had manifestly no more reference to Jesus than to Napoleon. The conclusion, therefore, is unavoidable, that the events said to have occurred in fulfilment of a prophecy, which Matthew *wrongly* supposed to have reference to them, were by him imagined, or modified into accordance with the supposed prophecy; since it is certain that they did *not*, as he affirms, take place, "in order that the prophecy might be fulfilled."

Pursuing this line of inquiry, we shall find many instances in which this tendency of Matthew to find in Jesus the fulfilment of prophecies, which he *erroneously* conceived to refer to him, has led him to narrate circumstances respecting which the other evangelists are silent, as well as to give, with material (but *intentional*) variations, relations which are

¹ "Therefore the Lord spake unto Ahaz, saying, . . . Behold a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel. . . . Before the child shall know to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land that thou abhorrest shall be forsaken of both her kings."—Isa. vii. 10-16.

"And I went unto the prophetess, and she conceived and bare a son. Then said the Lord unto me . . . before the child shall have knowledge to cry, My father and my mother, the riches of Damascus and the spoil of Samaria shall be taken away before the King of Assyria."—viii. 3, 4.

No divine of character will now, we believe, maintain that this prophecy had any reference to Jesus; nor ever would have imagined it to have, without Matthew's intimation.—See "Hebrew Monarchy," p. 262.

common to them all—a peculiarity which throws great suspicion over several passages. Thus in ii. 13-15, we are told that immediately after the visit of the Magi, Joseph took Mary and the child, and fled into Egypt, remaining there till the death of Herod, “that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Out of Egypt have I called my son.” The passage in question occurs in Hosea, xi. 1, and has not the slightest reference to Christ. It is as follows:—“When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt.” Here is an event related, very improbable in itself, flatly contradicted by Luke’s history¹ and which occurred, we are told, that a prophecy might be fulfilled to which it had no reference, of which it was no fulfilment, and which, in fact, was no prophecy at all.

A similar instance occurs immediately afterwards in the same chapter. We are told that Herod, when he found “that he was mocked of the wise men, was exceeding wroth, and sent forth and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under”;—an act which, whether suitable or not to the known character of Herod (who was cruel and tyrannical, but at the same time crafty and politic, not silly nor insane²)—must, if it had occurred, have created a prodigious sensation, and made one of the most prominent points in Herod’s history³—yet of which none of the other

¹ Luke’s account entirely precludes the sojourn in Egypt. He says that *eight* days after the birth of Jesus he was circumcised, *forty* days after was presented in the temple, and that when these legal ceremonies were accomplished, he went with his parents to Nazareth.

² Neander argues very ably that such a deed is precisely what we should expect from Herod’s character. But Sir W. Jones gives reason for believing that the whole story may be of *Hindoo origin*.—“Christian Theism,” p. 84, where the passage is quoted.

³ Mr. Milman (“Hist. Jews,” b. xii.), however, thinks differently, and argues that, among Herod’s manifold barbarities, “the murder of a few children in an obscure village” would easily escape notice. The story is at least

evangelists, nor any historian of the day, nor Josephus (though he devoted a considerable portion of his history to the reign of Herod, and does not spare his reputation), makes any mention. But this also, according to Matthew’s notion, was the fulfilment of a prophecy. “Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying, In Rama there was a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not.”—Here, again, the adduced prophecy was quite irrelevant, being simply a description of the grief of Judea for the captivity of her children, accompanied by a promise of their return.¹

A still more unfortunate instance is found at the 23rd verse, where we are told that Joseph abandoned his intention of returning into Judea, and turned aside into Galilee, and came and dwelt at Nazareth, “that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene.” Now, in the first place, the name Nazarene was not in use till long afterwards;—secondly, there is no such prophecy in the Old Testament. The evangelist, perhaps, had in his mind the words that were spoken to the mother of Samson (Judg. xiii. 5) respecting her son: “The child shall be a Nazarite (*i.e.* one bound by a vow, whose hair was forbidden to be cut, which never was the case with Jesus²) to God from the womb.”

In this place we must notice the marked discrepancy between Matthew and Luke, as to the original residence of

highly improbable, for had Herod wished to secure the death of Jesus, so cunning a prince would have sent his messengers along with the Magi, not awaited their doubtful return.

¹ The passage is as follows:—“A voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation, and bitter weeping; Rachel weeping for her children, refused to be comforted for her children, because they were not. Thus saith the Lord, Refrain thy voice from weeping, and thine eyes from tears; for thy work shall be rewarded, saith the Lord; and they shall come again from the land of the enemy.”—Jer. xxxi. 15, 16.

² See Num. vi. 2-6.

the parents of Jesus. Luke speaks of them as living at Nazareth *before* the birth of Jesus: Matthew as having left Bethlehem, the birth-place of their child, to go to Nazareth, only after that event, and from peculiar considerations. Critics, however, are disposed to think Matthew right on this occasion.

There are, however, several passages in different parts of the Evangelists which suggest serious doubts as to whether Jesus were really born at Bethlehem, and were really a lineal descendant of David, and whether both these statements were not unfounded inventions of his followers to prove his title to the Messiahship. In the first place, the Jews are frequently represented as urging that Jesus could not be the Messiah, because he was *not* born at Bethlehem; and neither Jesus nor his followers ever set them right upon this point. If he were really born at Bethlehem, the circumstance was generally unknown, and though its being unknown presented an obvious and valid objection to the admission of his claim to the Messianic character, no effort was made either by Christ or his disciples to remove this objection, which might have been done by a single word. (John vii. 41-43, 52; i. 46.) "Others said, This is the Christ. But some said, Shall Christ come out of Galilee? Hath not the Scripture said that Christ cometh of the seed of David, and out of the town of Bethlehem, where David was? So there was a division among the people because of him."—Again, the Pharisees object to Nicodemus, when arguing on Jesus' behalf—"Search and look, for out of Galilee ariseth no prophet."

The three Synoptical evangelists (Matt. xxii. 41; Mark xii. 35; Luke xx. 41) all record an argument of Christ addressed to the Pharisees, the purport of which is to show that the Messiah need not be, and could not be, the Son of David. "While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them, saying, What think ye of Christ? whose son is he? They say unto him, The son of David. He saith unto them, How

then doth David in spirit call him Lord, saying, the Lord saith unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool! If David then call him Lord, how is he his son?" Now,—passing by the consideration that, as Mr. Arnold informs us, "the translation ought to run, 'The Eternal said unto my lord the king,' and was a simple promise of victory to a prince of God's chosen people,"—is it conceivable that Jesus should have brought forward the passage as an argument if he were really a descendant of David? Must not his intention have been to argue that, though *not* a son of David, he might still be the Christ?

In xxi. 2-4, 6, 7, the entry into Jerusalem is thus described: "Then sent Jesus two disciples, saying unto them, Go into the village over against you, and straightway ye shall find an ass tied, and a colt with her: loose them and bring them to me. . . . And the disciples went and did as Jesus commanded them, and brought the ass and the colt, and put on them their clothes, and set him thereon" (literally "upon them," ἐπάνω αὐτῶν). Now, though two animals may well have been brought, the foal naturally accompanying its mother, yet the description (in ver. 16), representing Jesus as sitting upon *both* animals, is absurd; and, again, Mark, Luke, and John, who all mention the same occurrence, agree in speaking of one animal only. But the liberty which Matthew has taken with both fact and probability is at once explained, when we read in the 4th verse: "All this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, Tell ye the daughter of Zion, Behold thy King cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass."¹

As a final example, we may instance

¹ The quotation is from Zechariah ix. 9; the passage has reference to the writer's own time, and the second animal is obviously a mere common poetical reduplication, such as is met with in every page of Hebrew poetry. But Matthew thought a *literal* similitude essential. "And" ought to have been translated "even."

Notice
Entry into Jerusalem. Another example of Matthew's imposition of prophecy.

N.
Note!

the treachery of Judas. The other evangelists simply narrate that Judas covenanted with the chief priests to betray Jesus. Matthew, however, relates the conversation between the traitor and his fellow-conspirators as minutely as if he had been present, specifies the exact sum of money that was given, and the use to which it was put by the priests (the purchase of the Potter's field), when returned to them by the repentant Judas.¹ Here, as usual, the discrepancy between Matthew and his fellow-evangelists is explained by a prophecy which Matthew conceived to apply to the case before him, and thought necessary therefore should be literally fulfilled; but which, on examination, appears to have had no allusion to any times but those in which it was uttered, and which, moreover, is not found in the prophet whom Matthew quotes from, but in another.² The passage as quoted by Matthew is as follows:—"And they took the thirty pieces of silver; the price of him that was valued, whom they of the children of Israel did value, and gave them for the Potter's field, as the Lord appointed me." The original passage in Zechariah is given in a note.

To pass from this ground of want of confidence in Matthew's fidelity, we may specify two others:—*first*, we find several discrepancies between him and the other evangelists, in which there is reason to

¹ Luke, however, in the Acts (i. 18), states that Judas himself purchased the field with the money he had received, and died accidentally therein. Matthew says he returned the money, and went and hanged himself.

² Matthew quotes Jeremiah, but the passage is contained in Zechariah xi. 12, 13. Some people, however, imagine that the latter chapters of Zechariah do really belong to Jeremiah. Others conceive the passage to be contained in some lost book of Jeremiah. "And I said unto them, If ye think good, give me my price; and if not, forbear. So they weighed for my price thirty pieces of silver. And the Lord said unto me, Cast it unto the potter: a goodly price that I was prized at of them. And I took the thirty pieces of silver, and cast them to the potter in the house of the Lord." The word "potter" is a translation *made to accommodate* Matthew. The LXX. has "treasury" or "foundry," as it were our "mint."

believe that he was wrong; and, *secondly*, we find words and parts of discourses put by him into Jesus' mouth, which there is ample reason to believe that Jesus never uttered.

I. The second chapter opens with an account (peculiar to Matthew) of the visit of the wise men of the East to Bethlehem, whither they were guided by a star which went before them, and stood over the house in which the infant Jesus lay. The general legendary character of the narrative—its similarity in style with those contained in the apocryphal gospels—and more especially its conformity with those astrological notions which, though prevalent in the time of Matthew, have been exploded by the sounder scientific knowledge of our days—all unite to stamp upon the story the impress of poetic or mythic fiction; and its admission into his history is not creditable to Matthew's judgment, though it may not impugn his fidelity; as it may have been among his materials, and he had no critical acumen which should lead him to reject it.

In Matt. viii. 28–34, we have an account of the healing of *two* demoniacs, whose diseases (or whose devils, according to the evangelist) were communicated to an adjacent herd of swine. Now, putting aside the great improbability of two madmen, as fierce as these are described to be, living together, Mark and Luke.¹ who both relate the same occurrence, state that there was *one* demoniac, obviously a much preferable version of the narrative.

In the same manner, in chap. xx. 30–34, Matthew relates the cure of *two* blind men near Jericho. Mark and Luke² narrate the same occurrence, but speak of only *one* blind man. This story affords also an example of the evangelist's carelessness as a compiler, for (in chap. ix. 27) he has already given the same

¹ Mark v. 1; Luke viii. 26. There are other discrepancies between the three narratives, both in this and the following case, but they are beside our present purpose.

² Mark x. 46; Luke xviii. 35.

Visit of the wise men, poetic and improbable.

narrative, but has assigned to it a different locality.

A still more remarkable instance of Matthew's tendency to amplification, or rather to multiplication and repetition, is found in xiv. 16, *et seq.*, and xv. 32, *et seq.*,¹ where the two miraculous feedings of the multitude are described. The feeding of the five thousand is related by all four evangelists; but the repetition of the miracle, with a slight variation in the number of the multitude and of the loaves and fragments, is peculiar to Matthew and to Mark.² Now, that both these narratives are merely varying accounts of the same event (the variation arising from the mode in which the materials of the gospel history were collected, as explained in our preceding chapter), and that only one feeding was originally recorded, is now admitted by all competent critics,³ and appears clearly from several considerations.—*First*, Luke and John relate only one feeding; in the next place, the two narratives in Matthew are given with the same accompaniments, in a similar, probably in the very same, locality; *thirdly*, the particulars of the occurrence and the remarks of the parties are almost identically the same on each occasion; and, finally (what is perfectly conclusive), in the second narration, the language and conduct both of Jesus and his disciples show a perfect unconsciousness of any previous occurrence of the same nature. Is it credible, that if the disciples had, a few days before, witnessed the miraculous feeding of the "five thousand" with "five loaves and two fishes," they should on the second occasion, when they had "seven loaves and a few small fishes," have replied to the suggestion of Jesus

¹ The parallel passages are Mark vi. 35; Luke ix. 12; John vi. 5.

² See Mark viii. 1, *et seq.* The language of the two evangelists is here so precisely similar, as to leave no doubt that one copied the other, or both a common document. The word baskets is *κόφιναι* in the first case, and *σπυρίδες* in the second, in both evangelists.

³ See also Schleiermacher, p. 144, who does not hesitate to express his full disbelief in the second feeding.

that the fasting multitude should again be fed, "whence should we have so much bread in the wilderness as to fill so great a multitude?" It is certain that the idea of two feedings having really taken place, could only have found acceptance in minds preoccupied with the doctrine of the plenary inspiration and infallibility of Scripture. It is now entirely abandoned by all divines except the English, and by the few thinkers even among them. A confirmatory argument, were any needed, might be drawn from observing that the narrative of the fourth evangelist agrees in some points with Matthew's first, and in some with his second account.

The story contained in xvii. 17, *et seq.*, of Jesus commanding Peter to catch a fish in whose mouth he should find the tribute money, has a most pagan and unworthy character about it, harmonises admirably with the puerile narratives which abound in the apocryphal gospels, and is ignored by all the other evangelists.

In xxvii. 24, we find this narrative: "When Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing, but rather that a tumult was made, he took water and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just person; see ye to it." Now, in the first place, this symbolic action was a Jewish, not a Roman, ceremony,¹ and as such most unsuitable and improbable in a Roman governor, one of a nation noted for their contempt of the habits and opinions of their subject nations. In the second place, it is inconceivable that Pilate should so emphatically have pronounced his own condemnation, by declaring Jesus to be a "just man" at the very moment when he was about to scourge him, and deliver him over to the most cruel tortures.

¹ It appears from Deut. xxi. 1-9, that the washing of the hands was a specially-appointed Mosaic rite, by which the authorities of any city in which murder had been committed were to avow their innocence of the crime and ignorance of the criminal.

True

True.

Notice this

In Matthew's account of the last moments of Jesus, we have the following remarkable statements (xxvii. 50-53):—"Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost. And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent; and the graves were opened, and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, and came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many." Now, *first*, this extraordinary fact, if it be a fact (and it is said to have been a public one—"they appeared unto many"), is ignored by the other evangelists; nor do we find any reference to it in the Acts or the Epistles, nor any reason to believe that any of the apostles were aware of the occurrence—one, certainly, to excite the deepest interest and wonder. *Secondly*, the statement is a confused, if not a self-contradictory, one. The assertion in ver. 52, clearly is, that the opening of the graves, and the rising of the bodies of saints, formed a portion of that series of convulsions of nature which is said to have occurred at the moment when Jesus expired; whereas the following verse speaks of it as occurring "after his resurrection." To suppose, as believers in verbal accuracy do, and must do, that the bodies were re-animated on the Friday, and not allowed to come out of their graves till the Sunday, is clearly too monstrous to be seriously entertained. If, to avoid this difficulty, we adopt Griesbach's reading, and translate the passage thus: "And coming out of their graves, went into the holy city after the resurrection"—the question still recurs, "Where did they remain between Friday and Sunday? And did they, after three days' emancipation, resume their sepulchral habiliments, and return to their narrow prison-house, and their former state of dust?" Again, when we refer to the original, we find that it was *the bodies* (σώματα) which "arose"; but, if we suppose that the evangelist wrote gram-

matically, it could not have been the bodies which "came out of the graves," or he would have written ἐξελθόντα, not ἐξελθόντες. Whence Bush¹ assumes that the *bodies* arose (or were raised, ἠγέρθη) at the time of the crucifixion, but lay down again,² and that it was the *souls* which came out of the graves after the resurrection of Christ and appeared unto many! We cannot, however, admit that souls inhabit graves.

There can, we think, remain little doubt in unprepossessed minds that the whole legend (it is greatly augmented in the apocryphal gospels³) was one of those intended to magnify and honour Christ,⁴ which were current in great numbers at the time when Matthew wrote, and which he, with the usual want of discrimination and somewhat omnivorous tendency which distinguished him as a compiler, admitted into his gospel;—and that the confusing phrase, "after his resurrection," was added either by him or by some previous transmitter, or later copier, to prevent the apparent want of deference and decorum involved in a resurrection which should have preceded that of Jesus.

In chap. xxvii. 62-66, and xxviii.

¹ See a very elaborate work of Professor Bush, entitled "Anastasis, or the Resurrection of the Body" (p. 210), the object of which is to prove that the resurrection of the *body* is neither a rational nor a scriptural doctrine.

² The Professor's notion appears to be that the *rising of the bodies* on the Friday was a mere mechanical effect of the earthquake, and that re-animation did not take place till the Sunday, and that even then it was not the *bodies* which arose.

³ The Gospel of the Hebrews says that a portion of the temple was thrown down. See also the Gospel of Nicodemus.

⁴ Similar prodigies were said, or supposed to accompany, the deaths of many great men in former days, as in the case of Cæsar (Virgil, Gorg. i. 463, *et seq.*). Shakespeare has embalmed some traditions of the kind, exactly analogous to the present case. See Julius Cæsar, Act ii. Sc. 2. Again he says: Hamlet, Act i. Sc. 1.

"In the most high and palmy state of Rome,
A little ere the mightiest Julius fell,
The graves stood tenantless, and the sheeted
dead
Did squeak and gibber in the Roman streets."

not we
but per
haps o.
there,
simple
p. 1. 2.

11-15, we find a record of two conversations most minutely given—one between the chief priests and Pilate, and the other between the priests and the guards of the sepulchre—at which it is impossible the evangelist, and most improbable that any informant of his, could have been present;—and which, to our minds, bear evident marks of being subsequent fictions *supposed* in order to complete and render more invulnerable the history of Jesus' resurrection. It is extremely unlikely that the chief priests and Pharisees should have thought of taking precautions beforehand against a fraudulent resurrection. We have no reason to believe that they had ever heard of the prophecy to which they allude,¹ for it had been uttered only to his own disciples, the twelve, and to them generally with more or less secrecy;² and we know that by them it was so entirely disregarded,³ or had been so completely forgotten, that the resurrection of their Lord was not only not expected, but took them completely by surprise. Were the enemies of Christ more attentive to, and believing on, his predictions than his own followers?

¹ It is true that John (ii. 19) relates that Jesus said publicly in answer to the Jews' demand for a sign, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will build it up again." This John considers to have reference to his resurrection, but we know that the Jews attach no such meaning to it, from ver. 20, and also from Matt. xxvi. 61.

² Matt. xvi. 21, xx. 19; Mark viii. 31, x. 32; Luke ix. 22, xviii. 33.

³ This is distinctly stated, John xx. 9: "For as yet they knew not the Scripture, that he must rise again from the dead," and indeed it is clear from all the evangelical narratives.

The improbability of the sequel of the story is equally striking. That the guard placed by the Sanhedrim at the tomb should, all trembling with affright from the apparition (xxviii. 4), have been at once, and so easily, persuaded to deny the vision, and propagate a lie;—that the Sanhedrim, instead of angrily and contemptuously scouting the story of the soldiers, charging them with having slept, and threatening them with punishment, should have believed their statement, and, at the same time, in full conclave, resolved to bribe them to silence and falsehood;—that Roman soldiers, as it is generally assumed they were, who could scarcely commit a more heinous offence against discipline than to sleep upon their post, should so willingly have accepted money to accuse themselves of such a breach of duty;—are all too improbable suppositions to be readily allowed; especially when the 13th verse indicates a subsequent Jewish rumour as the foundation of the story, and when the utter silence of all the other evangelists and apostles respecting a narrative which, if true, would be so essential a feature in their preaching of the resurrection, is duly borne in mind.

Many minor instances in which Matthew has retrenched or added to the accounts of Mark, according as retrenchment or omission would, in his view, most exalt the character of Jesus, are specified in the article already referred to (*Prosp. Rev.* xxi.), which we recommend to the perusal of all our readers as a perfect pattern of critical reasoning.

CHAPTER VII

FIDELITY OF THE GOSPEL HISTORY CONTINUED—MATTHEW

In pursuing our inquiry as to the degree of reliance to be placed on Matthew's narrative, we now come to the considera-

tion of those passages in which there is reason to believe that the conversations and discourses of Christ have been in-

correctly reported: and that words have been attributed to him which he did not utter, or at least did not utter in the form and context in which they have been transmitted to us. That this should be so, is no more than we ought to expect *a priori*; for, of all things, discourses and remarks are the most likely to be imperfectly heard, inaccurately reported, and materially altered and corrupted in the course of transmission from mouth to mouth. Indeed, as we do not know, and have no reason to believe, that the discourses of Christ were written down by those who heard them immediately after their delivery, or indeed much before they reached the hands of the evangelists, nothing less than a miracle perpetually renewed for many years could have preserved these traditions perfectly pure and genuine. In admitting the belief, therefore, that they are in several points imperfect and inaccurate, we are throwing no discredit upon the sincerity or capacity, either of the evangelists or their informants, or the original reporters of the sayings of Christ;—we are simply acquiescing in the alleged operation of natural causes.¹ In some cases, it is true, we shall find reason to believe that the published discourses of Christ have been intentionally altered and artificially elaborated by some of the parties through whose hands they passed; but in those days when the very idea of historical criticism was yet unborn, this might have been done without any unfairness of purpose. We know that at that period, historians of far loftier pre-

¹ This seems to be admitted even by orthodox writers. Thus Abp. Trench says:—"The most earnest oral tradition will in a little while lose its distinctness, undergo essential though insensible modifications. Apart from all desire to vitiate the committed word, yet, little by little, the subjective condition of those to whom it is entrusted, through whom it passes, will infallibly make itself felt; and in such treacherous keeping is all which remains merely in the memories of men, *after a very little while*, rival schools of disciples will begin to contend not merely how their Master's words were to be accepted, but *what those very words were.*"—Trench's "Hulsean Lectures," p. 15.

tensions and more scientific character, writing in countries of far greater literary advancement, seldom scrupled to fill up and round off the harangues of their orators and statesmen with whatever they thought appropriate for them to have said—nay, even to elaborate for them long orations out of the most meagre hearsay fragments.¹

A general view of Matthew, and still more a comparison of his narrative with that of the other three gospels, brings into clear light his entire indifference to chronological or contextual arrangement in his record of the discourses of Christ. Thus in ch. v., vi., vii., we have crowded into one sermon the teachings and aphorisms which in the other evangelists are spread over the whole of Christ's ministry. In ch. xiii. we find collected together no less than six parables of similitudes for the kingdom of heaven. In ch. x. Matthew compresses into one occasion (the sending of the twelve, where many of them are strikingly out of place) a variety of instructions and reflections which must have belonged to a subsequent part of the career of Jesus, where indeed they are placed by the other evangelists. In c. xxiv., in the same manner, all the prophecies relating to the destruction of Jerusalem and the end of the world are grouped together; while, in many instances, remarks of Jesus are introduced in the midst of others with which they have no connection, and where they are obviously out of place; as xi. 28-30, and xiii. 12, which evidently belongs to xxv. 29.

¹ This in fact was the *custom* of antiquity—the rule, not the exception:—See Thucydides, Livy, Sallust, &c. *passim*. We find also (see Acts v. 34-39), that Luke himself did not scruple to adopt this common practice, for he gives us a verbatim speech of Gamaliel delivered in the Sanhedrim, after the apostles had been expressly excluded, and which therefore he could have known only by hearsay report. Moreover, it is certain that this speech must have been Luke's, and not Gamaliel's, since it represents Gamaliel in the year A.D. 34 or 35, as speaking in the past tense of an agitator, Theudas, who did not appear, as we learn from Josephus, till after the year A.D. 44.

good.
 In c. xi. 12 is the following expression :
 "And from the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of Heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by storm." Now, though the meaning of the passage is difficult to ascertain with precision, yet the expression, "from the days of John the Baptist until now," clearly implies that the speaker lived at a considerable distance of time from John ; and though appropriate enough in a man who wrote in the year A.D. 65, or 30 years after John, could not have been used by one who spoke in the year A.D. 30 or 33, while John was yet alive. This passage, therefore, must be regarded as coming from Matthew, not from Jesus.

The passage at c. xvi. 15-19 bears obvious marks of being either an addition to the words of Christ, or a corruption of them. "He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in Heaven. And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church ; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven ; and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven ; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."

The confession by Simon Peter of his belief in the Messiahship of Jesus is given by all the four evangelists, and there is no reason to question the accuracy of this part of the narrative. Mark and John, as well as Matthew, relate that Jesus bestowed on Simon the surname of Peter, and this part, therefore, may also be admitted. The remainder of the narrative corresponds almost exactly with the equivalent passages in the other evangelists ; but the 18th verse has no parallel in any of them. Moreover, the word "church" betrays its later origin. The word *ἐκκλησία*

was used by the disciples to signify those assemblies and organisations into which they formed themselves after the death of Jesus, and is met with frequently in the epistles, but nowhere in the gospels, except in the passage under consideration, and one other, which is equally, or even more, contestable.¹ It was in use when the gospel was written, but not when the discourse of Jesus was delivered. It must be taken as belonging, therefore, to Matthew, not to Jesus.

The following verse, conferring spiritual authority, or, as it is commonly called, "the power of the keys," upon Peter, is repeated by Matthew in connection with another discourse (in c. xviii. 18) ; and a similar passage is found in John (c. xx. 23), who, however, places the promise after the resurrection, and represents it as made to the apostles generally, subsequent to the descent of the Holy Spirit. But there are considerations which effectually forbid our receiving this promise, at least as given by Matthew, as having really emanated from Christ. In the *first* place, in both passages it occurs in connection with the suspicious word "church," and indicates an ecclesiastical as opposed to a Christian origin. *Secondly*, Mark, who narrates the previous conversation, omits this promise so honourable and distinguishing to Peter, which it is impossible for those who consider him as Peter's mouthpiece, or amanuensis, to believe he would have done, had any such promise been actually made.² Luke, the companion and intimate of Paul and other apostles, equally omits all mention of this singular conversation. *Thirdly*, not only do we know Peter's utter unfitness to be the depositary of such a fearful power, from his impetuosity and instability of character, and Christ's

¹ C. xviii. 17. "If he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church ; but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as a heathen man and a publican." The whole passage with its context, betokens an ecclesiastical, not a Christian spirit.

² See Thirlwall, cvii., "Introd. to Schleiermacher."

thorough perception of this unfitness, but we find that immediately after it is said to have been conferred upon him, his Lord addresses him indignantly by the epithet of Satan, and rebukes him for his presumption and unspirituality; and shortly afterwards this very man thrice denied his Master. Can anyone maintain it to be conceivable that Jesus should have conferred the awful power of deciding the salvation or damnation of his fellow-men upon one so frail, so faulty, and so fallible? *Does anyone believe that he did?* We cannot, therefore, regard the 19th verse otherwise than as an unwarranted addition to the words of Jesus, and painfully indicative of the growing pretensions of the Church at the time the gospel was compiled.

In c. xxviii. 19 is another passage which we may say with almost certainty never came from the mouth of Christ: "Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." That this definite form of baptism proceeded from Jesus, is opposed by the fact that such an allocation of the Father, Son, and Spirit does not elsewhere appear, except as a form of salutation in the epistles; while as a definite form of baptism it is nowhere met with throughout the New Testament. Moreover, it was not the form *used*, and could scarcely therefore have been the form *commanded*; for in the apostolic epistles, and even in the Acts, the form always is "baptising into Christ Jesus," or, "into the name of the Lord Jesus";¹ while the threefold reference to God, Jesus, and the Holy Ghost is only found in ecclesiastical writers, as Justin. Indeed, the formula in Matthew sounds so exactly as if it had been borrowed from the ecclesiastical ritual, that it is difficult to avoid the supposition that it was transferred thence into the mouth of Jesus. Many critics, in consequence, regard it as a subsequent interpolation.

¹ Rom. vi. 3. Gal. iii. 27. Acts ii. 38; viii. 16; x. 48; xix. 5.

There are two other classes of discourses attributed to Jesus both in this and in the other gospels, over the character of which much obscurity hangs—those in which he is said to have foretold his own death and resurrection; and those in which he is represented as speaking of his second advent. The instances of the first are in Matthew *five* in number, in Mark *four*, in Luke *four*, and in John *three*.¹

Now we will at once concede that it is extremely probable that Christ might easily have foreseen that a career and conduct like his could, in such a time and country, terminate only in a violent and cruel death; and that indications of such an impending fate thickened fast around him as his ministry drew nearer to a close. It is even possible, though in the highest degree unlikely,² that his study of the prophets might have led him to the conclusion that the expected Messiah, whose functions he believed himself sent to fulfil, was to be a suffering and dying Prince. We will not even dispute that he might have been so amply endowed with the spirit of prophecy as distinctly to foresee his approaching crucifixion and resurrection. But we find in the Evangelists themselves insuperable difficulties in the way of admitting the belief that he actually did predict these events, in the language, or with anything of the precision, which is there ascribed to him.

In the fourth gospel, these predictions are three in number,³ and in all the

¹ Matt. xii. 40; xvi. 21; xvii. 9, 22, 23; xx. 17-19; xxvi. 3. Mark viii. 31; ix. 10, 31; x. 33; xiv. 28. Luke ix. 22, 44; xviii. 32, 33; xxii. 15. John ii. 20-22; iii. 14; xii. 32, 33: all very questionable.

² It was in the highest degree unlikely, because this was neither the interpretation put upon the prophecies among the Jews of that time, nor their natural signification, but it was an interpretation of the disciples *ex eventu*.

³ We pass over those touching intimations of approaching separation contained in the parting discourses of Jesus during and immediately preceding the last supper, as there can be little doubt that at that time his fate was so imminent as to have become evident to any acute observer, without the supposition of supernatural information.

language is doubtful, mysterious, and obscure, and the interpretation commonly put upon them is not that suggested by the words themselves, nor that which suggested itself to those who heard them; but is one affixed to them by the Evangelist after the event supposed to be referred to; it is an *interpretatio ex eventu*.¹ In the three synoptical gospels, however, the predictions are numerous, precise, and conveyed in language which it was impossible to mistake. Thus (in Matt. xx. 18, 19, and parallel passages), "Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and the Son of man shall be betrayed unto the chief priests, and unto the scribes, and they shall condemn him to death, and shall deliver him to the Gentiles to mock, and to scourge, and to crucify him: and the third day he shall rise again." Language such as this, definite, positive, explicit, and circumstantial, if really uttered, could not have been misunderstood, but must have made a deep and ineradicable impression on all who heard it, especially when repeated, as it is stated to have been, on several distinct occasions. Yet we find ample proof that *no such impression was made*;—that the disciples had no conception of their Lord's approaching death—still less of his resurrection;—and that so far from their expecting either of these events, both, when they occurred, took them entirely by surprise;—they were utterly con-

¹ In the case of the first of these predictions—"Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up,"—we can scarcely admit that the words were used by Jesus (if uttered by him at all) in the sense ascribed to them by John; since the words were spoken *in the temple*, and in answer to the demand for a sign, and could therefore only have conveyed, and have been intended to convey, the meaning which we know they actually did convey to the inquiring Jews. In the two other cases (or three, if we reckon viii. 28 as one), the language of Jesus is too indefinite for us to know what meaning he intended it to convey. The expression "to be lifted up" is thrice used, and may mean exaltation, glorification (its natural signification), or, artificially and figuratively, *might* be intended to refer to his crucifixion.

founded by the one, and could not believe the other.

We find them shortly after (nay, in one instance instantly after) these predictions were uttered, disputing which among them should be greatest in their coming dominion (Matt. xx. 24; Mark ix. 35; Luke xxii. 25);—glorying in the idea of thrones, and asking for seats on his right hand and on his left, in his Messianic kingdom (Matt. xix. 28, xx. 21; Mark x. 37; Luke xxii. 30); which, when he approached Jerusalem, they thought "would immediately appear" (Luke xix. 11, xxiv. 21). When Jesus was arrested in the garden of Gethsemane, they first attempted resistance, and then "forsook him and fled"; and so completely were they scattered, that it was left for one of the Sanhedrim, Joseph of Arimathæa, to provide even for his decent burial;—while the women who "watched afar off," and were still faithful to his memory, brought spices to embalm the body—a sure sign, were any needed, that the idea of his resurrection had never entered into their minds. Further, when the women reported his resurrection to the disciples, "their words seemed to them as idle tales, and they believed them not" (Luke xxiv. 11). The conversation, moreover, of the two disciples on the road to Emmaus is sufficient proof that the resurrection of their Lord was a conception which had never crossed their thoughts;—and, finally, according to John, when Mary found the body gone, her only notion was that it must have been removed by the gardener (xx. 15).

All this shows, beyond, we think, the possibility of question, that the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus were wholly unexpected by his disciples. If further proof were wanted, we find it in the words of the evangelists, who repeatedly intimate (as if struck by the incongruity we have pointed out) that they "knew not," or "understood not," these sayings. (Mark ix. 31; Luke ix. 45, xviii. 34; John xx. 9).

Here, then, we have two distinct

statements, which mutually exclude and contradict each other. If Jesus really foretold his death and resurrection in the terms recorded in the gospels, it is inconceivable that the disciples should have *misunderstood* him; for no words could be more positive, precise, or intelligible than those which he is said to have repeatedly addressed to them. Neither could they have *forgotten* what had been so strongly urged upon their memory by their Master, as completely as it is evident from their subsequent conduct they actually did.¹ They might, indeed, have *disbelieved* his prediction (as Peter appears in the first instance to have done), but in that case his crucifixion would have led them to expect his resurrection, or, at all events, to think of it:—which it did not. The fulfilment of one prophecy would necessarily have recalled the other to their minds.

The conclusion, therefore, is inevitable—that the predictions were ascribed to Jesus after the event, not really uttered by him. It is, indeed, very probable that, as gloomy anticipations of his own death pressed upon his mind, and became stronger and more confirmed as the danger came nearer, he endeavoured to communicate these apprehensions to his followers, in order to prepare them for an event so fatal to their worldly hopes. That he did so, we think the conversations during, and previous to, the last supper afford ample proof. These vague intimations of coming evil—*intermingled and relieved, doubtless, by strongly expressed convictions of a future existence of reunion and reward*, disbelieved or disregarded by the disciples at the time—recurred to their minds after all was over; and gathering strength, and expanding in definiteness and fulness during constant repetition for nearly forty years, had, at the period when the Evangelists wrote, become consolidated into the fixed prophetic form in which they have been transmitted to us.

¹ Moreover, if they had so completely forgotten these predictions, whence did the evangelists derive them?

Another argument may be adduced, strongly confirmatory of this view. Jesus is repeatedly represented as affirming that his expected sufferings and their glorious termination must take place, *in order that the prophecies might be fulfilled.* (Matt. xxvi. 24, 54; Mark ix. 12, xiv. 49; Luke xiii. 33, xviii. 31, xxii. 37, xxiv. 27.) Now, the passion of the disciples for representing everything connected with Jesus as the fulfilment of prophecy, explains why they should have sought, after his death, for passages which might be supposed to prefigure it,¹—and why these accommodations of prophecy should, in process of time, and of transmission, have been attributed to Jesus himself. But if we assume, as is commonly done, that these references to prophecy really proceeded from Christ in the first instance, we are landed in the inadmissible, or at least the embarrassing and unorthodox, conclusion that he interpreted the prophets erroneously. To confine ourselves to the principal passages only, a profound grammatical and historical exposition has convincingly shown, to all who are in a condition to liberate themselves from dogmatic presuppositions, that in none of these is there any allusion to the sufferings of Christ.²

One of these references to prophecy in Matthew has evident marks of being an addition to the traditional words of Christ by the Evangelist himself. In

¹ “There were sufficient motives for the Christian legend thus to put into the mouth of Jesus, after the event, a prediction of the particular features of his passion, especially of the ignominious crucifixion. The more a Christ crucified became ‘to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness’ (1 Cor. i. 23), the more need was there to remove the offence by every possible means; and as, among the subsequent events, the resurrection especially served as a *retrospective* cancelling of that shameful death, so it must have been earnestly desired to take the sting from that offensive catastrophe *beforehand* also; and this could not be done more effectually than by such a minute prediction.”—Strauss, iii. 54, where this idea is fully developed.

² Even Dr. Arnold admitted this fully. (“Sermons on Interpretations of Prophecy,” Preface.)

Matt. xvi. 4, we have the following: "A wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it but the sign of the prophet Jonas." The same expression precisely is recorded by Luke (xi. 29), with this addition, showing what the reference to Jonas really meant: "For as Jonas was a sign to the Ninevites, so also shall the Son of man be to this generation. The men of Nineveh shall rise up in judgment against this generation, and shall condemn it; *for they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here.*" But when Matthew repeats the same answer of Jesus in response to the same demand for a sign (xii. 40), he adds the explanation of the reference, "for as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly, so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights [which Jesus was *not*, but only one day and two nights¹] in the heart of the earth";—and he then proceeds with the same context as Luke.

The prophecies of the second coming of Christ (Matt. xxiv.; Mark xiii.; Luke xvii. 22-37; xxi. 5-36) are mixed up with those of the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus in a manner which has long been the perplexity and despair of orthodox commentators. The obvious meaning of the passages which contain these predictions—the sense in which they were evidently understood by the Evangelists who wrote them down—the sense which we know from many sources² they conveyed to the minds of the early Christians—clearly is, that the coming of Christ to judge the world should follow *immediately*³ ("im-

¹ Nay: possibly only a few hours.

² See I Cor. x. 11; xv. 51. Phil. iv. 5. I Thess. iv. 15. James v. 8. I Peter iv. 7. I John ii. 18. Rev. i. 1, 3; xxii. 7, 10, 12, 20.

³ An apparent contradiction to this is presented by Matt. xxiv. 14; Matt. xiii. 10, where we are told that "the gospel must be first preached to all nations." It appears, however, from Col. i. 5, 6, 23 (see also Romans x. 18), that St. Paul considered this to have been already accomplished in his time.

mediately," "in those days") the destruction of the Holy City, and should take place during the lifetime of the then existing generation. "Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass away till all these things be fulfilled" (Matt. xxiv. 34; Mark xiii. 30; Luke xxi. 32). "There be some standing here that shall not taste of death till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom" (Matt. xvi. 28). "Verily I say unto you, Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of man be come" (Matt. x. 23). "If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?" (John xxi. 23).

Now if these predictions really proceeded from Jesus, he was entirely in error on the subject, and the prophetic spirit was not in him; for not only did his advent not follow close on the destruction of Jerusalem, but 1800 years have since elapsed, and neither he nor the preliminary signs which were to announce him have yet appeared. If these predictions did *not* proceed from him, then the Evangelist has taken the liberty of putting into the mouth of Christ words and announcements which Christ never uttered.

Much desperate ingenuity has been exerted to separate the predictions relating to Jerusalem from those relating to the Advent: but these exertions have been neither creditable nor successful; and they have already been examined and refuted at great length. Moreover, they are rendered necessary only by two previous *assumptions*: first, that Jesus cannot have been mistaken as to the future; and, secondly, that he really uttered these predictions. Now, neither of these assumptions is capable of proof. The first we shall not dispute, because we have no adequate means of coming to a conclusion on the subject. But as to the second assumption, we think there are several indications that, though the predictions in question were current among the Christians when the gospels were composed, yet that they did not, at least as handed down to us, proceed

from the lips of Christ; but were, as far as related to the second advent, the unauthorised anticipations of the disciples; and, as far as related to the destruction of the city, partly gathered from the denunciations of Old Testament prophecy, and partly from actual knowledge of the events which passed under their eyes.

In the *first* place, it is not admissible that Jesus could have been so true a prophet as to one part of the prediction, and so entirely in error as to the other, both parts referring equally to future events. *Secondly*, the three gospels in which these predictions occur are allowed to have been written between the years 65 and 72 A.D., or during the war which ended in the destruction of Jerusalem¹; that is, they were written during and

after the events which they predict. They may, therefore, either have been entirely drawn from the events, or have been vaguely in existence before, but have derived their definiteness and precision from the events. And we have already seen in the case of the first evangelist, that he, at least, did not scruple to eke out and modify the predictions he recorded, from his own experience of their fulfilment. *Thirdly*, the parallel passages, both in Matthew and Mark, contain an expression twice repeated—"the elect"—which we can say almost with certainty was unknown in the time of Christ, though frequently found in the epistles, and used, at the time the gospels were composed, to designate the members of the Christian Church.

CHAPTER VIII

SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED—MARK AND LUKE

MANY of the criticisms contained in the last chapter—tending to prove that Matthew's Gospel contains several statements not strictly accurate, and attributes to Jesus several expressions and discourses which were not really uttered by him—are equally applicable both to Mark and Luke. The similarity—not to say identity—of the greater portion of Mark's narrative with that of Matthew leaves no room for doubt either that one evangelist copied from the other, or that both employed the same documents, or oral narratives, in the compilation of their histories. Our own clear conviction is that Mark was the earliest in time, and far the most correct in fact.

¹ The war began by Vespasian's entering Galilee in the beginning of the year A.D. 67, and the city was taken in the autumn of A.D. 70.

As we have already stated, we attach little weight to the tradition of the second century, that the second gospel was written by Mark, the companion of Peter. It originated with Papias, whose works are now lost, but who was stated to be a "weak man" by Eusebius, who records a few fragments of his writings. But if the tradition be correct, the omissions in this gospel, as compared with the first, are significant enough. It omits entirely the genealogies, the miraculous conception, several matters relating to Peter (especially his walking on the water, and the commission of the keys), and everything miraculous or improbable relating to the resurrection¹—everything, in fact, but the simple statement that the body

¹ We must not forget that the real genuine Gospel of Mark terminates with the 8th verse of the 16th chapter.

was missing, and that a "young man" assured the visitors that Christ was risen.

In addition to these, there are two or three peculiarities in the discourses of Jesus, as recorded by Mark, which indicate that the evangelist thought it necessary and allowable slightly to modify the language of them, in order to suit them to the ideas or the feelings of the Gentile converts; if, as is commonly supposed, it was principally designed for them. We copy a few instances of these, though resting little upon them.

Matthew, who wrote for the Jews, has the following passage, in the injunctions pronounced by Jesus on the sending forth of the twelve apostles: "Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not. But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (x. 5). Mark, who wrote for the Gentiles, *omits entirely this unpalatable charge* (v. 7-13).

Matthew (xv. 24), in the story of the Canaanitish woman, makes Jesus say, "I am not sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." Mark (vii. 26) *omits this expression entirely*, and modifies the subsequent remark. In Matthew it is thus:—"It is not meet to take the children's bread and cast it unto the dogs." In Mark it is softened by the preliminary, "*Let the children first be filled,*" &c.

Matthew (xxiv. 20), "But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, *neither on the Sabbath day.*" Mark omits the last clause, which would have had no meaning for any but the Jews, whose Sabbath day's journey was by law restricted to a small distance.

In the promise given to the disciples, in answer to Peter's question, "Behold we have forsaken all, and followed thee; what shall we have therefore?" The following verse, given by Matthew (xix. 28), *is omitted by Mark* (x. 28):—"Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration, when the Son of Man shall sit in the

throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel."

The Gospel of Luke, which is a work in some respects of more pretension, and unquestionably of more literary merit, than the two first, will require a few additional observations. The remarks we have made on the prophecies of his own sufferings and resurrection, alleged by Matthew and Mark to have been uttered by Jesus, apply equally to Luke's narrative, in which similar passages occur; and in these, therefore, we must admit that the third evangelist, like the other two, ascribed to Jesus discourses which never really proceeded from him. But besides these, there are several passages in Luke which bear an equally apocryphal character, some of which it will be interesting to notice.

The first chapter, from verse 5-80, contains the account of the annunciation and birth of John the Baptist, with all the marvellous circumstances attending it, and also the annunciation to Mary, and the miraculous conception of Jesus—an account exhibiting many remarkable discrepancies with the corresponding narrative in Matthew. We are spared the necessity of a detailed investigation of this chapter by the agreement of the most learned critics, both of the orthodox and sceptical schools, in considering the narrative as poetical and legendary.¹ It is examined at great length by Strauss, who is at the head of the most daring class of the Biblical Commentators of Germany, and by Schleiermacher, who ranks first among the learned divines of that country. The latter (in the work translated by one of our most erudite and liberal Prelates, and already often referred to), writes thus, pp. 25-7:—

"Thus, then, we begin by detaching the first chapter as an originally independent composition. If we consider it in this light somewhat more closely, we

¹ [The recent repudiation of the "Virgin-birth" by modern divines will be in the memory of all.]

cannot resist the impression that it was originally rather a little poetical work than a properly-historical narrative. The latter supposition, in its strictest sense at all events, no one will adopt, or contend that the angel Gabriel announced the advent of the Messiah in figures so purely Jewish, and in expressions taken mostly from the Old Testament; or that the alternate song between Elizabeth and Mary actually took place in the manner described; or that Zacharias, at the instant of recovering his speech, made use of it to utter the hymn, without being disturbed by the joy and surprise of the company, by which the narrator himself allows his description to be interrupted. At all events we should then be obliged to suppose that the author made additions of his own, and enriched the historical narrative by the lyrical effusions of his own genius." . . . "If we consider the whole grouping of the narrative, there naturally presents itself to us a pleasing little composition, completely in the style and manner of several Jewish poems, still extant among our apocryphal writings, written in all probability originally in Aramaic by a Christian of the more liberal Judaising school." . . . "There are many other statements which I should not venture to pronounce historical, but would rather explain by the occasion the poet had for them. To these belongs, in the first place, John's being a late-born child, which is evidently only imagined for the sake of analogy with several heroes of Hebrew antiquity; and, in the next place, the relation between the ages of John and Christ, and likewise the consanguinity of Mary and Elizabeth, which besides, it is difficult to reconcile with the assertion of John (John, i, 33), that he did not know Christ before his baptism."

In the second chapter we have the account of the birth of Jesus, and the accompanying apparition of a multitude of angels to shepherds in the fields near Bethlehem—as to the historical foundation of which Strauss and Schleierma-

cher are at variance; the former regarding it as wholly mythical, and the latter as based upon an actual occurrence, imperfectly remembered in after times, when the celebrity of Jesus caused every contribution to the history of his birth and infancy to be eagerly sought for. All that we can say on the subject with any certainty is, that the tone of the narrative is legendary. The poetical rhapsody of Simeon when Jesus was presented in the temple may be passed over with the same remark;—but the 33rd verse, where we are told that "Joseph and his mother marvelled at those things which were spoken of him," proves clearly one of two things:—either the unhistorical character of the Song of Simeon, and of the consequent astonishment of the parents of Jesus—or the unreality of the miraculous annunciation and conception. It is impossible, if an angel had actually announced to Mary the birth of the divine child in the language, or in anything resembling the language, recorded in Luke i. 31-35; and if, in accordance with that announcement, Mary had found herself with child before she had any *natural* possibility of being so—that she should have felt any astonishment whatever at the prophetic announcement of Simeon, so consonant with the angelic promise, especially when occurring after the miraculous vision of the Shepherds, which, we are told, "she pondered in her heart." Schleiermacher has felt this difficulty, and endeavours to evade it by considering the first and second chapters to be two monographs originally by different hands, which Luke incorporated into his gospel. This was very probably the case; but it does not avoid the difficulty, as it involves giving up ii. 33 as an unauthorised and incorrect statement.

The genealogy of Jesus, as given in the third chapter, may be in the main correct, though there are some perplexities in one portion of it; but if the previous narrative be correct, it is not the genealogy of Jesus at all, but only of Joseph, who was no relation to him whatever, but simply his guardian. On the other

hand, if the preparer of the genealogy, or the evangelist who records it, knew or believed the story of the miraculous conception, we can conceive no reason for his admitting a pedigree which is either wholly meaningless, or destructive of his previous statements. The insertion in verse 23, "as was supposed," whether by the evangelist or a subsequent copyist, merely shows that whoever made it perceived the incongruity, but preferred neutralising the genealogy to omitting it.¹

In all the synoptical gospels we find instances of the cure of demoniacs by Jesus early in his career, in which the demons, promptly, spontaneously, and loudly, bear testimony to his Messiahship. These statements occur once in Matthew (viii. 29)—four times in Mark (i. 24, 34; iii. 11; v. 7); and three times in Luke (iv. 33, 41; viii. 28).² Now, two points are evident to common sense, and are fully admitted by honest criticism:—*first*, that these demoniacs were lunatic and epileptic patients; and *secondly*, that Jesus (or the narrators who framed the language of Jesus throughout the synoptical gospels) shared the common belief that these maladies were caused by evil spirits inhabiting the bodies of the sufferers. We are then landed in this conclusion—certainly not a probable one, nor the one intended to be conveyed by the narrators—that the idea of Jesus being the Messiah was adopted by madmen before it had found entrance into the public mind, apparently even before it was received by his immediate disciples—was in fact first suggested by madmen;—in other words, that it was an idea which originated with insane brains

¹ The whole story of the Incarnation, however, is effectually discredited by the fact that none of the Apostles or sacred Historians make any subsequent reference to it, or indicate any knowledge of it.

² It is worthy of remark that no narrative of the healing of demoniacs, stated as such, occurs in the fourth gospel. This would intimate it to be the work of a man who had outgrown, or had never entertained, the idea of maladies arising from possession. It is one of many indications in this evangelist of a Greek rather than a Jewish mind.

—which presented itself to, and found acceptance with, insane brains more readily than sane ones. The conception of the evangelists clearly was that Jesus derived honour (and his mission confirmation) from this early recognition of his Messianic character by hostile spirits of a superior order of Intelligences; but to us, who know that these supposed superior Intelligences were really unhappy men whose natural intellect had been perverted or impaired, the effect of the narrative becomes absolutely reversed;—and if they are to be accepted as historical, they lead inevitably to the conclusion that the idea of the Messiahship of Jesus was originally formed in disordered brains, and spread thence among the mass of the disciples. The only rescue from this conclusion lies in the admission, that these narratives are not historical, but mythic, and belong to that class of additions which early grew up in the Christian Church, out of the desire to honour and aggrandise the memory of its Founder, and which our uncritical evangelists embodied as they found them.

Passing over a few minor passages of doubtful authenticity or accuracy, we come to one near the close of the gospel, which we have no scruple in pronouncing to be an unwarranted interpolation. In xxii. 36-38, Jesus is reported, after the last Supper, to have said to his disciples, "He that hath no sword, let him sell his garment and buy one. And they said, Lord, behold, here are two swords. And he said, It is enough." Christ never could have uttered such a command, nor, we should imagine, anything which could have been mistaken for it. The very idea is contradicted by his whole character, and utterly precluded by the narratives of the other evangelists;—for when Peter did use the sword, he met with a severe rebuke from his Master:—"Put up thy sword into the sheath: the cup which my Father hath given me shall I not drink it?"—according to John "Put up again thy sword into its place; for all they that take the sword shall perish by

the sword,"—according to Matthew. The passage we conceive to be a clumsy invention of some early narrator, to account for the remarkable fact of Peter having a sword at the time of Christ's apprehension; and it is inconceivable to us how a sensible compiler like Luke could have admitted into his history such an apocryphal and unharmonising fragment.

In conclusion, then, it appears certain that in all the synoptical gospels we have events related which did not really occur,

and words ascribed to Jesus which Jesus did not utter; and that many of these words and events are of great significance. In the great majority of these instances, however, this incorrectness does not imply any want of honesty on the part of the Evangelists, but merely indicates that they adopted and embodied, without much scrutiny or critical acumen, whatever probable and honourable narratives they found current in the Christian community.

CHAPTER IX

SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED—GOSPEL OF JOHN

IN the examination of the fourth Gospel a different mode of criticism from that hitherto pursued is required. Here we do not find, so frequently as in the other Evangelists, particular passages which pronounce their own condemnation, by anachronisms, peculiarity of language, or incompatibility with others more obviously historical; but the whole tone of the delineations, the tenor of the discourses, and the general course of the narrative, are utterly different from those contained in the synoptical gospels, and also from what we should expect from a Jew speaking to Jews, writing of Jews, imbued with the spirit and living in the land of Judaism.

By the common admission of all recent critics, this gospel is rather to be regarded as a polemic, than an historic composition.¹ It was written less with the intention of giving a complete and continuous view of Christ's character and career, than to meet and confute certain heresies which had sprung up in the Christian church near the close of the first century, by selecting, from the

¹ See Hug, Strauss, Hennell, De Wette. Also Dr. Tait's "Suggestions."

memory of the author, or the traditions then current among believers, such narratives and discourses as were conceived to be most opposed to the heresies in question. Now these heresies related almost exclusively to the person and nature of Jesus; on which points we have many indications that great difference of opinion existed, even during the apostolic period. The obnoxious doctrines especially pointed at in the gospel appear, both from internal evidence and external testimony,¹ to be those held by Cerinthus and the Nicolaitans, which, according to Hug, were as follows:—The one Eternal God is too pure, perfect, and pervading an essence to be able to operate on matter; but from him emanated a number of inferior and gradually degenerating spiritual natures, one of whom was the Creator of the world,—hence its imperfections. Jesus was simply and truly a man, though an eminently great and virtuous one; but one of the above spiritual

¹ Irenæus, Jerome, Epiphanius. See Hug, § 51. See also a very detailed account of the Gnostics in Norton's "Genuineness of the Gospels," ii. c. 1, 2.

natures—the Christ, the Son of God—united itself to Jesus at his baptism, and thus conferred upon him superhuman power. “This Christ, as an immaterial Being of exalted origin, one of the purer kinds of spirits, was from his nature unsusceptible of material affections, of suffering and pain. He, therefore, at the commencement of the Passion, resumed his separate existence, abandoned Jesus to pain and death, and soared upwards to his native heaven. Cerinthus distinguished *Jesus* and *Christ*, *Jesus* and the *Son of God*, as beings of different nature and dignity.¹ The Nicolaitans held similar doctrines in regard to the Supreme Deity and his relation to mankind, and an inferior spirit who was the Creator of the world. Among the subaltern orders of spirits they considered the most distinguished to be the only-begotten, the *μονογενής* (whose existence, however, had a beginning), and the *λόγος*, the Word, who was an immediate descendant of the only-begotten.”²

These, then, were the opinions which the author of the fourth gospel wrote to controvert; in confirmation of which being his object we have his own statement (xx. 31): “These are written” (not that ye may know the life and understand the character of our great Teacher, but that ye may believe his nature to be what I affirm) “that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing, ye might have life through his name.” Now, a narrative written with a controversial aim—a narrative, more especially, consisting of recollected or selected circumstances and discourses—carries within it, as everyone will admit, from the very nature of fallible humanity, an obvious element of inaccuracy. A man who *writes a history to prove a doctrine* must be something more than a man, if he writes that history with

¹ Several critics contend that the original reading of 1 John iv. 3 was, “Every spirit that separateth Jesus (from the Christ) is not of God.”—See Hug, p. 423.

² Hug, § 51.

a scrupulous fidelity of fact and colouring. Accordingly, we find that the public discourses of Jesus in this gospel turn almost exclusively upon the dignity of his own person, which topic is brought forward in a manner and with a frequency which it is impossible to regard as historical. The prominent feature in the character of Jesus, as here depicted, is an overweening tendency to self-glorification. We see no longer, as in the other gospels, a prophet eager to bring men to God, and to instruct them in righteousness, but one whose whole mind seems occupied with the grandeur of his own nature and mission. In the first three gospels we have the message; in the fourth we have comparatively little but the messenger. If any of our readers will peruse the gospel with this observation in their minds, we are persuaded the result will be a very strong and probably painful impression that they cannot here be dealing with the genuine language of Jesus, but simply with a composition arising out of deep conviction of his superior nature, left in the mind of the writer by the contemplation of his splendid genius and his noble and lovely character.

The difference of style and subject between the discourses of Jesus in the fourth gospel and in the synoptical ones has been much dwelt upon, and we think by no means too much, as proving the greater or less unauthenticity of the former. This objection has been met by the supposition that the finer intellect and more spiritual character of John induced him to select, and enabled him to record, the more subtle and speculative discourses of his Master, which were unacceptable or unintelligible to the more practical and homely minds of the other disciples; and reference is made to the parallel case of Xenophon and Plato, whose reports of the conversations of Socrates are so different in tone and matter as to render it very difficult to believe that both sat at the feet of the same master, and listened to the same teaching. But the citation

is an unfortunate one; for in this case, also, it is more than suspected that the more simple recorder was the more correct one, and that the sublimer and subtler peculiarities in the discourses reported by Plato belong rather to the disciple than to the teacher. Had John merely *superadded* some more refined and mystical discourses omitted by his predecessors, the supposition in question might have been admitted; but it is impossible not to perceive that here the *whole tone* of the mind delineated is new and discrepant, though often eminently beautiful.

Another argument, which may be considered as conclusive against the historical fidelity of the discourses of Jesus in the fourth gospel is, that not only they, but the discourses of John the Baptist likewise, are entirely in the style of the evangelist himself, where he introduces his own remarks, both in the gospel and in the first epistle. He makes both Jesus and the Baptist speak exactly as he himself speaks. Compare the following passages:—

John iii. 31-36. (Baptist loquitur.) He that cometh from above is above all: he that is of the earth is earthly, and speaketh of the earth: he that cometh from heaven is above all. And what he hath seen and heard, that he testifieth; and no man receiveth his testimony.

He that receiveth his testimony hath set to his seal that God is true.

For he whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God; for God giveth not the spirit by measure.

The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand.

John viii. 23. (Jesus loquitur.) Ye are from beneath, I am from above; ye are of this world; I am not of this world.

iii. 11. (Jesus loq.) We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen; and ye receive not our testimony.

viii. 26. (Jesus loq.) I speak to the world those things which I have heard of him.— (See also vii. 16-18; xiv. 24.)

v. 20. (Jesus loq.) The Father loveth the Son, and showeth him all things that himself doeth.

xiii. 3. (Evangelist loq.) Jesus knowing

that the Father had given all things into his hands.

He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life, and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.

vi. 47. (Jesus loq.) He that believeth on me hath everlasting life.—(See also I Epistle v. 10-13, and Gospel iii. 18, where the Evangelist or Jesus speaks.)

vi. 40. (Jesus loq.) And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life.

Another indication that in a great part of the fourth gospel we have not the genuine discourses of Jesus, is found in the mystical and enigmatical nature of the language. This peculiarity, of which we have scarcely a trace in the other Evangelists, beyond the few parables which they did not at first understand, but which Jesus immediately explained to them, pervades the fourth gospel. The great Teacher is here represented as absolutely labouring to be unintelligible, to soar out of the reach of his hearers, and at once perplex and disgust them. "It is the constant method of this Evangelist, in detailing the conversation of Jesus, to form the knot and progress of the discussions, by making the interlocutors understand literally what Jesus intended figuratively. The type of the dialogue is that in which language intended spiritually is understood carnally." The instances of this are inconceivably frequent and unnatural. We have the conversation with the Jews about "the temple of his body" (ii. 21); the mystification of Nicodemus on the subject of regeneration (iii. 3-10); the conversation with the Samaritan woman (iv. 10-15); with his disciples about "the food which ye know not of" (iv. 32); with the people about the "bread from heaven" (vi. 31-35); with the Jews about giving them his flesh to eat (vi. 48-66); with the Pharisees about his disappearance (vii. 33-39, and viii. 21,

22); again about his heavenly origin and pre-existence (viii. 37, 34, and 56-58); and with his disciples about the sleep of Lazarus (xi. 11-14). Now, in the first place, it is very improbable that Jesus, who came to preach the gospel to the poor, should so constantly have spoken in a style which his hearers could not understand; and in the next place, it is equally improbable that an Oriental people, so accustomed to figurative language,¹ and whose literature was so eminently metaphorical, should have misapprehended the words of Jesus so stupidly and so incessantly as the Evangelist represents them to have done.

But perhaps the most conclusive argument against the historical character of the discourses in the fourth gospel is to be found in the fact that, whether dialogues or monologues, they are complete and continuous, resembling compositions rather than recollections, and of a length which it is next to impossible could have been accurately retained—even if we adopt Bertholdt's improbable hypothesis, that the apostle took notes of Jesus' discourses at the time of their delivery. Notwithstanding all that has been said as to the possible extent to which the powers of memory may go, it is difficult for an unprepossessed mind to believe that discourses such as that contained in the 14th, 15th, and 16th chapters could have been accurately retained and reported unless by a shorthand writer, or by one favoured with supernatural assistance. "We hold it therefore to be established" (says Strauss,² and in the main we agree with him) "that the discourses of Jesus in the fourth gospel are mainly free compositions of the Evangelist; but we have admitted that he has culled several sayings of Jesus

from an authentic tradition, and hence we do not extend this proposition to those passages which are countenanced by parallels in the synoptical gospels. In these latter compilations we have an example of the vicissitudes which befall discourses that are preserved only in the memory of a second party. Severed from their original connection, and broken up into smaller and smaller fragments, they present, when reassembled, the appearance of a mosaic, in which the connection of the parts is a purely external one, and every transition an artificial juncture. The discourses in John present just the opposite appearance. Their gradual transitions, only occasionally rendered obscure by the mystical depths of meaning in which they lie—transitions in which one thought develops itself out of another, and a succeeding proposition is frequently but an explanatory amplification of the preceding one—are indicative of a pliable, unresisting mass, such as is never presented to a writer by the traditional sayings of another, but by such only as proceeds from the stores of his own thought, which he moulds according to his will. For this reason the contributions of tradition to these stores of thought were not so likely to have been *particular independent sayings of Jesus, as rather certain ideas which formed the basis of many of his discourses*, and which were modified and developed according to the bent of a mind of Greek or Alexandrian culture."¹

Another peculiarity of this gospel—arising, probably, out of its controversial origin—is its exaltation of dogma over morality—of belief over spiritual affection.

¹ See the remarks of Strauss on the conversation with Nicodemus, from which it appears that the image of a new birth was a current one among the Jews, and *could not* have been so misunderstood by a master in Israel, and in fact that the whole conversation is almost certainly fictitious.—ii. 153.

² "Leben Jesu," ii. 187.

¹ See also Hennell, p. 200. "The picture of Jesus bequeathing his parting benedictions to the disciples, seems fully to warrant the idea that the author was one whose imagination and affections had received an impress from real scenes and real attachments. The few relics of the words, looks, and acts of Jesus, which friendship itself could at that time preserve unmixed, he expands into a complete record of his own and the disciples' sentiments; what they felt, he makes Jesus speak."

In the other gospels, piety, charity, forgiveness of injuries, purity of life, are preached by Christ as the titles to his kingdom and his Father's favour. Whereas, in John's gospel, as in his epistles, belief in Jesus as the Son of God, the Messiah, the Logos—belief, in fact, in the evangelist's view of his nature—is constantly represented as the one thing needful. The whole tone of the history bears token of a time when the message was beginning to be forgotten in the Messenger; when metaphysical and fruitless discussions as to the nature of Christ had superseded devotion to his spirit, and attention to the sublime piety and simple self-sacrificing holiness which formed the essence of his own teaching. The discourses are often touchingly eloquent and tender, the narrative is full of beauty, pathos, and nature; but we miss the simple and intelligible truth, the noble, yet practicable, morality of the other histories; we find in it more of Christ than of Christianity, and more of John than of Jesus. If the work of an apostle at all, it was of an apostle who had caught but a fragment of his Master's mantle, or in whom the good original seed had been choked by the long bad habit of subtle and scholastic controversies. We cannot but regard this gospel as decidedly inferior in moral sublimity and purity to the other representations of Christ's teaching which have come down to us; its religion is more of a dogmatic creed, and its very philanthropy has a narrower and more restricted character.

There are several minor peculiarities which distinguish this gospel from the preceding ones, which we can do no more than indicate. We find here little about the Kingdom of Heaven—nothing about Christ's mission being confined to the Israelites—nothing about the casting out of devils—nothing about the destruction of Jerusalem—nothing about the struggle between the law and gospel—topics which occupy so large a space in the picture of Christ's ministry given in the synoptical gospels; and the omission of

which seems to refer the composition of this narrative to a later period, when the Gentiles were admitted into the Church—when the idea of demoniacal possession had given way before a higher culture—when Jerusalem had been long destroyed—and when Judaism had quite retired before Christianity, at least within the pale of the Church.¹

¹ Modern criticism has detected several slight errors and inaccuracies in the fourth gospel, such as Sychar for Sichem, Siloam erroneously interpreted *sent*, &c., &c., from which it has been argued that the writer could not have been a native of Palestine, and by consequence not the Apostle John.

These, however, are insignificant in comparison with the discrepancy as to the date of the Last Supper in the different Evangelists, the Synoptists fixing it *on* the Feast of the Passover and the Fourth Gospel on the previous day. This discrepancy gave rise to the famous "Quartodeciman Controversy," as it is called, which so long agitated the early Church, and was at last only quelled by an authoritative decree of the Emperor Constantine. Those who wish to understand the question, and the light which its details throw upon the probable authorship of the fourth Gospel, will find an exhaustive account in Section ix. of Mr. Tayler's learned inquiry already referred to.—The remarkable points are that the early controversialists, who took the view and held to the practice of the Synoptists, appealed to *the Apostle John* as their strongest authority on their side;—while it was not till very late in the discussion that their adversaries seem to have thought of quoting the fourth Gospel in *their* favour;—that this Gospel entirely ignores the institution of the Eucharist in its account of the last days of Jesus, though apparently alluding to it in some earlier chapters;—and that the object of the author appears to have been to represent, by implication at least, Christ as *being* himself the Paschal Lamb, not as partaking of it.

If the fourth gospel were really the work of the Apostle John, it would seem impossible to avoid the inference that the institution of "the Sacrament" of bread and wine as recorded by the other Evangelists is entirely unhistorical, and then all the stupendous ecclesiastical corollaries flowing from it fall to the ground. It is impossible that John could have *forgotten* such commands or assertions as are supposed to be involved in the words, "Take eat; this is my body," &c.—It is equally impossible that, if they were ever spoken, and signified what Christians in general believe to be their significance, the disciple who leaned on the bosom of Jesus while they were uttered could have so under-valued their meaning as to have omitted to record them. The dilemma, then, seems to

Though we have seen ample reason to conclude that nearly all the discourses of Jesus in the fourth gospel are mainly the composition of the evangelist from memory or tradition, rather than the genuine utterances of our great Teacher, it may be satisfactory, as further confirmation, to select a few single passages and expressions, as to the unauthentic character of which there can be no question. Thus at ch. iii. 11, Jesus is represented as saying to Nicodemus, in the midst of his discourse about regeneration, "We speak that we do know, and testify that which we have seen; and ye receive not our witness,"—expressions wholly unmeaning and out of place in the mouth of Jesus on an occasion where he is testifying nothing at all, but merely propounding a mystical dogma to an auditor dull of comprehension—but expressions which are the evangelist's habitual form of asseveration and complaint.

It is not clear whether the writer intended verses 16-21 to form part of the discourse of Jesus, or merely a commentary of his own. If the former, they are clearly unwarrantable; their point of view is that of a period when the teaching of Christ had been known and rejected, and they could not have been uttered with any justice or appropriateness at the very commencement of his ministry.

Ch. xi. 8. "His disciples say unto him, Master, the Jews of late sought to stone thee: and goest thou thither again?" *The Jews* is an expression which would be natural to Ephesians or other foreigners when speaking of the inhabitants of Palestine, but could not have been used by Jews speaking of

be inescapable:—*Either* John did not write the fourth Gospel—in which case we have the direct testimony of no eye-witness to the facts and sayings of Christ's ministry;—*Or* the Sacrament of the Lord's supper, as deduced from the Synoptical accounts, with the special doctrines of Sacramental grace to partakers of it, and of the Atonement (as far as it is warranted or originally was suggested by those words of Christ), becomes "the baseless fabric of a vision."

their own countrymen. They would have said, the People, or, the Pharisees. The same observation applies to xiii. 33, and also probably to xviii. 36.

Ch. xvii. 3. "And this is life eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God, and *Jesus Christ* whom Thou hast sent." This would be a natural expression for the evangelist, but scarcely for his Master.

As before observed, great doubt hangs over the whole story of the testimony borne by the Baptist to Jesus at his baptism. In the fourth evangelist, this testimony is represented as most emphatic, public, and repeated—so that it could have left no doubt in the minds of any of his followers, either as to the grandeur of the mission of Jesus, or as to his own subordinate character and position (i. 29-36; iii. 26-36). Yet we find, from Acts xviii. 25, and again xix. 3, circles of John the Baptist's disciples, who appear never even to have heard of Jesus—a statement which we think is justly held irreconcilable with the statements above referred to in the fourth gospel.

The question of miracles will be considered in a future chapter, and several of those related in this Gospel—significantly seven in number, and in culminating order—have special characteristics of their own; but there is one miracle, peculiar to John, of so singular and apocryphal a character as to call for notice here. The turning of water into wine at the marriage feast in Cana of Galilee has long formed the opprobrium and perplexity of theologians, and must continue to do so as long as they persist in regarding it as an accurate historical relation. None of the numberless attempts to give anything like a probable explanation of the narrative has been attended with the least success. They are for the most part melancholy specimens of ingenuity misapplied, and plain honesty perverted by an originally false assumption. No portion of the gospel history, scarcely any portion of Old Testament, or even of apocryphal,

narratives, bears such unmistakable marks of fiction. It is a story which, if found in any other volume, would at once have been dismissed as a clumsy and manifest invention. In the first place, it is a miracle wrought to supply more wine to men who had already drunk much—a deed which has no suitability to the character of Jesus, and no analogy to any other of his miracles. *Secondly*, though it was, as we are told, the first of his miracles, his mother is represented as expecting him to work a miracle, and to commence his public career with so unfit and improbable a one. *Thirdly*, Jesus is said to have spoken harshly¹ to his mother, asking her what they had in common, and telling her that “his hour (for working miracles) was not yet come,” when he

knew that it *was* come. *Fourthly*, in spite of this rebuff, Mary is represented as still expecting a miracle, and *this particular one*, and as making preparation for it: “She saith to the servants, Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it”; and accordingly Jesus immediately began to give orders to them. *Fifthly*, the superior quality of the wine, and the enormous quantity produced (135 gallons, or in our language, above 43 dozen¹) are obviously fabulous. And those who are familiar with the apocryphal gospels will have no difficulty in recognising the close consanguinity between the whole narrative and the stories of miracles with which they abound. It is perfectly hopeless, as well as mischievous, to endeavour to retain it as a portion of authentic history.

CHAPTER X

RESULTS OF THE FOREGOING CRITICISM

THE conclusion at which we have arrived in the foregoing chapters is of vital moment, and deserves to be fully developed. When duly wrought out, it will be found the means of extricating Religion from Orthodoxy—of rescuing Christianity from Calvinism. We have seen that the Gospels, while they give a fair and faithful *outline* of Christ's character and teaching (the Synoptical gospels at least) fill up that outline with much that is not authentic; that many of the statements therein related are not historical, but mystical or legendary; and that portions at least of the language ascribed to Jesus were never uttered by him, but originated either with the Evangelists themselves, or more frequently in the traditional stores from which they drew their materials.

¹ All attempts at explanation have failed to remove this character from the expression—*γύναι τί έμοι και σοί.*

We cannot, indeed, say in all cases, nor even in most cases, *with certainty*—in many we cannot even pronounce with any very strong *probability*—that such and such particular expressions or discourses are, or are not, the genuine utterances of Christ. With respect to some, we can say with confidence that they are *not* from him; with respect to others, we can say with almost equal confidence that they are his actual words; but with regard to the majority of passages this certainty is not attainable. But as we *know* that much did not proceed from Jesus—that much is unhistorical and ungentine—we are entitled

¹ See the calculation in Hennell, and in Strauss, ii. 432. The *μετρητης* is supposed to correspond to the Hebrew *bath*, which was equal to $1\frac{1}{2}$ Roman amphora, or 8.7 gallons; the whole quantity would therefore be from 104 to 156 gallons.

to conclude—we are even *forced*, by the very instinct of our reasoning faculty, to conclude that the unhistorical and un-genuine passages are those in which Jesus is represented as speaking and acting in a manner uncomformable to his character as otherwise delineated, irreconcilable with the tenour of his teaching as elsewhere described, and at variance with those grand moral and spiritual truths which have commanded the assent of all disciplined and comprehensive minds, and which could scarcely have escaped an intellect so just, wide, penetrating, and profound as that of our great Teacher.

Most reflecting minds rise from a perusal of the gospel history with a clear, broad, vivid conception of the character and mission of Christ, notwithstanding the many passages at which they have stumbled, and which they have felt—perhaps with needless alarm and self-reproach—to be incongruous and unharmonising with the great whole. The question naturally arises, Did these incongruities and inconsistencies really exist in Christ himself? or, are they the result of the imperfect and unhistorical condition in which his biography has been transmitted to us? The answer, it seems to us, ought to be this:—We cannot *prove*, it is true, that some of these unsuitabilities did not exist in Christ himself, but we have shown that many of them belong to the history, not to the subject of the history, and it is only fair, therefore, in the absence of contrary evidence, to conclude that the others also are due to the same origin.

Now the peculiar, startling, perplexing, revolting, and contradictory doctrines of modern orthodoxy—so far as they have originated from or are justified by the gospels at all—have originated from, or are justified by, not the general tenour of Christ's character and preaching, *but those single unharmonising, discrepant, texts of which we have been speaking.* Doctrines, which unsophisticated men feel to be inadmissible and repellent and which those who hold them most

devotedly secretly admit to be fearful and perplexing, are founded on particular passages which contradict the *generality* of Christ's teaching, but which, being attributed to him by the evangelists, have been regarded as endowed with an authority which it would be profane and dangerous to resist. In showing, therefore, that several of these passages did not emanate from Christ, and that in all probability none of them did, we conceive that we shall have rendered a vast service to the cause of true religion, and to those numerous individuals in whose tortured minds sense and conscience have long struggled for the mastery. We will elucidate this matter by a few specifications.¹

One of the most untenable, unphilosophical, uncharitable doctrines of the orthodox creed—one most peculiarly stamped with the impress of the bad passions of humanity—is, that *belief* (by which is generally signified belief in Jesus as the Son of God, the promised Messiah, a Teacher sent down from Heaven on a special mission to redeem mankind) *is essential, and the one thing essential, to Salvation.* The source of this doctrine must doubtless be sought for in that intolerance of opposition unhappily so common among men, and in that tendency to ascribe bad motives to those who arrive at different conclusions from themselves, which prevails so generally among unchastened minds. But it cannot be denied that the gospels contain many texts which clearly affirm or fully imply a doctrine so untenable and harsh. Let us turn to a few of these and inquire into the degree of authenticity to which they are probably entitled.

The most specific assertion of the

¹ It is true that many of the doctrines in question had not a scriptural origin at all, but an ecclesiastical one; and, when originated, were defended by texts from the *epistles*, rather than the *gospels*. The authority of the epistles we shall consider in a subsequent chapter, but if in the meantime we can show that those doctrines have no foundation in the language of Christ, the *chief* obstacle to the renunciation of them is removed.

tenet in question, couched in that positive, terse, sententious damnatory language so dear to orthodox divines, is found in the spurious portion of the gospel of Mark (c. xvi. 16),¹ and is there by the writer, whoever he was, unscrupulously put into the mouth of Jesus after his resurrection. In the synoptical gospels may be found a few texts which may be wrested to support the doctrine, but there are none which teach it. But when we come to the fourth gospel we find several passages similar to that in Mark,² proclaiming Salvation to believers, *but all in the peculiar style and spirit of the author of the first Epistle of John*, which abounds in denunciations precisely similar³ (but directed, it is remarkable, apparently against heretics, not against infidels, against those who believe amiss, not against those who do not believe at all)—all, too, redolent of the temper of that Apostle who wished to call down fire from heaven on an unbelieving village, and *who was rebuked by Jesus for the savage and presumptuous suggestion.*

In the last chapter we have shown that the *style* of these passages is of a nature to point to John, and not to Jesus, as their author, and that the *spirit* of them is entirely hostile and incompatible with the language of Jesus in other parts more obviously faithful. It appears, therefore, that the passages confirmatory of the doctrine in question are found exclusively in a portion of the synoptists which is certainly spurious, and in portions of the fourth gospel which are almost certainly unhistorical; and that they are contradicted by other passages in all the gospels. It only remains to show that as the doctrine is at variance with the spirit of the mild

¹ "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned," a passage which, were it not happily spurious, would suffice to "damn" the book which contains it.

² John iii. 16, 18, 36; v. 24; vi. 29, 40, 47; xi. 25, 26; xx. 31.

³ 1 John ii. 19, 22, 23; iv. 2, 3, 6, 15; v. 1, 5, 10, 12, 13.

and benevolent Jesus, so it is too obviously unsound not to have been recognised as such by one whose clear and grand intelligence was informed and enlightened by so pure a heart.

In the first place, Christ must have known that the same doctrine will be presented in a very different manner, and with very different degrees of evidence for its truth, by different preachers; so much so that to *resist* the arguments of one preacher would imply either dulness of comprehension or obstinate and wilful blindness, while to *yield* to the arguments of his colleague would imply weakness of understanding or instability of purpose. The same doctrine may be presented and defended by one preacher so clearly, rationally, and forcibly that all sensible men (idiosyncrasies apart) must accept it, and by another preacher so feebly, corruptly, and confusedly, that all sensible men must reject it. The rejection of the Christianity preached by Luther, and of the Christianity preached by Tetzels, of the Christianity preached by Loyola and Dunstan, and of the Christianity preached by Oberlin and Pascal, cannot be worthy of the same condemnation. Few Protestants, and no Catholics, will deny that Christianity *has been* so presented to men as to make it a simple affair both of sense and virtue to reject it. To represent, therefore, the reception of a doctrine as a matter of merit, or its rejection as a matter of blame, *without reference to the consideration how and by whom it is preached*, is to leave out the main element of judgment—an error which could not have been committed by the just and wise Jesus.

Further. The doctrine and the passages in question ascribe to "belief" the highest degree of merit, and the sublimest conceivable reward—"eternal life"; and to "disbelief," the deepest wickedness, and the most fearful penalty, "damnation," and "the wrath of God." Now, here we have a logical error, betraying a confusion of intellect which

we may well scruple to ascribe to Jesus. Belief is an effect produced by a cause. It is a condition of the mind induced by the operation of evidence presented. Being, therefore, an *effect*, and not an *act*, it cannot be, or have, a merit. The moment it becomes a distinctly voluntary act (*and therefore a thing of which merit can be predicated*) it ceases to be genuine—it is then brought about (if it be not an abuse of language to name this state "belief") by the will of the individual, not by the *bonâ fide* operation of evidence upon his mind—which brings us to the *reductio ad absurdum*, that belief can only become meritorious by ceasing to be honest.

In sane and competent minds, if the evidence presented is sufficient, belief will follow as a necessary consequence—if it does not follow, this can only arise from the evidence adduced being insufficient—and in such case to pretend belief, or to attempt belief, would be a forfeiture of mental integrity; and cannot therefore be meritorious, but the reverse. To disbelieve, in spite of adequate proof is impossible—to believe without adequate proof is weak or dishonest. Belief, therefore, can only become meritorious by becoming sinful—can only become a fit subject for reward by becoming a fit subject for punishment. Such is the sophism involved in the dogma which theologians have dared to put into Christ's mouth, and to announce on his authority.

But, it will be urged, the disbelief which Christ blamed and menaced with punishment was (as appears from John iii. 19) the disbelief implied in a wilful rejection of his claims, or a refusal to examine them—a love of darkness in preference to light. If so, the language employed is incorrect and deceptive, and the blame is predicated of an effect instead of a cause—it is *meant* of a voluntary action, but it is *predicated* of a specified and denounced consequence which is no natural or logical indication of that voluntary action, but may arise from independent causes. The moralist

who should denounce gout as a sin, meaning the sinfulness to apply to the excesses of which gout is *often, but by no means always*, a consequence and an indication, would be held to be a very confused teacher and inaccurate logician. Moreover, this is not the sense attached to the doctrine by orthodox divines in common parlance. And the fact still remains that Christ is represented as rewarding by eternal felicity a state of mind which, *if honestly attained*, is inevitable, involuntary, and therefore in no way a fitting subject for reward, and which, if not honestly attained, is hollow, fallacious, and deserving of punishment rather than of recompense.

We are aware that the orthodox seek to escape from the dilemma, by asserting that belief results from the state of the heart, and that if this be right belief will inevitably follow. This is simply false in fact. How many excellent, virtuous, and humble minds, in all ages, have been *anxious* but unable to believe—have prayed earnestly for belief, and suffered bitterly for disbelief—in vain!

The dogma of the Divinity, or, as it is called in the technical language of polemics, *the proper Deity*, of Christ, though historically provable to have had an ecclesiastical, not an evangelical, origin¹—though clearly negatived by the whole tenour of the synoptical gospels, and even by some passages in the fourth gospel [and though it is difficult to read the narrative of his career with an unforestalled mind without being clear that Jesus had no notion of such a belief himself, and would have repudiated it with horror]—can yet appeal to several isolated portions and texts, as suggesting and confirming, if not asserting it. On close examination, however, it will be seen that all these passages are to be found either in the fourth gospel—which we have already shown reason to conclude is throughout an unscrupulous and

¹ "The Unscriptural Origin and Ecclesiastical History of the Doctrine of the Trinity," by the Rev. J. Hamilton Thom.

most inexact paraphrase of Christ's teaching—or in those portions of the first three gospels which, on other accounts and from independent trains of argument, have been selected as at least of questionable authenticity. It is true that the doctrine in question is now chiefly defended by reference to the Epistles; but at the same time it would scarcely be held so tenaciously by the orthodox if it were found to be wholly destitute of *evangelical* support. Now, the passages which appear most confirmatory of Christ's Deity, or Divine Nature, are, in the first place, the narratives of the Incarnation, or the miraculous Conception, as given by Matthew and Luke. We have already entered pretty fully into the consideration of the authenticity of these portions of Scripture, and have seen that we may almost with certainty pronounce them to be fabulous, or mythical. The two narratives do not harmonise with each other; they neutralise and negative the genealogies on which depended so large a portion of the proof of Jesus being the Messiah;¹—the marvellous statement they contain is not referred to in any subsequent portion of the two gospels, and is tacitly but positively negated by several passages—it is never mentioned in the Acts or in the Epistles, and was evidently unknown to all the Apostles—and, finally, the tone of the narrative, especially in Luke, is poetical and legendary, and bears a marked similarity to the stories contained in the apocryphal gospels.

The only other expressions in the first three gospels which lend the slightest countenance to the doctrine in question are the acknowledgments of the disciples, the centurion, and the demoniacs that Jesus was the Son of God,²—some

¹ The Messiah must, according to Jewish prophecy, be a lineal descendant of David: this Christ was, according to the genealogies; this he was not, if the miraculous conception be a fact. If, therefore, Jesus came into being as Matthew and Luke affirm, we do not see how he could have been the Messiah.

² An expression here merely signifying a prophet or the Messiah.

of which we have already shown to be of very questionable genuineness,—and the voice from heaven said to have been heard at the baptism and the transfiguration, saying, "This is my beloved Son," &c. But, besides that, as shown in chapter vi., considerable doubt rests on the accuracy of the first of these relations: the testimony borne by the heavenly voice to Jesus can in no sense mean that he was *physically* the Son of God, or a partaker of the divine nature, inasmuch as the very same expression was frequently applied to others, and as indeed a "Son of God" was, in the common parlance of the Jews, simply a prophet, a man whom God had sent, or to whom he had spoken.¹

But when we come to the fourth gospel, especially to those portions of it whose peculiar style betrays that they came from John, and not from Jesus, the case is very different. We find here many passages evidently intended to convey the impression that Jesus was endowed with a superhuman nature, but nearly all expressed in language savouring less of Christian simplicity than of Alexandrian philosophy. The Evangelist commences his gospel with a confused statement of the Platonic doctrine as modified in Alexandria, and that the Logos was a partaker of the Divine Nature, and was the Creator of the world; on which he proceeds to engraft his own notion, that Jesus was this Logos—that the Logos or the divine wisdom, the second person in Plato's Trinity, became flesh in the person of the Prophet of Nazareth. Now, can anyone read the epistles, or the first three gospels—or even the whole of the fourth—and not at once repudiate the notion that Jesus was, and knew himself to be, the Creator of the World?—which John

¹ "The Lord hath said unto me [David], Thou art my son; this day have I begotten thee."—(Ps. ii. 7.) Jehovah says of Solomon, "I will be his father, and he shall be my son."—(2 Sam. vii. 14.) The same expression is applied to Israel (Exod. iv. 22, Hos. xi. 1), and to David (Ps. lxxxix. 27). "I have said, Ye are gods, and all of you are children of the Most High."—(Ps. lxxxii. 6.)

affirms him to have been. Throughout this gospel we find constant repetitions of the same endeavour to make out a superhuman nature for Christ; but the unguineness of these passages has already been fully considered.

Take, again, the doctrine of the Eternity of future punishments—the most *impossible* of the tenets included in the popular creed. It rests upon and is affirmed by one single Gospel text, Matt. xxv. 46;—for, though “hell fire,” “everlasting fire”—*i.e.*, the fire that was kept perpetually burning in the adjacent valley of Gehenna for the consumption of the city refuse—is often spoken of as typifying the fate of the wicked, yet the expression distinctly implies, not everlasting *life* in fire, *but the precise opposite*,—namely, *death*, annihilation, total destruction, in a fire ever at hand and never extinguished. The doctrine is not only in diametric antagonism to all that we can conceive or accept of the attributes of the God of Jesus, but to the whole spirit and teaching of our great Master. It is at variance with other texts and with the general view¹ gathered from authentic Scripture, which teaches the “perishing,” the “death” of the wicked, not their everlasting life in torment. And finally, the isolated text in question occurs in one only of the gospels,—and occurs there (as will be seen by comparing Matt. xxv. 31 with xxiv. 30) in immediate connection with the prophecy as to the coming of the end of the world within the lifetime of the then existing generation,—a prophecy the erroneous-ness of which is now demonstrated, and which there is (to say the least) no need for believing ever to have come out of the mouth of Christ. What are called the “eschatological” discourses are notoriously among the passages in the gospels of most questionable genuineness.

¹ See countless arguments from the pens, not of unbelievers, but of qualified divines—among later ones, “Harmony of Scripture on Future Punishments,” by the Rev. S. Minton, and a paper by “Anglicanus” in the *Contemporary Review* for May, 1872.

Yet it is on the authority of a single verse, so suspiciously located, so repeatedly contradicted elsewhere either distinctly or by implication, and so flagrantly out of harmony with the spirit both of Theism and of Christianity, that we are summoned to accept a dogma revolting alike to our purer instincts and our saner reason!

Once more: the doctrine of the Atonement, of Christ's death having been a sacrifice in expiation of the sins of mankind, is the keystone of the common form of modern orthodoxy. It takes its origin from the epistles, and we believe can only appeal to *three* texts in the Evangelists for even partial confirmation. In Matt. xx. 28 it is said: “The Son of man came, not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a *ransom for many*,”—an expression which may *countenance* the doctrine, but assuredly does not contain it. Again, in Matt. xxvi. 28 we find: “This is my blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many *for the remission of sins*.” Mark (xiv. 24) and Luke (xxi. 20), however, who gave the same sentence, *both omit the significant expression*; while John omits, not only the expression, but the entire narrative of the institution of the Eucharist, which is said elsewhere to have been the occasion of it. In the fourth gospel, John the Baptist is represented as saying of Jesus (i. 29), “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world,” an expression which may possibly be intended to convey the doctrine, but which occurs in what we have already shown to be about the most apocryphal portion of the whole gospel.

In fine, then, we arrive at this irresistible conclusion; that—knowing several passages in the Evangelists to be unauthentic, and having reason to suspect the authenticity of many others, and scarcely being able with absolute certainty to point to any which are perfectly and indubitably authentic—the probability *in favour* of the fidelity of any of

important

the texts relied on to prove the peculiar and perplexing doctrines of modern orthodoxy, is far inferior to the probability *against* the truth of those doctrines. A doctrine perplexing to our reason and painful to our feelings *may* be from God ; but in this case the proof of its being from God must be proportionally clear and irrefragable ; the assertion of it in a narrative which does not scruple to attribute to God's messenger words which he never uttered, is not only no proof, but scarcely even amounts to a presumption. There is no text in the Evangelists, the divine (or Christian) origin of which is sufficiently unquestionable to enable it to serve as the foundation of doctrines repugnant to natural feeling or to common sense.

But, it will be objected, if these conclusions are sound, absolute uncertainty is thrown over the whole gospel history, and all over Christ's teaching. To this we reply, *in limine*, in the language of Algernon Sydney, "No consequence can destroy any truth"; the sole matter for consideration is, Are our arguments correct? not, Do they lead to a result which is embarrassing and unwelcome?

But the inference is excessive ; the premises do not reach so far. The uncertainty thrown is not over the main

points of Christ's history, which, after all its retrenchments, still stands out an intelligible though a skeleton account—not over the grand features, the pervading tone, of his doctrines or his character, which still present to us a clear, consistent, and splendid delineation ; but over those individual statements, passages, and discourses which mar this delineation, which break its unity, which destroy its consistency, which cloud its clearness, which tarnish its beauty. The gain to us seems immense. It is true, we have no longer *absolute* certainty with regard to any one especial text or scene : such is neither necessary nor attainable ; it is true that, instead of passively accepting the whole heterogeneous and indigestible mass, we must, by the careful and conscientious exercise of those faculties with which we are endowed, by ratiocination and moral tact, separate what Christ did from what he did not teach, as best we may. But the task will be difficult to those only who look in the gospels for a minute, dogmatic, and sententious creed—not to those who seek only to learn Christ's spirit, that they may imbibe it, and to comprehend his views of virtue and of God, that they may draw strength and consolation from those fountains of living water.¹

CHAPTER XI

RESURRECTION OF JESUS

WE are now arrived at the most vitally important, and the most intensely interesting, portion of the Christian records—the Resurrection of Jesus. This is the great fact to which the affections of Christians turn with the most cherished eagerness, the grand foundation on which their hopes depend, on which their faith is fixed. If, in consequence of our inquiries, the ordinary doctrine of Scriptural Inspiration be relinquished,

we have reason to rejoice that Religion is relieved from a burden often too great for it to bear. If the complete verbal accuracy of the Gospel narratives is dis-

¹ "The character of the record is such that I see not how any great stress can be laid on particular actions attributed to Jesus. That he lived a divine life, suffered a violent death, taught and lived a most beautiful religion—this seems the great fact about which a mass of truth and error has been collected."—Theodore Parker, "Discourse," p. 188.

proved, orthodoxy and not Christianity is a sufferer by the change, since it is only the more minute and embarrassing tenets of our creed that find their foundation swept away. If investigation shows the miracles of the Bible to be untenable, or at least unobligatory upon our belief, theologians are comforted by feeling that they have one weak and vulnerable outpost the less to defend. But if the resurrection of our Lord should prove, on closer scrutiny, to rest on no adequate evidence, and mental integrity should compel us to expunge it from our creed, the generality of Christians will feel that the whole basis of their faith and hope is gone, and their Christianity will vanish with the foundation on which, perhaps half-unconsciously, they rested it. Whether this ought to be so is a point for future consideration. All that we have now to do is to remember that truth must be investigated without any side-glance to the consequences which that investigation may have upon our hopes. Our faith is sure to fail us in the hour of trial if we have based it on consciously or suspectedly fallacious grounds, and maintained it by wilfully closing our eyes to the flaws in its foundations.

The belief in the resurrection of our Lord, when based upon reflection at all, and not a mere mental habit, will be found to rest on two grounds: *first*, the direct testimony of the Scripture narratives; and *secondly*, the evidence derivable from the subsequent conduct of the Apostles.

I. The narratives of the resurrection contained in the four Gospels present many remarkable discrepancies. But discrepancies in the accounts of an event given by different narrators, whether themselves witnesses, or merely historians, by no means necessarily impugn the reality of the event narrated, but simply those *accessories* of the event to which the discrepancies relate. Thus, when one Evangelist tells us that the two malefactors, who were crucified along with Jesus, reviled him, and another Evange-

list relates that only one of them reviled him, and was rebuked by the other for so doing, though the contradiction is direct and positive, no one feels that the least doubt is thereby thrown upon the fact of two malefactors having been crucified with Jesus, nor of some reviling having passed on the occasion. Therefore the variations in the narratives of the resurrection given by the four Evangelists do not, of themselves, impugn the fact of the resurrection. Even were they (which they are not) the first-hand accounts of eye-witnesses, instead of being merely derived from such, still it is characteristic of the honest testimony of eye-witnesses to be discrepant in collateral minutiae. But, on a closer examination of these accounts, several peculiarities present themselves for more detailed consideration.

I. We have already seen reason for concluding that, of the four Gospels, three at least were certainly not the production of eye-witnesses, but were compilations from oral or documentary narratives current among the Christian community at the time of their composition, and derived doubtless for the most part from very high authority. With regard to the fourth Gospel the opinions of the best critics are so much divided, that all we can pronounce upon the subject with any certainty is, that if it were the production of the Apostle John, it was written at a time when, either from defect of memory, redundancy of imagination, or laxity in his notions of an historian's duty, he allowed himself to take strange liberties with fact.¹ All, therefore, that the Gospels now present to us is the narrative of the Resurrection, not as it actually occurred, but in the form it had assumed among the disciples thirty years or more after the death of Jesus.

Now, the discrepancies which we notice in the various accounts are not greater than might have been expected in historians recording an event, or rather traditions of an event, which oc-

¹ See chap. ix.

curred from thirty to sixty years before they wrote. These records, therefore, discrepant as they are, are, we think, quite sufficient to prove that *something of the kind* occurred, *i.e.*, that some occurrence took place which gave rise to the belief and traditions;—but no more. The agreement of the several accounts shows that something of the kind occurred:—their discrepancies show that this occurrence was not exactly such as it is related to have been.

Something of the kind occurred which formed the groundwork for the belief and the narrative. What, then, was this something—this basis—this nucleus of fact? The Gospel of Mark appears to contain this nucleus, and this alone.¹ It contains nothing but what all the other accounts contain, and nothing that is not simple, credible, and natural, but it contains enough to have formed a foundation for the whole subsequent superstructure. Mark informs us that when the women went early to the Sepulchre, they found it open, the body of Jesus gone, and someone in white garments who assured them that he was risen. *This all the four narratives agree in:—and they agree in nothing else.* The disappearance of the body, then, was certain;—the information that Jesus was risen came from the women alone, who believed it because *they were told it*, and who were also the first to affirm that they had seen their Lord. In the excited state of mind in which all the disciples must have been at this time, were not these three unquestioned circumstances—that the body was gone;—that a figure dressed in white told the women that their Lord was risen;—and that the same women saw *someone whom they believed to be him*;—amply sufficient to make a belief in his resurrection spread with the force and rapidity of a contagion?

¹ We must bear in mind that the *genuine* Gospel of Mark ends with the 8th verse of chapter xvi.; and that there is good reason to believe that Mark's Gospel was, if not the original one, at least the earliest.

2. It is clear that to prove such a miracle as the reappearance in life of a man who had been publicly slain, the direct and concurrent testimony of eye-witnesses would be necessary;—that two or more should state that they saw him at such a time and place, and *knew* him;—and that this clear testimony should be recorded and handed down to us in an authentic document. This degree of evidence we *might* have had:—this we have not. We have epistles from Peter, James, John, and Jude—all of whom are said by the Evangelists to have seen Jesus after he rose from the dead, in none of which epistles is the fact of the resurrection even stated, much less that Jesus was seen by the writer after his resurrection. This point deserves weighty consideration. We have ample evidence that the belief in Christ's resurrection¹ was very early and very general among the disciples, but we have not the direct testimony of any one of the twelve, nor any eye-witness at all, that they saw him on earth after his death. Many writers say, "*he was seen*";—no one says, "*I saw him alive in the flesh.*"

There are three apparent exceptions to this, which, however, when examined, will prove rather confirmatory of our statement than otherwise. If the last chapter of the fourth Gospel were written by the Apostle John, it would contain the direct testimony of an eye-witness to the appearance of Jesus upon earth after his crucifixion. But its genuineness has long been a matter of question among learned men,² and few can read it critically and retain the belief that it is a real relic of the beloved Apostle, or even that it originally formed part of the Gospel to which it is appended. In

¹ The belief in a general resurrection was, we know, prevalent among the Jews in general, and the disciples of Christ especially; and it appears from several passages that the opinion was that the resurrection would be immediate upon death (Luke xx. 38; xxiii. 43). In this case the belief that Christ was risen would follow immediately on the knowledge of his death.

² See Hug, 484.

the first place, the closing verse of the preceding chapter unmistakably indicates the termination of a history. Then, the general tone of the twenty-first chapter—its particularity as to the distance of the bark from shore, and the exact number of fishes taken—the fire ready made when the disciples came to land—the contradiction between the fourth verse and the seventh and twelfth, as to the recognition of Jesus—all partake strongly of the legendary character, as does likewise the conversation between Jesus and Peter. Again, the miraculous draught of fishes which is here placed after the resurrection of Christ, is by Luke related as happening at the very commencement of his ministry. And finally, the last two verses, it is clear, cannot be from the pen of John, and we have no grounds for supposing them to be less genuine than the rest of the chapter. On a review of the whole question we entertain no doubt that the whole chapter was an addition of later date, perhaps by some elder of the Ephesian Church.

In the first Epistle of Peter (iii. 21, 22), the resurrection and existence in heaven of Jesus are distinctly affirmed; but when we remember that the Jews at that time believed in a future life, and apparently in an immediate transference of the spirit from this world to the next, and that this belief had been especially enforced on the disciples of Jesus (Matt. xvii. 1-4; xxii. 32. Luke xvi. 23-31; xxiii. 43), this will appear very different from an assertion that Jesus had actually risen to an earthly life, and that Peter had seen him. Indeed, the peculiar expression that is made use of at ver. 18, in affirming the doctrine ("being slain in flesh, but made alive again in spirit") indicates, in the true meaning of the original, not a fleshly, but a spiritual revivification.

There remains the statement of Paul (1 Cor. xv. 8), "And last of all, he was seen of me also." This assertion, taken with the context, negatives rather than affirms the reappearance of Christ upon

the earth to the bodily eye of his disciples. The whole statement is a somewhat rambling one, and not altogether consistent with the Gospel narratives; but the chief point to be attended to here is that Paul places the appearance of Jesus to the other disciples on the same footing as his appearance to himself. Now, we know that his appearance to Paul was *in a vision*—a vision visible to Paul alone of all the bystanders, and, therefore, *subjective* or mental merely. Moreover, strictly speaking, there was no *vision* at all;—no one was *seen*; there was a bright light, and a voice was heard. In this all the accounts agree. In a subsequent verse, indeed (xxii. 18) Paul says that, when "in a trance in the Temple at Jerusalem," he "*saw*, him (the Lord) saying to him," &c. But this expression, again, seems to imply hearing, not sight. The conclusion to be drawn from the language of Paul would, therefore, be that the appearance of Jesus to the other disciples was visionary likewise. Our original statement, therefore, remains unqualified:—We might have had, and should have expected to have, the direct assertion of *four* Apostles, that they had seen Jesus on earth and in the flesh after his death:—we have not this assertion from any one of them.

3. The statements which have come down to us as to when, where, by whom, and how often Jesus was seen after his death, present such serious and irreconcilable variations as to prove beyond question that they are not the original statements of eye-witnesses, but merely the form which the original statements had assumed, after much transmission, thirty or forty years after the event to which they relate. Let us examine them more particularly. *It will be seen that they agree in everything that is natural and probable, and disagree in everything that is supernatural and difficult of credence.* All the accounts agree that the women, on their matutinal visit to the sepulchre, found the body gone, and saw some one in white raiment who