

The first and second Gospels state that when Jesus cried with a loud voice and yielded up his spirit "the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom."¹ The third Synoptic associates this occurrence with the eclipse of the sun, and narrates it before the final cry and death of the Master.² The fourth Gospel takes no notice of so extraordinary a phenomenon. The question might be asked: How could the chief priests, who do not appear to have been at all convinced by such a miracle, but still continued their invincible animosity against the Christian sect, reveal the occurrence of such a wonder, of which there is no mention elsewhere? Here again the account is legendary and symbolical, and in the spirit of the age of miracles.³

The first Synoptist, however, has further marvels to relate. He states in continuation of the passage quoted above: "and the earth was shaken (*ἐσείσθη*) and the rocks were rent and the sepulchres were opened, and many bodies of the saints who slept were raised; and they came out of the sepulchres after his resurrection, and entered into the holy city and appeared unto many."⁴ How great must be the amazement of anyone who may have been inclined to suppose the Gospels sober historical works, on finding that the other three Evangelists do not even mention these astounding occurrences related by the first Synoptist! An earthquake (*σεισμός*)⁵ and the still more astounding resurrection of many saints who appeared unto "many," and, therefore, an event by no means secret and unknown to all but the Synoptist, and yet three other writers, who give accounts of the crucifixion and death of Jesus, and who enter throughout into very minute details, do not even condescend to mention them! Nor does any other New Testament writer chronicle them. It is unnecessary to say that the passage has been a very serious difficulty for Apologists; and one of the latest writers of this school, reproducing the theories of earlier critics, deals with it in a *Life of Christ*, which "is avowedly and unconditionally the work of a believer,"⁶ as follows: "An earthquake shook the earth and split the rocks, and as it rolled away from their places the great stones which closed and covered the cavern sepulchres of the Jews, it seemed to the imaginations of many to have disimprisoned the spirits of the dead, and to have filled the air with ghostly visitants, who after Christ had risen appeared to linger in the Holy City." In a note he adds: "Only in some such way as this can I account for the singular and

¹ Matt. xxvii. 51; Mark xv. 38.

² Luke xxiii. 45.

³ We have elsewhere referred to the wonderful occurrences related by Josephus at the Temple about the time of the siege (*Bell. Jud.*, vi. 5, § 3; cf. *Apoc.*, xi. 19).

⁴ Matt. xxvii. 51-53.

⁵ So the phenomenon is distinctly called in v. 54.

⁶ Farrar, *Life of Christ*, i., Pref., p. viii.

wholly isolated allusion of Matt. xxvii. 52, 53."¹ It is worthy of note, and we may hereafter refer to the point, that learned divines thus do not scruple to adopt the "vision hypothesis" of the resurrection. Even if the resurrection of the saints so seriously related by the Evangelist be thus disposed of, and it be assumed that the other Gospels, likewise adopting the "vision" explanation, consequently declined to give an objective place in their narrative to what they believed to be a purely subjective and unreal phenomenon, there still remains the earthquake, to which supernatural incident of the crucifixion none of the other Evangelists think it worth while to refer. Need we argue that the earthquake is as mythical as the resurrection of the saints? In some apocryphal writings even the names of some of these risen saints are given.² As the case actually stands, with these marvellous incidents related solely by the first Synoptist and ignored by the other Evangelists, it would seem superfluous to enter upon more detailed criticism of the passage, and to point out the incongruity of the fact that these saints are said to be raised from the dead just as the Messiah expires, or the strange circumstance that, although the sepulchres are said to have been opened at that moment and the resurrection to have then taken place, it is stated that they only came out of their graves after the resurrection of Jesus. The allegation, moreover, that they were raised from the dead at that time, and before the resurrection of Jesus, virtually contradicts the saying of the Apocalypse (i. 5) that Jesus was the "first begotten of the dead," and of Paul (1 Cor. xv. 20) that he was "the first fruits of them who had fallen asleep."³ Paul's whole argument is opposed to such a story; for he does not base the resurrection of the dead upon the death of Jesus, but, in contradistinction, upon his resurrection only. The Synoptist evidently desires to associate the

¹ Farrar, *ib.*, ii., p. 419. Dean Milman, following the explanation of Michaelis, says: "Even the dreadful earthquake which followed seemed to pass away without appalling the enemies of Jesus. The rending of the veil of the Temple from the top to the bottom, so strikingly significant of the abolition of the local worship, would either be concealed by the priesthood, or attributed as a natural effect to the convulsion of the earth. The same convulsion would displace the stones which covered the ancient tombs and lay open many of the innumerable rock-hewn sepulchres which perforated the hills on every side of the city, and expose the dead to public view. To the awe-struck and depressed minds of the followers of Jesus, no doubt, were confined those visionary appearances of these spirits of their deceased brethren, which are obscurely intimated in the rapid narratives of the Evangelists" (*Hist. of Christianity*, i., p. 336). It will be observed that, inadvertently, Dr. Milman has put "Evangelists" in the plural.

² *Anaphora Pilati*, Thilo, *Cod. Apoc. N. T.*, p. 810 f.; Tischendorf, *Evang. Apocr.*, p. 424.

³ Can the author of the Apocalypse or Paul ever have heard of the raising of Lazarus?

resurrection of the saints with the death of Jesus to render that event more impressive, but delays the completion of it in order to give a kind of precedence to the resurrection of the Master. The attempt leads to nothing but confusion. What could be the object of such a resurrection? It could not be represented as any effect produced by the death of Jesus, nor even by his alleged resurrection, for what dogmatic connection could there be between that event and the fact that a few saints only were raised from their graves, whilst it was not pretended that the dead "saints" generally participated in this resurrection? No intimation is given that their appearance to many was for any special purpose, and certainly no practical result has ever been traced to it. Finally we might ask: What became of these saints raised from the dead? Did they die again? Or did they also "ascend into Heaven"? A little reflection will show that these questions are pertinent. It is almost inconceivable that any serious mind could maintain the actual truth of such a story, upon such evidence. Its objective truth not being maintainable, however, the character of the work which advances such an unhesitating statement is determined, and the value of its testimony can without difficulty be settled.

The continuation of this episode in the first Synoptic is quite in keeping with its commencement. It is stated: "But when the centurion and they that were with him watching Jesus saw the earthquake (σεισμὸν) and the things that were done (τὰ γινόμενα) they feared greatly, saying, Truly this was a son of God" ('Αληθῶς υἱὸς θεοῦ ἦν οὗτος).¹ In Mark the statement is very curiously varied: "And when the centurion who stood over against him saw that he so expired, he said: Truly this man was a son of God."² It is argued on the one hand that the centurion's wonder was caused by Jesus dying with so loud a cry, and the reading of many MSS. would clearly support this;³ and on the other that the cause of his exclamation was the unexpectedly rapid death of Jesus. Whichever view be taken, the centurion's deduction, it must be admitted, rests upon singularly inconclusive reasoning.

¹ Matt. xxvii. 54. This is the reading of the Vatican Cod. and D, with some others. Cod. A, C, E, F, and many others, read θεοῦ υἱός. The Sinaitic MS. has 'Αλ. υἱὸς ἦν τοῦ θεοῦ οὗτος. The rendering of the A. V., "the Son of God," cannot be sustained linguistically, whatever may have been the writer's intention.

² Mark xv. 39. The A. V. has: "saw that he so cried out, and gave up the ghost"; κράζας has certainly high authority (A, C, E, G, H, etc.; D has κράξαντα), but the Sin., Vat., and some other codices and versions, omit it, and it is rejected by Tischendorf. We, therefore, take the reading for the moment which leaves the question most open.

³ Meyer, who takes the view, considers that, hearing Jesus expire with so loud a cry, the centurion concluded him to be a "Hero" (*Ev. des Mark u. Lukas, 5te Aufl., 203 f.*).

We venture to think that it is impossible that a Roman soldier could either have been led to form such an opinion upon such grounds, or to express it in such terms. In Luke we have a third reading: "But when the centurion saw what was done, he glorified God, saying, Certainly this man was righteous"¹ (*Ὀυτως ὁ ἄνθρωπος οὗτος δίκαιος ἦν*). There is nothing here about the "Son of God"; but when the writer represents the Roman soldier as glorifying God the narrative does not seem much more probable than that of the other Synoptists.

The fourth Evangelist does not refer to any such episode, but, as usual, introduces a very remarkable incident of his own, of which the Synoptists, who record such peculiar details of what passed, seem very strangely to know nothing. The fourth Evangelist states: "The Jews, therefore, because it was the preparation, that the bodies might not remain upon the cross on the sabbath (for that sabbath-day was a high day), besought Pilate that their legs might be broken and they might be taken away. So the soldiers came and brake the legs of the first, and of the other who was crucified with him; but when they came to Jesus, as they saw that he was dead already, they brake not his legs; but one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith there came out blood and water. And he that hath seen hath borne witness, and his witness is true; and that man knoweth that he saith what is true, that ye also may believe. For these things came to pass that the Scripture might be fulfilled: A bone of him shall not be broken. And again another Scripture saith: They shall look on him whom they pierced."² It is inconceivable that, if this actually occurred, and occurred more especially that the "Scripture might be fulfilled," the other three Evangelists could thus totally ignore it all.³ The second Synoptist does more: he not only ignores, but excludes it; for (xv. 43 f.) he represents Joseph as begging the body of Jesus from Pilate "when evening was now come." "And Pilate marvelled if he were already dead; and, calling unto him the centurion, he asked him whether he had been long dead. And, when he knew it of the centurion, he gave the corpse to Joseph."⁴ Now, although there could be no doubt on the point, the fourth Gospel clearly states (xix. 38, *μετὰ ταῦτα*) that Joseph made his request for the body after the order had been given by Pilate to break the legs of the crucified, and after it had been executed as above described. If Pilate had already given

¹ xxiii. 47.

² John xix. 31-37.

³ The Sin., Vat., and other codices insert in Matt. xxvii. 49 the phrase from John xix. 34, *ἄλλος δὲ λαβὼν λόγχην, ἐνυξεν αὐτοῦ τὴν πλευράν, καὶ ἐξῆλθεν ὕδωρ καὶ αἷμα*. Notwithstanding this high authority, it is almost universally acknowledged that the phrase is an interpolation here.

⁴ Mark xv. 44-45.

import.

the order to break the legs, how is it possible he could have marvelled, or acted as he is described in Mark to have done?

It is well known that the Crurifragium, which is here applied, was not usually an accompaniment of crucifixion, though it may have been sometimes employed along with it,¹ but that it was a distinct punishment. It consisted in breaking, with hammers or clubs, the bones of the condemned from the hips to the feet. We shall not discuss whether, in the present case, this measure really was adopted or not. The representation is that the Jews requested Pilate to break the legs of the crucified that the bodies might be removed before the Sabbath, and that the order was given and executed. The first point to be noted is the very singular manner in which the leg-breaking was performed. The soldiers are said to have broken the legs of the first, and then of the other who was crucified with Jesus, thus passing over Jesus in the first instance; and then the Evangelist says: "*but when they came to Jesus, as they saw that he was dead already, they brake not his legs, but one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side.*" This order of procedure is singular; but the whole conduct of the guard is so extraordinary that such details become comparatively insignificant. An order having been given to the Roman soldiers, in accordance with the request of the Jews, to break the legs of the crucified, we are asked to believe that they did not execute it in the case of Jesus! It is not reasonable to suppose that Roman soldiers either were in the habit of disregarding their orders, or could have any motive for doing so in this case, and subjecting themselves to the severe punishment for disobedience inflicted by Roman military law. It is argued that they saw that Jesus was already dead, and, therefore, that it was not necessary to break his legs; but soldiers are not in the habit of thinking in this way: they are disciplined to obey. The fact is that the certainty that Jesus was dead already did not actually exist in their minds, for, in that case, why should the soldier have pierced his side with a spear? The only conceivable motive for doing so was to make sure that Jesus really was dead; but is it possible to suppose that a Roman soldier, being in the slightest doubt, actually chose to assure himself in this way when he might still more effectually have done so by simply obeying the order of his superior and breaking the legs? The whole episode is manifestly unhistorical.

It is clear that to fulfil in a marked way the prophecies which the writer had in his mind, and wished specially to apply to Jesus, it was necessary that, in the first place, there should have been a distinct danger of the bones being broken, and at the

¹ Ebrard admits that it was not common (*Evang. Gesch.*, p. 565, anm. 31).

worthy of note.

note this

all this is important

same time of the side not being pierced. The order to break the legs of the crucified is therefore given, but an extraordinary exception is made in favour of Jesus, and a thrust with the lance substituted, so that both passages of the Scripture are supposed to be fulfilled. What Scriptures, however, are fulfilled? The first, "A bone of him shall not be broken," is merely the prescription with regard to the Paschal lamb, Ex. xii. 46,¹ and the dogmatic view of the fourth Evangelist leads him throughout to represent Jesus as the true Paschal lamb. The second is Zech. xii. 10,² and anyone who reads the passage, even without the assistance of learned exegesis, may perceive that it has no such application as our Evangelist gives it. We shall pass over, as not absolutely necessary for our immediate purpose, very many important details of the episode; but regarding this part of the subject we may say that we consider it evident that, if an order was given to break the legs of the crucified upon this occasion, that order must have been executed upon Jesus equally with any others who may have been crucified with him.

There has been much discussion as to the intention of the author in stating that, from the wound made by the lance, there forthwith came out "blood and water" (*αἷμα καὶ ὕδωρ*); and likewise as to whether the special testimony here referred to in the third person is to attest more immediately the flow of blood and water, or the whole episode.³ In regard to the latter point, we need not pause to discuss the question. As to the "blood and water," some see in the statement made an intention to show the reality of the death of Jesus, whilst others more rightly regard the phenomenon described as a representation of a supernatural and symbolical incident, closely connected with the whole dogmatic view of the Gospel. It is impossible not to see in this the same idea as that expressed in 1 John v. 6: "This is he that came by water and blood, Jesus Christ; not in the water only, but in the water and the blood."⁴ As a natural incident it cannot be entertained, for in no sense but mere quibbling could it be said that "blood and water" could flow from such a wound, and as a supernatural phenomenon it must be rejected. As a proof of the reality of the death of Jesus, it could only have been thought of at a time when gross ignorance prevailed upon all medical subjects. We shall not here discuss the reality of the death of Jesus, but we may merely point out that

¹ Cf. Numbers ix. 12; Ps. xxxiv. 20.

² Cf. Ps. xxii. 16. We need not discuss here the variation in the quotation from Zech. xii. 10.

³ Of course we do not here even touch upon the wider question raised by this passage.

⁴ Cf. John vii. 37-39, iii. 5, etc. (Water & the spirit; "spirit" is expressed by blood: ??)

note.

it can, v.

Blood & Water

the almost unprecedentedly rapid decease of Jesus was explained by Origen¹ and some of the Fathers as miraculous. It has been argued that the thrust of the lance may have been intended to silence those objectors who might have denied the actual death on the ground that the legs of Jesus were not broken like those of the two malefactors,² and it certainly is generally quoted as having assured the fact of death. The statement that blood flowed from the wound by no means supports the allegation; and, although we may make little use of the argument, it is right to say that there is no evidence of any serious kind advanced of the reality of the death of Jesus, here or in the other Gospels.³

Note this

The author of the fourth Gospel himself seems to betray that this episode is a mere interpolation of his own into a narrative to which it does not properly belong. According to his own account (xix. 31), the Jews besought Pilate that the legs might be broken and that the bodies "might be taken away" (ἀρθῶσιν). The order to do this was obviously given, for the legs are forthwith broken, and, of course, immediately after, the bodies, in pursuance of the same order, would have been taken away. As soon as the Evangelist has secured his purpose of showing how the Scriptures were fulfilled by means of this episode, he takes up the story as though it had not been interrupted, and proceeds verse 38: "After these things" (μετὰ ταῦτα), that is to say after the legs of the malefactors had been broken and the side of Jesus pierced, Joseph besought Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus, and Pilate gave leave. But, if verse 31 f. be historical, the body must already have been taken away. All the Synoptics agree with the fourth Gospel in stating that Joseph of Arimathæa begged for and obtained the body of Jesus from Pilate.⁴ The second and third Synoptics describe him as belonging to the Council, but the first Gospel merely calls him "a rich man," whilst the fourth omits both of these descriptions. They all call him a disciple of Jesus—secretly for fear of the Jews, the fourth Gospel characteristically adds—although the term that he was "waiting for the Kingdom of God," used by the second and third Gospels, is somewhat vague. The fourth Gospel introduces a second personage in the

¹ "*Oravit Patrem, et exauditus est, et statim ut clamavit ad Patrem, receptus est aut sicut qui potestatem habebat ponendi animam suam, posuit eam quando voluit ipse.....Miraculum enim erat quoniam post tres horas receptus est,*" etc. (Orig. in *Matth. ed. Delarue*, 1740, iii., § 140, p. 928).

² The use of the verb *νόσσω* does not favour the view that the writer intended to express a deep wound.

³ It has likewise been thought that the representation in Mark xv. 44, that Pilate marvelled at the rapid death of Jesus, and sent for the centurion to ascertain the fact, was made to meet similar doubts, or at least to give assurance of the reality of the death.

⁴ According to Luke xxiii. 53, Joseph actually "took down" the body.

Note

Note

shape of Nicodemus, "who at the first came to him by night,"¹ and who, it will be remembered, had previously been described as "a ruler of the Jews."² The Synoptics do not once mention such a person, either in the narrative of the Passion or in the earlier chapters, and there are more than doubts as to his historical character.

The accounts of the Entombment given by the three Synoptists, or at least by the second and third, distinctly exclude the narrative of the fourth Gospel, both as regards Nicodemus and the part he is represented as taking. The contradictions which commence here between the account of the fourth Gospel and the Synoptics, in fact, are of the most glaring and important nature, and demand marked attention. The fourth Gospel states that, having obtained permission from Pilate, Joseph came and took the body of Jesus away. "And there came also Nicodemus.....bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pound weight. They took, therefore, the body of Jesus, and wound it in linen cloths with the spices, as the manner of the Jews is to bury. Now, in the place where he was crucified there was a garden, and in the garden a new sepulchre wherein was never man yet laid. There, therefore, on account of the preparation of the Jews (ἐκεῖ οὖν διὰ τὴν παρασκευὴν τῶν Ἰουδαίων), they laid Jesus, for the sepulchre was at hand" (ὅτι ἐγγὺς ἦν τὸ μνημεῖον).³

According to the first Synoptic, when Joseph took the body, he simply wrapped it "in clean linen" (ἐν σινδόνι καθαρῇ) and "laid it in his own new sepulchre, which he hewed in the rock: and he rolled a great stone to the door of the sepulchre, and departed."⁴ There is no mention of spices or any anointing of the body, and the statement that the women provide for this is not made in this Gospel. According to the writer, the burial is complete, and the sepulchre finally closed. Mary Magdalene and the other Mary come merely "to behold the sepulchre" at the end of the Sabbath.⁵ The fourth Evangelist apparently does not know anything of the sepulchre being Joseph's own tomb, and the body is, according to him, although fully embalmed, only laid in the sepulchre in the garden on account of the Sabbath and because it was at hand. We shall refer to this point, which must be noted, further on.

There are very striking differences between these two accounts, but the narratives of the second and third Synoptists are still more emphatically contradictory of both. In Mark⁶ we are told that Joseph "brought linen, and took him down and wrapped him in

¹ John iii. 1.

³ *Ib.*, xix. 39-42.

⁵ *Ib.*, xxviii. 1.

² *Ib.*, iii. 1, vii. 50.

⁴ Matt. xxvii. 59 f.

⁶ Mark xv. 46.

the linen, and laid him in a sepulchre which had been hewn out of a rock, and rolled a stone against the door of the sepulchre." There is no mention here of any embalming performed by Joseph or Nicodemus, nor are any particulars given as to the ownership of the sepulchre, or the reasons for its selection. We are, however, told¹: "And when the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, bought spices that they might come and anoint him." It is distinctly stated in connection with the entombment, moreover, in agreement with the first Synoptic²: "And Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Josès beheld where he was laid."³ According to this account and that of the first Gospel, the women, having remained to the last and seen the body deposited in the sepulchre, knew so little of its having been embalmed by Joseph and Nicodemus that they actually purchase the spices and come to perform that office themselves.

In Luke the statement is still more specific, in agreement with Mark, and in contradiction to the fourth Gospel. Joseph took down the body "and wrapped it in linen, and laid it in a sepulchre that was hewn in stone, wherein never man before was laid..... And women who had come with him out of Galilee followed after, and beheld the sepulchre *and how his body was laid*. And they returned and prepared spices and ointments." Upon the first day of the week, the author adds, "they came unto the sepulchre bringing the spices which they had prepared."⁴

Which of these accounts are we to believe? According to the first Gospel, there is no embalmment at all; according to the second and third Gospels, the embalmment is undertaken by the women, and not by Joseph and Nicodemus, but is never carried out; according to the fourth Gospel, the embalmment is completed on Friday evening by Joseph and Nicodemus, and not by the women. According to the first Gospel, the burial is completed on Friday evening; according to the second and third, it is only provisional; and according to the fourth, the embalmment is final, but it is doubtful whether the entombment is final or temporary; several critics consider it to have been only provisional. In Mark the women buy the spices "when the Sabbath was past" (*διαγενομένου τοῦ σαββάτου*);⁵ in Luke before it has begun;⁶ and in Matthew and John they do not buy them at all. In the first and fourth Gospels the women come after the Sabbath merely to behold the sepulchre,⁷ and in the second and third they bring the

¹ Mark xvi. 1.

³ Mark xv. 47.

⁵ Mark xvi. 1.

² Matt. xxvii. 61.

⁴ Luke xxiii. 53 f., xxiv. 1.

⁶ Luke xxiii. 35.

⁷ Matt. xxviii. 1; John xx. 1.

note this
 spices to complete the burial. Amid these conflicting statements we may suggest one consideration. It is not probable, in a hot climate, that a wounded body, hastily laid in a sepulchre on Friday evening before six o'clock, would be disturbed again on Sunday morning for the purpose of being anointed and embalmed. Corruption would, under the circumstances, already have commenced. Besides, as Keim¹ has pointed out, the last duties to the dead were not forbidden amongst the Jews on the Sabbath, and there is really no reason why any care for the body of the Master which reverence or affection might have dictated should not at once have been bestowed.

The enormous amount of myrrh and aloes—"about a hundred pound weight" (ὡς λίτρας ἑκατόν)—brought by Nicodemus has excited much discussion, and adds to the extreme improbability of the story related by the fourth Evangelist. To whatever weight the litra may be reduced, the quantity specified is very great; and it is a question whether the body thus enveloped "as the manner of the Jews is to bury" could have entered the sepulchre. The practice of embalming the dead, although well known amongst the Jews, and invariable in the case of kings and noble or very wealthy persons, was by no means generally prevalent. In the burial of Gamaliel the elder, chief of the party of the Pharisees, it is stated that over eighty pounds of balsam were burnt in his honour by the proselyte Onkelos; but this quantity, which was considered very remarkable, is totally eclipsed by the provision of Nicodemus.

most important suggestion from
 The key to the whole of this history of the burial of Jesus, however, is to be found in the celebrated chapter liii. of "Isaiah." We have already, in passing, pointed out that, in the third Gospel (xxii. 37), Jesus is represented as saying: "For I say unto you, that this which is written must be accomplished in me: And he was reckoned among transgressors." The same quotation from Is. liii. 12 is likewise interpolated in Mark xv. 28. Now the whole representation of the burial and embalmment of Jesus is evidently based upon the same chapter, and more especially upon verse 9, which is wrongly rendered both in the Authorised Version and in the Septuagint, in the latter of which the passage reads: "I will give the wicked for his grave and the rich for his death."² The Evangelists, taking this to be the sense of the passage, which they suppose to be a Messianic prophecy, have represented the death of Jesus as being with the wicked, crucified as he is between two robbers; and through Joseph of Arimathæa, significantly called

¹ *Schabbath* 151. 1; Keim, *Jesu von Nazara*, iii. 522, anm. 1.

² Καὶ δώσω τοὺς πονηροὺς ἀντὶ τῆς ταφῆς αὐτοῦ, καὶ τοὺς πλουσίους ἀντὶ τοῦ θανάτου αὐτοῦ. Is. liii. 9.

"a rich man" (*ἄνθρωπος πλούσιος*) by the first Synoptist, especially according to the fourth Evangelist by his addition of the counsellor Nicodemus and his hundred pounds weight of mingled myrrh and aloes, as being "with the rich in his death." Unfortunately, the passage in the "prophecy" does not mean what the Evangelists have been led to understand, and the ablest Hebrew scholars and critics are now agreed that both phrases quoted refer, in true Hebrew manner, to one representation, and that the word above translated "rich" is not used in a favourable sense, but that the passage must be rendered: "And they made his grave with the wicked and his sepulchre with the evil-doers," or words to that effect. Without going minutely into the details of opinion on the subject of the "servant of Jehovah" in this writing of the Old Testament, we may add that upon one point at least the great majority of critics are of one accord: that Is. liii. and other passages of "Isaiah" describing the sufferings of the "Servant of Jehovah" have no reference to the Messiah. As we have touched upon this subject, it may not be out of place to add that Psalms xxii. and lxix., which are so frequently quoted in connection with the passion, and represented by New Testament and other early writers as Messianic, are determined, by sounder principles of criticism applied to them in modern times, not to refer to the Messiah at all.

We now come to a remarkable episode, which is peculiar to the first Synoptic and strangely ignored by all the other Gospels. It is stated that the next day—that is to say, on the Sabbath—the chief priests and the Pharisees came together to Pilate, saying: "Sir, we remember that that deceiver said while he was yet alive: After three days I am raised (*Μετὰ τρεῖς ἡμέρας ἐγείρομαι*). Command, therefore, that the sepulchre be made sure until the third day, lest his disciples come and steal him away and say unto the people: He is risen from the dead: so the last error shall be worse than the first. Pilate said unto them: Ye have a guard (*Ἔχετε κουστωδίαν*): go, make it as sure as ye can. So they went and made the sepulchre sure, sealing the stone, with the guard."¹ Not only do the other Evangelists pass over this strange proceeding in total silence, but their narratives, or at least those of the second and third Synoptists, exclude it. The women came with their spices to embalm the body, in total ignorance of there being any guard to interfere with their performance of that last sad office for the Master. We are asked to believe that the chief priests and the Pharisees actually desecrated the Sabbath by sealing the stone, and visited the house of the heathen Pilate on so holy a day, for the purpose of asking for the guard.² These

¹ Matt. xxvii. 62-66.

² Cf. John xviii. 28, xix. 31.

Note also.

Note, as important.

Note

note | priests are said to have remembered and understood a prophecy of Jesus regarding his resurrection, of which his disciples are represented to be in ignorance.¹ The remark about "the last error," moreover, is very suspicious. The ready acquiescence of Pilate is quite incredible.² That he should employ Roman soldiers to watch the sepulchre of a man who had been crucified cannot be entertained; and his friendly, "Go, make it as sure as ye can," is not in the spirit of Pilate. It is conceivable that to satisfy their clamour he may, without much difficulty, have consented to crucify a Jew, more especially as his crime was of a political character represented as in some degree affecting the Roman power; but, once crucified, it is not in the slightest degree likely that Pilate would care what became of his body, and still less that he would employ Roman soldiers to mount guard over it.

note | It may be as well to dispose finally of this episode, so we at once proceed to its conclusion. When the resurrection takes place, it is stated that some of the guard went into the city, and, instead of making their report to Pilate, as might have been expected, told the chief priests all that had occurred. A council is held, and the soldiers are largely bribed, and instructed: "Say that his disciples came by night and stole him while we slept. And if this come to the governor's ears we will persuade him and make you free from care. So they took the money and did as they were taught."³ Nothing could be more simple than the construction of the story, which follows the usual broad lines of legend. The idea of Roman soldiers confessing that they slept whilst on watch, and allowed that to occur which they were there to prevent! and this to oblige the chief priests and elders, at the risk of their lives! Then, are we to suppose that the chief priests and council believed this story of the earthquake and angel, and yet acted in this way? and if they did not believe it, would not the very story itself have led to the punishment of the men, and to the confirmation of the report they desired to spread, that the disciples had stolen the body? The large bribe seems to have been very ineffectual, since the Christian historian is able to report precisely what the chief priests and elders instruct them to say.⁴ Is it not palpable that the whole story is legendary?

¹ Cf. John xx. 9.

² It has been argued that Pilate does not give a Roman guard, but merely permits the chief priests to make use of their own guard. This, however, is opposed to the whole tenour of the story, and the suggestion is generally rejected. Tertullian says: "*Tunc Judæi detractum et sepulchro conditum magna etiam militaris custodiæ diligentia circumsederunt*" (*Apol.*, § 21).

³ Matt. xxviii. 11-15.

⁴ Olshausen, to obviate the difficulty of supposing that the Sanhedrin did all this, supposes that Caiaphas the high priest may have been the principal agent (*Bibl. Comm.*, ii. 2, p. 190 f.).

If it be so, and we think this cannot be doubted, a conclusion which the total silence of the other Gospels seems to confirm, very suggestive consequences may be deduced from it. The first Synoptist, referring to the false report which the Sanhedrin instruct the soldiers to make, says: "And this saying was spread among the Jews unto this day."¹ The probable origin of the legend may have been an objection to the Christian affirmation of the resurrection to the above effect; but it is instructive to find that Christian tradition was equal to the occasion, and invented a story to refute it. It is the tendency to this very system of defence and confirmation, everywhere apparent, which renders early Christian tradition so mythical and untrustworthy.

important.

important.

We now enter upon the narrative of the Resurrection itself. The first Synoptist relates that Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to behold the sepulchre "at the close of the Sabbath, as it began to dawn into the first day of the week" (Ὁψέ δὲ σαββάτων, τῇ ἐπιφωσκούσῃ εἰς μίαν σαββάτων),² that is to say, shortly after six o'clock on the evening of Saturday, the end of the Sabbath, the dawn of the next day being marked by the glimmer of more than one star in the heavens. The second Synoptic represents that, "when the Sabbath was past," Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices; and that they came to the sepulchre "very early on the first day of the week after the rising of the sun" (καὶ λίαν πρωτὶ τῆς μιᾶς σαββάτων.....ἀνατείλαντος τοῦ ἡλίου).³ The third Synoptist states that the women who came with Jesus from Galilee came to the sepulchre, but he subsequently more definitely names them: "Mary Magdalene, and Joanna, and Mary the mother of James, and the other women with them"⁴—a larger number of women—and they came "upon the first day of the week at early dawn" (Τῇ δὲ μιᾷ τῶν σαββάτων ὀρθροῦ βαθείως). The fourth Evangelist represents that Mary Magdalene only⁵ came to the sepulchre, on the first day of the week, "early, while it was yet dark" (πρωτὶ σκοτίας ἔτι οὕσης).⁶

The first Evangelist indubitably makes the hour at which the women come to the sepulchre different and much earlier than the others, and at the same time he represents them as witnessing the actual removal of the stone, which, in the other three Gospels, the women already find rolled away from the mouth of the sepulchre.⁷ It will, therefore, be interesting to follow the first Synoptic. It is

¹ Matt. xxviii. 15.

³ Mark xvi. 2.

⁵ It is argued from the οἶδαμεν of xx. 2 that there were others with her, although they are not named.

⁶ John xx. 1.

² *Ib.*, xxviii. 1.

⁴ Luke xxiii. 55, xxiv. 1, 10.

⁷ Mark xvi. 4; Luke xxiv. 2; John xx. 1.

here stated: 2. "And behold there was a great earthquake (*σεισμός*): for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled away the stone and sat upon it. 3. His appearance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow. 4. And for fear of him the keepers did shake and became as dead men. 5. And the angel answered and said unto the women: Fear ye not, for I know that ye seek Jesus, who hath been crucified. 6. He is not here: for he was raised (*ἡγέρθη γάρ*), as he said: Come, see the place where he lay. 7. And go quickly, and tell his disciples that he was raised (*ἡγέρθη*) from the dead, and behold he goeth before you into Galilee: there shall ye see him: behold, I have told you. 8. And they departed quickly from the sepulchre with fear and great joy; and ran to tell his disciples."¹

Note. We have here in the first place another earthquake, and apparently, on the theory of the course of cosmical phenomena held during the "Age of Miracles," produced by the angel who descended to roll away the stone from the sepulchre. This earthquake, like the others recorded in the first Synoptic, appears to be quite unknown to the other Evangelists, and no trace of it has been pointed out in other writings. With the appearance of the angel we obviously arrive upon thoroughly unhistorical ground. Can we believe, because this unknown writer tells us so, that "an angel,"² causing an earthquake, actually descended and took such a part in this transaction? Upon the very commonest principles of evidence, the reply must be an emphatic negative. Every fact of science, every lesson of experience, excludes such an assumption; and we may add that the character of the author, with which we are now better acquainted, as well as the course of the narrative itself, confirms the justice of such a conclusion. If the introduction of the angel be legendary, must not also his words be so?

Proceeding to examine the narrative as it stands, we must point out a circumstance which may appropriately be mentioned here, and which is well worthy of attention. The women and the guard are present when the stone is rolled away from the sepulchre, but they do not witness the actual Resurrection. It is natural to suppose that, when the stone was removed, Jesus, who, it is asserted, rises with his body from the dead, would have come forth from the sepulchre: but not so; the angel only says (verse 6): "He is not here, for he was raised (*ἡγέρθη γάρ*)"; and he merely invites the women to see the place where he lay. The actual resurrection is spoken of as a thing which had taken place before,

¹ Matt. xxviii. 2.

² Compare his description with Dan. x. 6. It is worthy of consideration also that when Daniel is cast into the den of lions a stone is rolled upon the mouth of the den, and sealed with the signet of the king and his lords (vi. 17).

important analogy.

and, in any case, it was not witnessed by anyone. In the other Gospels the resurrection has already occurred before anyone arrives at the sepulchre; and the remarkable fact is, therefore, absolutely undeniable that there was not, and that it is not even pretended that there was, a single eye-witness of the actual Resurrection. The empty grave, coupled with the supposed subsequent appearances of Jesus, is the only evidence of the Resurrection. We shall not, however, pursue this further at present. The removal of the stone is not followed by any visible result. The inmate of the sepulchre is not observed to issue from it, and yet he is not there. May we not ask what was the use, in this narrative, of the removal of the stone at all? As no one apparently came forth, the only purpose seems to have been to permit those from without to enter and see that the sepulchre was empty.

Another remarkable point is that the angel desires the women to go quickly and inform the disciples, "he goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see him." One is tempted to inquire why, as he rose from the dead in Jerusalem, and, in spite of previous statements, the disciples are represented as being there also,¹ Jesus did not appear to them in the Holy City, instead of sending them some three days' journey off to Galilee. At the same time, Jesus is represented by the first two Synoptics as saying at the Last Supper, when warning the disciples that they will all be offended at him that night and be scattered: "But after I shall have been raised I will go before you into Galilee."² At present we have only to call attention to the fact that the angel gives the order. With much surprise, therefore, we immediately after read that, as the women departed quickly to tell the disciples in obedience to the angel's message (verse 9): "Behold Jesus met them, saying, Hail. And they came up to him and laid hold of his feet, and worshipped him. 10. Then saith Jesus unto them: Be not afraid; go, tell my brethren that they depart into Galilee, and there they shall see me."³ What was the use of the angel's message, since Jesus himself immediately after appears and delivers the very same instructions in person? This sudden and apparently unnecessary appearance has all the character of an afterthought. One point is very clear: that the order to go into Galilee and the statement that there first Jesus is to appear to the disciples are unmistakable, repeated and peremptory.

We must now turn to the second Gospel. The women going to the sepulchre with spices that they might anoint the body of Jesus—which, according to the fourth Gospel, had already been fully embalmed, and, in any case, had lain in the sepulchre

¹ Luke xxiv. 33; John xx. 18 f.

² Matt. xxvi. 32; Mark xiv. 28.

³ *Ib.*, xxviii. 9, 10.

most important

note this

all this is nothing note!

note this

Note.

Note
this
Naturally opened
by, not by an un-
natural relation
 since the Friday evening—are represented as saying amongst themselves: "Who will roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulchre?"¹ This is a curious dramatic speculation, but very suspicious. These women are apparently not sufficiently acquainted with Joseph of Arimathæa to be aware that, as the fourth Gospel asserts, the body had already been embalmed, and yet they actually contemplate rolling the stone away from the mouth of the sepulchre which was his property.² Keim has pointed out that it was a general rule³ that, after a sepulchre had been closed in the way described, it should not again be opened. Generally, the stone was not placed against the opening of the sepulchre till the third day, when corruption had already commenced; but here the sepulchre is stated by all the Gospels to have been closed on the first day, and the unhesitating intention of the women to remove the stone is not a happy touch on the part of the second Synoptist. They find the stone already rolled away.⁴ Verse 5: "And entering into the sepulchre, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, clothed in a long white garment; and they were affrighted. 6. And he saith unto them: Be not affrighted: Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, the crucified: he was raised (*ἡγέρθη*); he is not here; behold the place where they laid him. 7. But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he goeth before you unto Galilee; there shall ye see him, as he said unto you. 8. And they went out and fled from the sepulchre: for trembling and astonishment seized them, and they said nothing to anyone; for they were afraid."⁵ In Matthew the angel rolls away the stone from the sepulchre and sits upon it, and the women only enter to see where Jesus lay, upon his invitation. Here, they go in at once, and see the angel ("a young man") sitting at the right side, and are affrighted. He re-assures them, and, as in the other narrative, says, "he was raised." He gives them the same message to his disciples and to Peter, who is specially named; and the second Synoptic thus fully confirms the first in representing Galilee as the place where Jesus is to be seen by them. It is curious that the women should say nothing to anyone about this wonderful event, and in this the statements of the other Gospels are certainly not borne out. There is one remarkable point to be noticed, that, according to the second Synoptist also, not only is there no eye-witness of the Resurrection, but the only evidence of that marvellous occurrence which it contains is the information of the

¹ Mark xvi. 3. ² Keim, *Jesu v. Nazara*, iii., p. 522. ³ *Ib.*, iii. 522, anm. 1.

Note
⁴ Mark xvi. 4. The continuation, "for it was very great" (*ἦν γὰρ μέγας σφόδρα*), is peculiar, but of course intended to represent the difficulty of its removal.

⁵ Mark xvi. 5.

"young man." There is no appearance of Jesus to anyone narrated, and it would seem as though the appearance described in Matt. xxviii. 9 f. is excluded. It is well known that Mark xvi. 9-20 did not form part of the original Gospel, and is inauthentic. It is unnecessary to argue a point so generally admitted. The verses now appended to the Gospel are by a different author, and are of no value as evidence. We, therefore, exclude them from consideration.

*Note also.
of contents
of this in-
authentic
part.*

In Luke, as in the second Synoptic, the women find the stone removed, and here it is distinctly stated that "on entering in they found not the body of the Lord Jesus. 4. And it came to pass as they were perplexed thereabout, behold two men stood by them in shining garments; 5. And as they were afraid, and bowed their faces to the earth, they said unto them: Why seek ye the living among the dead? 6. He is not here, but was raised (*ἡγέρθη*); remember how he spake unto you when he was yet in Galilee; 7. saying, that the Son of Man must be delivered up into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified and the third day rise again. 8. And they remembered his words, 9. and returned from the sepulchre, and told all these things unto the eleven and to all the rest.....11. And these words appeared to them as an idle tale, and they believed them not."¹ The author of the third Gospel is not content with one angel, like the first two Synoptists, but introduces "two men in shining garments," who seem suddenly to stand beside the women, and, instead of re-assuring them, as in the former narratives, rather adopt a tone of reproof (verse 5). They inform the women that "Jesus was raised"; and here again not only has no one been an eye-witness of the resurrection, but the women only hear of it from the angels. There is one striking peculiarity in the above account. There is no mention of Jesus going before his disciples into Galilee to be seen of them, nor indeed of his being seen at all; but "Galilee" is introduced by way of a reminiscence. Instead of the future, the third Synoptist substitutes the past, and, as might be expected, he gives no hint of any appearances of Jesus to the disciples beyond the neighbourhood of Jerusalem. When the women tell the disciples what they have seen and heard, they do not believe them. The thief on the cross, according to the writer, was more advanced in his faith and knowledge than the Apostles. Setting aside Matt. xxviii. 9, 10, we have hitherto no other affirmation of the Resurrection than the statement that the sepulchre was found empty, and the angels announced that Jesus was raised from the dead.

note

important.

exact.

¹ Luke xxiv. 3-9, 11. It is unnecessary to say that verse 12 is a later interpolation.

The account of the fourth Evangelist differs completely from the narratives of all the Synoptists. According to him, Mary Magdalene alone comes to the sepulchre and sees the stone taken away. She, therefore, runs and comes to Simon Peter and to "the other disciple whom Jesus loved," saying: "They took (*ἦραν*) the Lord out of the sepulchre, and we know not (*οὐκ οἶδαμεν*)¹ where they laid (*ἐθηκαν*) him. 3. Peter, therefore, went forth and the other disciple, and came to the sepulchre. 4. And the two ran together; and the other disciple outran Peter and came first to the sepulchre; 5. and stooping down, looking in, he seeth the linen clothes lying; yet went he not in. 6. Then cometh Simon Peter following him and went into the sepulchre and beholdeth the linen clothes lying, 7. and the napkin that was on his head, not lying with the linen clothes, but wrapped in one place by itself. 8. Then went in, therefore, the other disciple also, who came first to the sepulchre, and he saw and believed. 9. For as yet they knew not the Scriptures, that he must rise again from the dead. 10. So the disciples went away to their own homes."² Critics have long ago pointed out the careful way in which the actions of "the beloved disciple" and Peter are balanced in this narrative. If the "other disciple" outstrips Peter, and first looks into the sepulchre, Peter first actually enters; and if Peter first sees the careful arrangement of the linen clothes, the other sees and believes. The evident care with which the writer metes out a share to each disciple in this visit to the sepulchre, of which the Synoptics seem totally ignorant, is very suggestive of artistic arrangement, and the careful details regarding the folding and position of the linen clothes, which has furnished so much matter for apologetic reasoning, seems to us to savour more of studied composition than natural observation. So very much is passed over in complete silence which is of the very highest importance, that minute details like these, which might well be composed in the study, do not produce so much effect as some critics think they should do. There is some ambiguity as to what the disciple "believed," according to verse 8, when he went into the sepulchre; and some understand that he simply believed what Mary Magdalene had told them (verse 2), whilst others hold that he believed in the resurrection, which, taken in connection with the following verse, seems undoubtedly to be the author's meaning. If the former were the reading, it would be too trifling a point to be so prominently mentioned, and it would not accord with the contented

¹ From the use of this plural, as we have already pointed out, it is argued that there were others with Mary who are not named. This by no means follows, but if it were the case the peculiarity of the narrative becomes all the more apparent.

² John xx. 2-10.

return home of the disciples. Accepting the latter sense, it is instructive to observe the very small amount of evidence with which "the beloved disciple" is content. He simply finds the sepulchre empty and the linen clothes lying, and although no one even speaks of the resurrection, no one professes to have been an eye-witness of it, and "as yet they know not the Scriptures, that he must rise again from the dead," he is nevertheless said to see and believe.

It will have been observed that hitherto, although the two disciples have both entered the sepulchre, there has been no mention of angels: they certainly did not see any. In immediate continuation of the narrative, however, we learn that when they have gone home Mary Magdalene, who was standing without at the tomb weeping, stooped down, and, looking into the sepulchre—where just before the disciples had seen no one—she beheld "two angels in white sitting, one at the head and one at the feet, where the body of Jesus lay. 13. They say unto her: Woman, why weepest thou? She saith unto them: Because they took away (*ἡρavan*) my Lord, and I know not where they laid him."¹ This, again, is a very different representation and conversation from that reported in the other Gospels. Do we acquire any additional assurance as to the reality of the angels and the historical truth of their intervention from this narrative? We think not. Mary Magdalene repeats to the angels almost the very words she had said to the disciples, verse 2. Are we to suppose that "the beloved disciple," who saw and believed, did not communicate his conviction to the others, and that Mary was left precisely in the same doubt and perplexity as before, without an idea that anything had happened except that the body had been taken away, and she knew not where it had been laid? She appears to have seen and spoken to the angels with singular composure. Their sudden appearance does not even seem to have surprised her.

We must, however, continue the narrative, and it is well to remark the maintenance, at first, of the tone of affected ignorance, as well as the dramatic construction of the whole scene: Verse 14. "Having said this, she turned herself back and beholdeth Jesus standing, and knew not that it was Jesus. 15. Jesus saith unto her: Woman, why weepest thou? whom seekest thou? She, supposing that it was the gardener, saith unto him: Sir, if thou didst bear him hence, tell me where thou didst lay him, and I will take him away. 16. Jesus saith unto her: Mary. She turned herself, and saith unto him in Hebrew:² Rabboni, which

¹ John xx. 12, 13.

² This is the reading of the Vatican and Sinaitic Codices, besides D and many other important MSS.

exact.

note

note also

is to say, Master. 17. Jesus saith unto her: Touch me not (*Μή μου ἅπτου*); for I have not yet ascended to the Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them: I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and my God and your God. 18. Mary Magdalene cometh announcing to the disciples that she has seen the Lord, and he spake these things unto her."¹

note
To those who attach weight to these narratives and consider them historical it must appear astonishing that Mary, who up to the very last had been closely associated with Jesus, does not recognise him when he thus appears to her, but supposes him at first to be the gardener. As part of the evidence of the Gospel such a trait is of much importance, and must hereafter be alluded to. After a couple of days, not know Jesus whom she had daily seen for so long! The interpretation of the reply of Jesus, verse 17, "Touch me not," etc., has long been a bone of contention among critics, but it does not sufficiently affect the inquiry upon which we are engaged to require discussion here. Only one point may be mentioned in passing, that if, as has been supposed in connection with Matt. xxviii. 9, Jesus be understood to repel, as premature, the worship of Mary, that very passage of the first Gospel, in which there is certainly no discouragement of worship, refutes the theory. We shall not say more about the construction of this dialogue, but we may point out that, as so many unimportant details are given throughout the narrative, it is somewhat remarkable that the scene terminates so abruptly, and leaves so much untold that it would have been of the utmost consequence for us to know. What became of Jesus, for instance? Did he vanish suddenly? or did he bid Mary farewell, and leave her like one in the flesh? Did she not inquire why he did not join the brethren? whither he was going? It is scarcely possible to tell us less than the writer has done; and as it cannot be denied that such minor points as where the linen clothes lay, or where Mary "turned herself back" (verse 14), or "turned herself" (verse 16) merely, cannot be compared in interest and importance to the supposed movements and conduct of Jesus under such circumstances, the omission to relate the end of the interview, or more particular details of it, whilst those graphic touches are inserted, is singularly instructive. *important*
It is much more important to notice that here again there is no mention of Galilee, nor, indeed, of any intention to show himself to the disciples anywhere, but simply the intimation sent to them: "I ascend unto my Father and your Father," etc.—a declaration which seems emphatically to exclude further "appearances," and to limit the vision of the risen Jesus to Mary Magdalene. Certainly this message implies in the clearest way that the Ascension was

¹ John xx. 14-18.

then to take place, and the only explanation of the abrupt termination of the scene immediately after this is said is, that, as he spoke, Jesus then ascended. The subsequent appearances related in this Gospel must, consequently, either be regarded as an after-thought or as visions of Jesus after he had ascended. This demands serious attention. We shall see that, after sending this message to his disciples, he is represented as appearing to them on the evening of the very same day.

According to the third Synoptic, the first appearance of Jesus to anyone after the Resurrection was not to the women, and not to Mary Magdalene, but to two brethren,¹ who were not Apostles at all, the name of one of whom, we are told, was Cleopas.² The story of the walk to Emmaus is very dramatic and interesting, but it is clearly legendary. None of the other Evangelists seem to know anything of it. It is difficult to suppose that Jesus should, after his resurrection, appear first of all to two unknown Christians in this manner, and accompany them in such a journey. The particulars of the story are to the last degree improbable, and in its main features incredible, and it is impossible to consider them carefully without perceiving the transparent inauthenticity of the narrative. The two disciples were going to a village called Emmaus threescore furlongs distant from Jerusalem, and while they are conversing Jesus joins them, "but their eyes were holden that they should not know him." He asks the subject of their discourse, and pretends ignorance, which surprises them. Hearing the expression of their perplexity and depression, he says to them: 25. "O foolish and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets spake. 26. Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things, and enter into his glory? 27. And beginning at Moses and at all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself." When they reach the village, he pretends to be going further (verse 28), but they constrain him to stay. 30. "And it came to pass, as he sat at meat with them, he took the bread and blessed and brake, and gave to them; 31. and their eyes were opened, and they knew him, and he vanished out of their sight." Now, why all this mystery? why were their eyes holden that they should not know him? why pretend ignorance? why make "as though he would go further"? Considering the nature and number of the alleged appearances of Jesus, this episode seems most disproportionate and inexplicable. The final incident completes our conviction of the unreality of the whole episode: after the sacramental blessing and breaking of bread, Jesus vanishes in a manner which removes the story from the domain of history. On their return to

note
all
this

¹ Luke xxiv. 13-34.

² *Ib.*, verse 18.

Jerusalem, the Synoptist adds that they find the Eleven, and are informed that "the Lord was raised and was seen by Simon." Of this appearance we are not told anything more.

Whilst the two disciples from Emmaus were relating these things to the Eleven, the third Synoptist states that Jesus himself stood in the midst of them: verse 37. "But they were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they saw a spirit." The apparent intention is to represent a miraculous sudden entry of Jesus into the midst of them, just as he had vanished at Emmaus; but, in order to re-assure them, Jesus is represented as saying: verse 39. "Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself; handle me and behold, for a spirit hath not flesh and bones as ye see me having. 41. And while they yet believed not for joy, and wondered, he said unto them: Have ye here any food? 42. And they gave him a piece of a broiled fish.¹ 43. And he took it and did eat before them." The care with which the writer demonstrates that Jesus rose again with his own body is remarkable, for not only does he show his hands and feet, we may suppose for the purpose of exhibiting the wounds made by the nails by which he was affixed to the cross, but he eats, and thereby proves himself to be still possessed of his human organism. It is apparent that there is direct contradiction between this and the representation of his vanishing at Emmaus, and standing in the midst of them now. The Synoptist, who is so lavish in his use of miraculous agency, naturally sees no incongruity here. One or other alternative must be adopted: If Jesus possessed his own body after his resurrection and could eat and be handled, he could not vanish; if he vanished, he could not have been thus corporeal. The aid of a miracle has to be invoked in order to reconcile the representations. We need not here criticise the address which he is supposed to make to the disciples,² but we must call attention to the one point that Jesus (verse 49) commands the disciples to tarry in Jerusalem until they be "clothed with power from on high." This completes the exclusion of all appearances in Galilee, for the narrative proceeds to say that Jesus led them out towards Bethany and lifted up his hands and blessed them: verse 51. "And it came to pass, while blessing them, he parted from them, and was carried up into heaven"; whilst they returned to Jerusalem, where they "were continually in the temple" praising God. We shall return to the Ascension presently; but, in the

¹ We omit *καὶ ἀπὸ μελισσίου κηρίου*, which is not found in the most ancient codices.

² The statement in xxiv. 44, however, is suggestive as showing how the fulfilment of the Prophets and Psalms is in the mind of the writer. We have seen how much this idea influenced the account of the Passion in the Gospels.

meantime, it is well that we should refer to the accounts of the other two Gospels.

According to the fourth Gospel, on the first day of the week, after sending to his disciples the message regarding his Ascension, which we have discussed, when it was evening: xx. 19. "And the doors having been shut where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in the midst, and saith unto them: Peace be unto you. 20. And having said this, he showed unto them both his hands and his side. The disciples, therefore, rejoiced when they saw the Lord. 21. So then he said to them again: Peace be unto you: as the Father hath sent me, I also send you. 22. And when he said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Spirit: 23. Whosoever sins ye forgive they are forgiven unto them; whosoever ye retain they are retained." This appearance of Jesus to the Eleven bears so far analogy to that in the third Gospel, which we have just examined, that it occurs upon the same day and to the same persons. Is it probable that Jesus appeared twice upon the same evening to the eleven disciples? The account in the fourth Gospel itself confirms the only reasonable reply, that he did not do so; but the narrative in the third Synoptic renders the matter certain. That appearance was the first to the Eleven (xxiv. 36 f.), and he then conducted them towards Bethany, and ascended into heaven (verse 50 f.). How, then, we may inquire, could two accounts of the same event differ so fundamentally? It is absolutely certain that both cannot be true. Is it possible to suppose that the third Synoptist could forget to record the extraordinary powers supposed to have been, on this occasion, bestowed upon the ten Apostles to forgive sins and to retain them? Is it conceivable that he would not relate the circumstance that Jesus breathed upon them, and endowed them with the Holy Ghost? Indeed, as regards the latter point, he seems to exclude it; verse 49 and Acts (ii.) certainly represent the descent of the Holy Spirit as taking place at Pentecost. On the other hand, can we suppose that the fourth Evangelist would have ignored the walk to Bethany and the solemn parting there? or the injunction to remain in Jerusalem? not to mention other topics. The two episodes cannot be reconciled.

In the fourth Gospel, instead of showing his hands and feet, Jesus is represented as exhibiting "his hands and his side"; and that this is not accidental is most clearly demonstrated by the fact that Thomas, who is not present, refuses to believe (verse 25) unless he see and put his finger into the print of the nails in his hands and put his hand into his side; and Jesus, when he appears again, allows him (verse 27) to put his finger into his hands and his hand into his side. In the Synoptic the wound made by that

important

mythical lance is ignored, and, in the fourth Gospel, the wounds in the feet. The omission of the whole episode of the leg-breaking and lance-thrust by the three Synoptics thus gains fresh significance. On the other hand, it may be a question whether, in the opinion of the fourth Evangelist, the feet of Jesus were nailed to the cross at all. It was at least as common, not to say more, that the hands alone of those who were crucified were nailed to the cross, the legs being simply bound to it by cords. Opinion is divided as to whether Jesus was so bound, or whether the feet were likewise nailed; but the point is not important to our examination and need not be discussed, although it has considerable interest in connection with the theory that death did not actually ensue on the cross, but that, having fainted through weakness, Jesus, being taken down after so unusually short a time on the cross, subsequently recovered. There is no final evidence upon the point.

None of the explanations offered by Apologists remove the contradiction between the statement that Jesus bestowed the Holy Spirit upon this occasion, and that of the third Synoptic and Acts. There is, however, a curious point to notice in connection with this: Thomas is said to have been absent upon this occasion, and the representation, therefore, is that the Holy Spirit was only bestowed upon ten of the Apostles. Was Thomas excluded? Was he thus punished for his unbelief? Are we to suppose that an opportunity to bestow the Holy Spirit was selected when one of the Apostles was not present? We have somewhat anticipated the narrative (xx. 24 f.), which relates that upon the occasion above discussed, Thomas, one of the Twelve, was not present, and, hearing from the rest that they have seen the Lord, he declares that he will not believe without palpable proof by touching his wounds. The Evangelist continues: verse 26. "And after eight days again his disciples were within, and Thomas was with them. Jesus cometh, the doors having been shut (*τῶν θυρῶν κεκλεισμένων*), and stood in the midst and said: Peace be unto you. 27. Then saith he to Thomas: Reach hither thy finger and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand and put it into my side, and be not unbelieving, but believing. 28. Thomas answered and said unto him: My Lord and my God. 28. Jesus saith unto him: Because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed; blessed are they who have not seen, and yet have believed."

The third Synoptic gives evidence that the risen Jesus is not incorporeal by stating that he not only permitted himself to be handled, but actually ate food in their presence. The fourth Evangelist attains the same result in a more artistic manner through the doubts of Thomas, but in allowing him actually to put his

finger into the prints of the nails in his hands, and his hand into the wound in his side, he asserts that Jesus rose with the same body as that which had hung on the cross. He, too, whilst doing this, actually endows him with the attribute of incorporeality; for, upon both of the occasions which we are discussing, the statement is markedly made that, when Jesus came and stood in the midst, the doors were shut where the disciples were. It can scarcely be doubted that the intention of the writer is to represent a miraculous entry.

note.

We are asked to believe that, when Thomas had convinced himself that it was indeed Jesus in the flesh who stood before him, he went to the opposite extreme of belief and said to Jesus: (καὶ εἶπεν αὐτῷ) "My Lord and my God"! In representing that Jesus, even before the Ascension, was addressed as "God" by one of the Twelve, the Evangelist commits one of those anachronisms with which we are familiar, in another shape, in the works of great painters, who depict pious bishops of their own time as actors in the scenes of the Passion. These touches betray the hand of the artist, and remove the account from the domain of sober history. In the message sent by Jesus to his disciples he spoke of ascending "to your God and my God," but the Evangelist at the close of his Gospel strikes the same note as that upon which he commenced his philosophical prelude.

note this

We shall only add one further remark regarding this episode, and it is the repetition of one already made. It is much to be regretted that the writer does not inform us how these interviews of Jesus with his disciples terminated. We are told of his entry, but not of his mode of departure. Did he vanish suddenly? Did he depart like other men? Then, it would be important to know where Jesus abode during the interval of eight days. Did he ascend to heaven after each appearance? or did he remain on earth? Why did he not consort as before with his disciples? These are not jeering questions, but serious indications of the scantiness of the information given by the Evangelists, which is not compensated by some trifling detail of no value occasionally inserted to heighten the reality of a narrative. This is the last appearance of Jesus related in the fourth Gospel; for the character of chapter xxi. is too doubtful¹ to permit it to rank with the Gospel. The appearance of Jesus therein related is, in fact, more palpably legendary than the others. It will be observed that in this Gospel, as in the third Synoptic, the appearances of Jesus are confined to Jerusalem and exclude Galilee. These two Gospels are, therefore, clearly in contradiction with the statement of the first two Synoptics.²

note.

¹ Cf. p. 538 f.

² Matt. xxviii. 7; Mark xvi. 7.

It only remains for us to refer to one more appearance of Jesus : that related in the first Synoptic, xxviii. 16 f. In obedience to the command of Jesus, the disciples are represented as having gone away into Galilee, "unto the mountain where Jesus had appointed them." We have not previously heard anything of this specific appointment. The Synoptist continues : verse 17. "And when they saw him they worshipped him, but some doubted. 18. And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying : All authority was given to me (*ἐδόθη μοι*) in heaven and on earth. 19. Go ye and make disciples of all the nations, baptising them into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit ; 20. teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you ; and lo, I am with you all the days, unto the end of the world." This appearance not only is not mentioned in the other Gospels, but it excludes the appearances in Judæa, of which the writer seems to be altogether ignorant. If he knew of them, he practically denies them. *Note!*

There has been some discussion as to what the doubt mentioned in verse 17 refers, some critics maintaining that "some doubted" as to the propriety of worshipping Jesus ; whilst others more correctly consider that they doubted as to his identity ; but we need not mention the curious apologetic explanations offered.¹ Are we to regard the mention of these doubts as an "inestimable proof of the candour of the Evangelists" ? If so, then we may find fault with the omission to tell us whether, and how, those doubts were set at rest. As the narrative stands the doubts were not resolved. Was it possible to doubt without good reason of the identity of one with whom, until a few days previously, the disciples had been in daily and hourly contact at least for a year, if not longer ? Doubt in such a case is infinitely more decisive than belief. We can regard the expression, however, in no other light than as a mere rhetorical device in a legendary narrative. The rest of the account need have little further discussion here. The extraordinary statement in verse 18² seems as clearly the expression of later theology as the baptismal formula in verse 19, where the doctrine of the Trinity is so definitely expressed. Some critics suppose that the eleven were not alone upon this occasion, but

Note. ¹ Dr. Farrar makes the following remarks on this point : "The *οἱ δὲ ἐδίστασαν* of Matt. xxviii. 17 can only mean 'but some doubted'—not as Wetstein and others take it, whether they should worship or not, but respecting the whole scene. All may not have stood near to Him, and even if they did, we have seen in four previous instances (Matt. xxviii. 17 ; Luke xxiv. 16, 37 ; John xxi. 4) that there was something unusual and not instantly recognisable in His resurrection body. At any rate, here we have another inestimable proof of the candour of the Evangelists, for there is nothing to be said in favour of the conjectural emendation *οὐδὲ*" (*Life of Christ*, ii. 445, note 1).

² This is supposed to be a reference to Daniel vii. 14.

that either all the disciples of Jesus were present, or at least the 500 brethren¹ to whom Paul refers, 1 Cor. xv. 6. This mainly rests on the statement that "some doubted," for it is argued that, after the two previous appearances to the disciples in Jerusalem mentioned by the other Evangelists, it is impossible that the Eleven could have felt doubt, and consequently that others must have been present who had not previously been convinced. It is scarcely necessary to point out the utter weakness of such an argument. It is not permissible to patch on to this Gospel scraps cut out of the others.

It must be clear to every unprejudiced student that the appearances of Jesus narrated by the four Gospels in Galilee and Judæa cannot be harmonised, and we have shown that they actually exclude each other.² The first Synoptist records (verse 10) the order for the disciples to go into Galilee, and, with no further interruption than the mention of the return of the discomfited guard from the sepulchre to the chief priest, he (verse 16) states that they went into Galilee, where they saw Jesus in the manner just described. No amount of ingenuity can insert the appearances in Jerusalem here without the grossest violation of all common sense. This is the only appearance to the Eleven recorded in Matthew.

We must again point out the singular omission to relate the manner in which this interview was ended. The episode and the Gospel, indeed, are brought to a very artistic close by the expression, "Lo, I am with you all the days unto the end of the world"; but we must insist that it is a very suggestive fact that it does not occur to these writers to state what became of Jesus. No point could have been more full of interest than the manner in which Jesus here finally leaves the disciples, and is dismissed from the history. That such an important part of the narrative is omitted is in the highest degree remarkable and significant. Had a formal termination to the interview been recounted, it would have been subject to criticism, and by no means necessarily evidence of truth; but it seems to us that the circumstance that it never occurred to these writers to relate the departure of Jesus is a very strong indication of the unreality and shadowy nature of the whole tradition.

¹ Dr. Farrar, without explanation or argument, boldly asserts the presence of the 500 (*Life of Christ*, ii. 445).

² Dean Alford, whilst admitting that it is fruitless to attempt a harmony of the different accounts, curiously adds: ".....Hence the great diversity in this portion of the narrative: and hence I believe much that is now dark might be explained, were the facts themselves, in their order of occurrence, before us. Till that is the case (and I am willing to believe that it will be one of our delightful employments hereafter, to trace the true harmony of the Holy Gospels, under His teaching of whom they are the record), we must be content to walk by faith, and not by sight" (*Gk. Test on John*, xx. 1-29, i., p. 905).

note.

unimpaired
sentence

We are thus brought to consider the account of the Ascension, which is, at least, given by one Evangelist. In the appendix to the second Gospel, as if the later writer felt the omission and desired to complete the narrative, it is vaguely stated: xvi. 19. "So then after the Lord spake unto them he was taken up into heaven and sat on the right hand of God."¹ The writer, however, omits to state how he was taken up into heaven; and sitting "at the right hand of God" is an act and position which those who assert the "Personality of God" may possibly understand, but which we venture to think betrays that the account is a mere theological figment. The third Synoptist, as we have incidentally shown, gives an account of the Ascension. Jesus having, according to the narrative in xxiv. 50 f., led the disciples out to Bethany, lifted up his hands and blessed them (verse 51): "And it came to pass while blessing them he parted from them, and was carried up into heaven."² The whole of the appearances narrated in the third Synoptic, therefore, and the Ascension are thus said to occur on the same day as the Resurrection. In Matthew there is a different representation made, for the time consumed in the journey of the disciples to Galilee obviously throws back the Ascension to a later date. In Mark there is no appearance at all recorded, but the command to the disciples to go into Galilee confirms the first Synoptic. In the fourth Gospel, Jesus revisits the Eleven a second time after eight days; and, therefore, the Ascension is here necessarily later still. In neither of these Gospels is there any account of an Ascension at all.

We may here point out that there is no mention of the Ascension in any of the genuine writings of Paul, and it would appear that the theory of a bodily Ascension, in any shape, did not form part of the oldest Christian tradition. The growth of the legend of the Ascension is apparent in the circumstance that the author of the third Gospel follows a second tradition regarding that event, when composing Acts. Whether he thought a fuller and more detailed account desirable, or it seemed necessary to prolong the period during which Jesus remained on earth after his Resurrection and to multiply his appearances, it is impossible to say; but the fact is that he does so. He states in his second work that to the Apostles Jesus "presented himself alive, after he suffered, by many proofs, being seen (*ὀπτανόμενος*) by them during forty days,

¹ Cf. Psalm cx. 1.

² The last phrase, "and was carried up into heaven," *καὶ ἀνεφέρετο εἰς τὸν οὐρανόν*, is suspected by Griesbach, omitted by Tischendorf, and pronounced inauthentic by some critics. The words are not found in the *Sinaitic Codex* and D, but are in the great majority of the oldest MSS., including the *Alexandrian* and *Vatican*, C, F, H, K, L, M, S, U, V, etc. The preponderance of authority is greatly in their favour. Compare also Acts i. 2.

note this
in the
question
of time

most
important!
this also.

and speaking of the things concerning the Kingdom of God." It is scarcely possible to doubt that the period of forty days is suggested by the Old Testament and the Hebrew use of that number, of which, indeed, we already find examples in the New Testament in the forty days' temptation of Jesus in the wilderness,¹ and his fasting forty days and forty nights.² Why Jesus remained on earth this typical period we are not told,³ but the representation evidently is of much more prolonged and continuous intercourse with his disciples than any statements in the Gospels have led us to suppose, or than the declaration of Paul renders in the least degree probable. If, indeed, the account in Acts were true, the numbered appearances recited by Paul show singular ignorance of the phenomena of the Resurrection.

We need not discuss the particulars of the last interview with the Apostles (i. 4 f.), although they are singular enough, and are indeed elsewhere referred to, but at once proceed to the final occurrences. Verse 9. "And when he had spoken these things, while they are looking he was lifted up; and a cloud received him out of their sight. 10. And as they were gazing stedfastly into the heaven as he went, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; 11. which also said: Men of Galilee (*ἄνδρες Γαλιλαῖοι*), why stand ye looking into the heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into the heaven, shall come in like manner as ye saw him going into the heaven. 12. Then returned they into Jerusalem," etc. A definite statement is here made of the mode in which Jesus finally ascended into heaven, and it presents some of the incongruities which might have been expected. The bodily Ascension up the sky in a cloud, apart from the miraculous nature of such an occurrence, seems singularly to localise "Heaven," and to present views of cosmical and celestial phenomena suitable certainly to the age of the writer, but which are not endorsed by modern science. The sudden appearance of the "two men in white apparel," the usual description of angels, is altogether in the style of the author of Acts, but does it increase the credibility of the story? It is curious that the angels open their address to the Apostles in the same form as almost every other speaker in this book. One might ask, indeed, why such an angelic interposition should have taken place? for its utility is not apparent, and in the short sentence recorded nothing which is new is embodied. No surprise is expressed at the appearance of the angels, and nothing is said of their disappearance. They are introduced, like the chorus of a Greek play, and are left

¹ Mark i. 13; Luke iv. 2.

² Matt. iv. 2.

³ The testimony of the Epistle of Barnabas (chapter xv.) does not agree with this.

Note.

important

Note this.

unceremoniously, with an indifference which betrays complete familiarity with supernatural agency. Can there be any doubt that the whole episode is legendary?

It may not seem inappropriate to mention here that the idea of a bodily Ascension does not originate with the author of the third Synoptic and Acts, nor is it peculiar to Christianity. The translation of Enoch¹ had long been chronicled in the sacred books; and the ascent of Elijah² in his whirlwind and chariot of fire before the eyes of Elisha was another well-known instance. The vision of Daniel (vii. 13), of one like the "Son of man" coming with the clouds of heaven, might well have suggested the manner of his departure, but another mode has been suggested.³ The author of Acts was, we maintain, well acquainted with the works of Josephus.⁴ We know that the prophet like unto Moses was a favourite representation in Acts of the Christ. Now, in the account which Josephus gives of the end of Moses, he states that, although he wrote in the holy books that he died lest they should say that he went to God, this was not really his end. After reaching the mountain Abarim he dismissed the senate; and as he was about to embrace Eleazar, the high priest, and Joshua, "a cloud suddenly having stood over him he disappeared in a certain valley."⁵ This we merely mention in passing.

Our earlier examination of the evidence for the origin and authorship of the historical books of the New Testament very clearly demonstrated that the testimony of these works for miracles and the reality of Divine Revelation, whatever that testimony might seem to be, could not be considered of any real value. We have now examined the accounts which the four Evangelists actually give of the Passion, Resurrection, and Ascension, and there can be no hesitation in stating as the result that, as might have been expected from works of such uncertain character, these narratives must be pronounced mere legends, embodying vague and wholly unattested tradition. As evidence for such stupendous miracles they are absolutely of no value. No reliance can be placed on a single detail of their story. The aim of the writers

¹ Gen. v. 24; Ecclesiasticus xlv. 16, xlix. 14; Heb. xi. 5.

² 2 Kings ii. 11; Ecclesiasticus xlviii. 9, 11.

³ Strauss, *Das Leben Jesu*, p. 618.

⁴ Cf. *Fortnightly Review*, 1877, p. 502 f.

⁵ νέφους αἰφνίδιον ὑπὲρ αὐτὸν σάντος ἀφανίζεται κατὰ τινος φάραγγος. *Antiq. Jud.*, iv. 8, § 48.

remains
and writing
of note.

note.

has obviously been to make their narrative of the various appearances of Jesus as convincing as possible, and they have freely inserted any details which seemed to them calculated to give them impressiveness, force, and verisimilitude.

An apologetic writer has said: "Any one who will attentively read side by side the narratives of these appearances on the first day of the Resurrection will see that they have only been preserved for us in general, interblended and scattered notices (see Matt. xxviii. 16; Luke xxiv. 34; Acts i. 3), which, in strict exactness, render it impossible, without many arbitrary suppositions, to produce from them a *certain* narrative of the order of events. The *lacunæ*, the compressions, the variations, the actual differences, *the subjectivity of the narrators as affected by spiritual revelations*, render all harmonies at the best uncertain."¹ Passing over without comment the strange phrase in this passage which we have italicised, and which seems to claim divine inspiration for the writers, it must be obvious to any one who has carefully read the preceding pages that this is an exceedingly moderate description of the wild statements and irreconcilable contradictions of the different narratives we have examined. But, such as it is, with all the glaring inconsistencies and impossibilities of the accounts even thus subdued, is it possible for anyone who has formed even a faint idea of the extraordinary nature of the allegations which have to be attested to consider such documents really evidence for the Resurrection and bodily Ascension?

The usual pleas which are advanced in mitigation of judgment against the Gospels for these characteristics are of no avail. It may be easy to excuse the writers for their mutual contradictions, but the pleas themselves are an admission of the shortcomings which render their evidence valueless. "The differences of purpose in the narrative of the four Evangelists"² may be fancifully

¹ Farrar, *Life of Christ*, ii. 432, note 1.

² "Professor Westcott, with his usual profundity and insight, points out the differences of purpose in the narrative of the four Evangelists. St. Matthew dwells chiefly on the majesty and glory of the Resurrection; St. Mark, both in the original part and in the addition (Mark xvi. 9-20), insists upon it as a *fact*; St. Luke, as a *spiritual necessity*; St. John, as a touchstone of character (*Introd.*, 310-315)" (Farrar, *ib.*, ii. 432, note 1). Dr. Westcott says: "The various narratives of the Resurrection place the fragmentariness of the Gospel in the clearest light. They contain difficulties which it is impossible to explain with certainty, but there is no less an intelligible fitness and purpose in the details peculiar to each account.....It is necessary to repeat these obvious remarks, because the records of the Resurrection have given occasion to some of the worst examples of that kind of criticism from which the other parts of the Gospels have suffered, though not in an equal degree. It is tacitly assumed that we are in possession of all the circumstances of the event, and thus, on the one hand, differences are urged as fatal, and, on the other, elaborate attempts are made to show that the details given can be forced into

Important

set forth, or ingeniously imagined, but no "purpose" can transform discordant and untrustworthy narratives into evidence for miracles. Unless the prologue to the third Gospel be considered a condemnation of any of the other Synoptics which we may have existed before it, none of the Evangelists makes the smallest reference to any of his brethren or their works. Each Gospel tacitly professes to be a perfectly independent work, giving the history of Jesus, or at least of the active part of his life, and of his death and Resurrection. The apologetic theory, derived from the Fathers, that the Evangelists designed to complete and supplement each other, is totally untenable. Each work was evidently intended to be complete in itself; but when we consider that much the greater part of the contents of each of the Synoptics is common to the three, frequently with almost literal agreement, and generally without sufficient alteration to conceal community of source or use of each other, the poverty of Christian tradition becomes painfully evident. We have already pointed out the fundamental difference between the fourth Gospel and the Synoptics. In no part of the history does greater contradiction and disagreement between the three Synoptics themselves, and likewise between them and the fourth Gospel, exist than in the account of the Passion, Resurrection, and Ascension. It is impossible to examine the four narratives carefully without feeling that here tradition, for natural reasons, has been more than usually wavering and insecure. Each writer differs essentially from the rest, and the various narratives not only disagree, but exclude each other. The third Synoptist, in the course of some years, even contradicts himself. The phenomena which are related, in fact, were too subjective and unsubstantial for sober and consistent narrative, and free play was allowed for pious imagination to frame details by the aid of supposed Messianic utterances of the Prophets and Psalmists of Israel.

Such a miracle as the Resurrection, startling as it is in our estimation, was commonplace enough in the view of these writers. We need not go back to discuss the story of the widow's son restored to life by Elijah,¹ nor that of the dead man who revived on touching the bones of Elisha.² The raising from the dead of the son of the widow of Nain³ did not apparently produce much effect at the time, and only one of the Evangelists seems to have thought it worth while to preserve the narrative. The case of Jairus' daughter,⁴ whatever it was, is regarded as a resurrection of

the semblance of a complete and connected narrative. The true critic will pause before he admits either extreme" (*Int. to the Study of the Gospels*, 4th ed., p. 329, 331).

¹ 1 Kings xvii. 17 f.

² 2 Kings xiii. 21.

³ Luke vii. 11 f.

⁴ Mark v. 35 f.; Luke viii. 46 f.

the dead, and is related by two of the Synoptists ; but the raising of Lazarus is only recorded by the fourth Evangelist. The familiarity of the age with the idea of the resurrection of the dead, according to the Synoptists, is illustrated by the representation which they give of the effect produced by the fame of Jesus upon Herod and others. We are told by the first Synoptist that Herod said unto his servants : "This is John the Baptist ; he was raised from the dead ; and therefore the powers work in him."¹ The second Synoptist repeats the same statement, but adds : "But others said that it is Elijah ; and others said that it is a prophet like one of the prophets."² The statement of the third Synoptist is somewhat different. He says : "Now Herod the tetrarch heard all that was occurring : and he was perplexed because it was said by some that John was raised from the dead, and by some that Elijah appeared, and by others that one of the old prophets rose up. And Herod said : John I beheaded, but who is this of whom I hear such things, and he sought to see him."³ The three Synoptists substantially report the same thing ; the close verbal agreement of the first two being an example of the community of matter of which we have just spoken. The variations are instructive as showing the process by which each writer made the original form his own. Are we to assume that these things were really said ? Or must we conclude that the sayings are simply the creation of later tradition ? In the latter case, we see how unreal and legendary are the Gospels. In the former, we learn how common was the belief in a bodily resurrection. How could it seem so strange to the Apostles that Jesus should rise again, when the idea that John the Baptist or one of the old prophets had risen from the dead was so readily accepted by Herod and others ? How could they so totally misunderstand all that the chief priests, according to the first Synoptic, so well understood of the teaching of Jesus on the subject of his Resurrection, since the world had already become so familiar with the idea and the fact ?

Then, the episode of the Transfiguration must have occurred to everyone, when Jesus took with him Peter and James and John into a high mountain apart, "and he was transfigured before them ; and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment became white as the light. And behold, there was seen ($\omega\phi\theta\eta$) by them Moses and Elijah talking with him" ; and then "a bright cloud overshadowed them" and "a voice came out of the cloud : This is my beloved son," etc. "And when the disciples heard they fell

¹ Matt. xiv. 2 ; cf. Mark vi. 14.

² Mark vi. 15.

³ Luke ix. 7-9.

on their face and were sore afraid."¹ The third Synoptist even knows the subject of their conversation: "They were speaking of his decease which he was about to fulfil in Jerusalem."² This is related by all as an objective occurrence.³ Are we to accept it as such? Then how is it possible that the disciples should be so obtuse and incredulous as they subsequently showed themselves to be regarding the person of Jesus and his Resurrection? How could the announcement of that event by the angels to the women seem to them as an idle tale, which they did not believe?⁴ Here were Moses and Elijah before them, and in Jesus, we are told, they recognised one greater than Moses and Elijah. The miracle of the Resurrection was here again anticipated and made palpable to them. Are we to regard the Transfiguration as a subjective vision? Then why not equally so the appearances of Jesus after his passion? We can regard the Transfiguration, however, as nothing more than an allegory without either objective or subjective reality. Into this at present we cannot further go. It is sufficient to repeat that our examination has shown the Gospels to possess no value as evidence for the Resurrection and Ascension.

Note. ¹ Matt. xvii. 1 f.; cf. Mark ix. 2 f., Luke ix. 28 f. Nothing could be more instructive than a careful comparison of the three narratives of this occurrence and of the curious divergencies and amplifications of a common original introduced by successive editors.

² Luke ix. 31.

³ We need not here speak of the use of the verb *ὁράω*.

⁴ Luke xxiv. 11.

CHAPTER III.

THE EVIDENCE OF PAUL

WE may now proceed to examine the evidence of Paul. "On one occasion," it is affirmed in a passage already quoted, "he gives a very circumstantial account of the testimony upon which the belief in the Resurrection rested (1 Cor. xv. 4-8)."¹ This account is as follows: 1 Cor. xv. 3. "For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, 4. and that he was buried, and that he has been raised (ἐγήγερται) the third day according to the Scriptures, 5. and that he was seen by Cephas, then by the Twelve. 6. After that, he was seen by about five hundred brethren at once (ἐφάπαξ), of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep. 7. After that, he was seen by James; then by all the Apostles. 8. And last of all he was seen by me also as the one born out of due time."² Can this be considered "a very circumstantial account"? It may be exceedingly unreasonable, but we must at once acknowledge that we are not satisfied. The testimony upon which belief in the Resurrection is said to rest is comprised in a dozen lines—for we may so far anticipate as to say that this cannot be regarded as a *résumé* of evidence which we can find elsewhere. We shall presently point out a few circumstances which it might be useful to know.

The Apostle states, in this passage, that the doctrines which he had delivered to the Corinthians he had himself "received." He does not pretend to teach them from his own knowledge, and the question naturally arises: From whom did he "receive" them? Formerly, divines generally taught that Paul received these doctrines by revelation, and up to recent times Apologists have continued to hold this view, even when admitting the subsidiary use of tradition. If this claim were seriously made, the statements of the Apostle, so far as our inquiry is concerned, would certainly not gain in value, for it is obvious that Revelation could not be admitted to prove Revelation. It is quite true that Paul himself professed to have received his Gospel not from men, but from God by direct revelation, and we shall hereafter have to consider this point and the inferences to be drawn from such pretensions. At present the

¹ Sanday, *The Gospels in the Second Century*, p. 12.

² 1 Cor. xv. 3.

argument need not be complicated by any such supposition, for certainly Paul does not here advance any such claim himself, and apologetic and other critics agree in declaring the source of his statements to be natural historical tradition. The points which he delivered, and which he had also received, are three in number: (1) that Christ died for our sins; (2) that he was buried; and (3) that he has been raised the third day. In strictness the *καὶ ὅτι* might oblige us to include, "and that he was seen by Cephas, then by the Twelve," after which the construction of the sentence is changed. It is not necessary to press this, however, and it is better for the present to separate the dogmatic statements from those which are more properly evidential.

It will be observed that, although the death, burial, and Resurrection are here taught as "received," evidence only of one point is offered: that Jesus "was seen by" certain persons. We have already pointed out that the Gospels do not pretend that any one was an eye-witness of the Resurrection itself, and it is important to notice that Paul, the earliest and most trustworthy witness produced, entirely passes over the event, and relies solely on the fact that Jesus was supposed to have been seen by certain persons to prove that he died, was buried, and had actually risen the third day. The only inference which we here wish to draw from this is, that the alleged appearances are thus obviously separated from the death and burial by a distinct gulf. A dead body, it is stated, or one believed to be dead, is laid in a sepulchre; after a certain time, it is alleged that the dead person has been seen alive. Supposing the first statement to be correct—of which there must, of course, be the most clear and detailed evidence—the second, being in itself, according to all our experience, utterly incredible, leaves further a serious gap in the continuity of evidence. What occurred in the interval between the burial and the supposed apparition? If it be asserted—as in the Gospels it is—that, before the apparition, the sepulchre was found empty and the body gone, the natural reply is that this very circumstance may have assisted in producing a subjective vision, but that, in so far as the disappearance of the body is connected with the appearance of the person apparently alive, the fact has no evidential value. The person supposed to be dead, for instance, may not have been actually so, but have revived; for, although we have no intention ourselves of adopting this explanation of the Resurrection, it is, as an alternative, certainly preferable to belief in the miracle. Or, in the interval, the body may have been removed from a temporary to a permanent resting-place, unknown to those who are surprised to find the body gone—and in the Gospels the conflicting accounts of the embalming and hasty burial, as we have seen, would fully permit of such an argument if we relied at all on those narratives.

Many other means of accounting for the absence of the body might be advanced, any one of which, in the actual default of testimony to the contrary, would be irrefutable. The mere surprise of finding a grave empty which was supposed to contain a body betrays a blank in the knowledge of the persons, which can only be naturally filled up. This gap, at least, would not have existed had the supposed resurrection occurred in the presence of those by whom it is asserted Jesus "was seen." As it is, no evidence whatever is offered that Jesus really died; no evidence that the sepulchre was even found empty; no evidence that the dead body actually rose and became alive again; but, skipping over the intermediate steps, the only evidence produced is the statement that, being supposed to be dead, he is said to have been seen by certain persons.¹

There is a peculiarity in the statement to which we must now refer. The words, "according to the Scriptures" (*κατὰ τὰς γραφάς*) are twice introduced into the brief recapitulation of the teaching which Paul had received and delivered: (1) "That Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures," and (3) "that he has been raised the third day, according to the Scriptures." It is obvious that mere historical tradition has only to do with the fact "that Christ died," and that the object, "for our sins," is a dogmatic addition. The Scriptures supply the dogma. In the second point, the appeal to Scripture is curious, and so far important as indicating that the Resurrection on the third day was supposed to be a fulfilment of prophecy; and we have thus an indication, regarding which we must hereafter speak, of the manner in which the belief probably originated. The double reference to the Scriptures is peculiarly marked, and we have already more than once had occasion to point out that the narratives of the Gospels betray the very strong and constant influence of parts of the Old Testament supposed to relate to the Messiah. It cannot, we think, be doubted by any independent critic that the details of these narratives are largely due to the influence of the prophetic gnosis. It is natural to suppose that the early Christians, once accepting the idea of a suffering Messiah, should assume that prophecies which they believed to have reference to him had really been fulfilled, and that the actual occurrences corresponded minutely with the prophecies. It is probable that Christian tradition generally was moulded from foregone conclusions.

What were the "Scriptures," according to which "Christ died for our sins," and "has been raised the third day"? The passages which Paul most probably had in view were, as regards the death

¹ The curious account in Matt., xxviii. 1 f., of the earthquake and rolling away of the stone by an angel in the presence of the women, who nevertheless saw no Resurrection, will not be forgotten.

for our sins—Isaiah liii., Psalms xxii. and lxix., and for the Resurrection—Psalm xvi. 10 and Hosea vi. 2. We have already pointed out that historical criticism has shown that the first four passages just indicated are not Messianic prophecies at all, and we may repeat that the idea of a suffering Messiah was wholly foreign to the Jewish prophets and people. The Messiah “crucified,” as Paul himself bears witness, was “to Jews a stumbling block,”¹ and modern criticism has clearly established that the parts of Scripture by which the early Christians endeavoured to show that such a Messiah had been foretold can only be applied by a perversion of the original signification. In the case of the passages supposed to foretell the Resurrection the misapplication is particularly flagrant. We have already discussed the use of Psalm xvi. 10, which in Acts² is put into the mouth of the Apostles Peter and Paul, and shown that the proof passage rests upon a mistranslation of the original in the Septuagint.³ Any reader who will refer to Hosea vi. 2 will see that the passage in no way applies to the Messiah, although, undoubtedly, it has influenced the formation of the doctrine of the Resurrection. The “sign of the prophet Jonah,” which, in Matt. xii. 40, is put into the mouth of Jesus, is another passage used with equal incorrectness; and a glimpse of the manner in which Christian tradition took shape, and the Gospels were composed, may be obtained by comparing with the words in the first Synoptic the parallel in the third (xi. 29–31).⁴ We shall have more to say presently regarding the Resurrection “on the third day.”

We may now proceed to examine the so-called “very circumstantial account of the testimony on which the belief in the Resurrection rested.” “And that he was seen by Cephas, then by the Twelve. After that he was seen by above 500 brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep. After that he was seen by James, then by all the Apostles, and last of all he was seen by me also.”⁵ There can be no doubt, we think, from the terms in which this statement is made, that Paul intended to give the appearances in chronological order. It would likewise be a fair inference that he intended to mention all the appearances of which he was aware. So far the account may possibly merit the epithet “circumstantial,” but in all other respects it is scarcely possible to conceive any statement less circumstantial. As to where the risen Jesus was seen by these persons, in what manner, under what circumstances, and at what time, we are not vouchsafed a single particular. Moreover, the Apostle was not present on any

¹ 1 Cor. i. 23.

² ii. 25 f., xiii. 35 f.

³ P. 82.

⁴ Cf. Matt. xvi. 4; Mark viii. 11.

⁵ 1 Cor. xv. 5–8.

of these occasions, excepting, of course, his own vision, and, consequently, merely reports appearances of which he has been informed by others ; but he omits to mention the authority upon which he makes these statements, or what steps he took to ascertain their accuracy and reality. For instance, when Jesus is said to have been seen by 500 brethren at once, it would have been of the highest importance for us to know the exact details of the scene, the proportion of inference to fact, the character of the Apostle's informant, the extent of the investigation into the various impressions made upon the individuals composing the 500, as opposed to the collective affirmation. We confess that we do not attach much value to such appeals to the experience of 500 persons at once. It is difficult to find out what the actual experience of the individuals was, and each person is so apt to catch the infection of his neighbour and join in excitement, believing that, though he does not himself see or feel anything, his neighbour does, that probably, when inquiry is pressed home, the aggregate affirmation of a large number may resolve itself into the actual experience of very few. The fact is, however, that in this "very circumstantial account" we have nothing except a mere catalogue by Paul, without a detail or information of any kind, of certain appearances which he did not himself see—always excepting his own vision, which we reserve—but merely had "received" from others. As evidence of the death and Resurrection it has no value.

If we compare these appearances with the instances recorded in the Gospels, the result is by no means satisfactory. The first appearance is said to be to Cephas. It is argued that Paul passes in silence over the appearances to women, both because the testimony of women was not received in Jewish courts, and because his own opinions regarding the active participation of women in matters connected with the Church were of a somewhat exclusive character.¹ The appearance to Cephas is generally identified with that mentioned, Luke xxiv. 34.² Nothing could be more cursory than the manner in which this appearance is related in the Synoptic. The disciples from Emmaus, returning at once to Jerusalem, found the Eleven and those who were with them saying : "The Lord was raised indeed, and was seen by Simon." Not another syllable is said regarding an appearance which, according to Paul, was the first which had occurred. The other Gospels say still less, for they ignore the incident altogether. It is difficult to find room for such an appearance in the Gospel narratives. If we take the

¹ Cf. 1 Cor. xiv. 34 f.

² So Bisping, Maier, Meyer, Neander, Osiander, Rückert, Stanley, de Wette, etc.

report of Paul to be true, that Jesus was first seen by Cephas, the silence of three Evangelists and their contradictory representations, on the one hand, and the remarkable way in which the third Gospel avoids all but a mere indirect reference to the occurrence, on the other, are phenomena which we leave Apologists to explain.¹

He is next seen "by the Twelve." This vision is identified with that narrated in John xx. 19 f. and Luke xxiv. 36 f.,² to which, as Thomas was absent on the first occasion, some critics understand the episode in John xx. 26 f. to be added. On reference to our discussion of these accounts, it will be seen that they have few or no elements of credibility. If the appearance to the Twelve mentioned by Paul be identified with these episodes, and their details be declared authentic, the second item in Paul's list becomes discredited.

The appearance to 500 brethren at once is not mentioned in any of the Gospels, but critics, and especially apologetic critics, assert with more or less of certainty the identity of the occasion with the scene described in Matt. xxviii. 16 f.³ We remarked whilst discussing the passage that this is based chiefly on the statement that "some doubted," which would have been inconsistent, it is thought, had Jesus already appeared to the Eleven.⁴ The identity is denied by others.⁵ The narrative in the first Synoptic would scarcely add force to the report in the Epistle. Is it possible to suppose that, had there been so large a number of persons collected upon that occasion, the Evangelist would not have mentioned the fact? On the other hand, does it not somewhat discredit the statement that Jesus was seen by so large a number at once, that no record of such a remarkable occurrence exists elsewhere? How could the tradition of such an event, witnessed by so many, have so completely perished that neither in the Gospels nor Acts, nor in any other writing, is there any reference to it, and our only knowledge of it is this bare statement, without a single detail? There is only one explanation: that the

¹ Gfrörer thinks the germ of Paul's incident to lie in the statement John xx. 4 (*Die heil. Sage*, i., p. 376 f.). Dr. Farrar thinks the details "may have been of a nature too personal to have been revealed" (*Life of Christ*, ii., p. 437).

² So Bisping, Maier, Meyer, Neander, Osiander, Stanley, de Wette, etc.

³ So Grotius, Maier, Osiander, Wordsworth, etc., ad l. Ebrard, *Wiss. Kr. ev. Gesch.*, p. 591 f., 599; *zu Olsh. Leidensgesch.*, p. 210; Farrar, *Life of Christ*, ii., p. 445; cf. Olshausen, *Leidensgesch.*, p. 227; Stanley, *Corinthians*, p. 288.

⁴ Beyschlag considers that, in these doubts, we have clearly an erroneous mixing up of the story of Thomas (John xx. 24 f.), and he thinks that probably in the incident of Jesus eating fish, described by the third Synoptic (xxiv. 42), we have a reminiscence of John xxi. 13 (*Stud. u. Kr.*, 1870, p. 218, anm).

⁵ Alford, Bisping, Hofmann, Meyer, de Wette, etc.

assembly could not have recognised in the phenomenon, whatever it was, the risen Jesus, or that subsequently an explanation was given which dispelled some temporary illusion. In any case, we must insist that the total absence of all confirmation of an appearance to 500 persons at once renders such an occurrence more than suspicious. The statement that the greater number were still living when Paul wrote does not materially affect the question. Paul doubtless believed the report that such an appearance had taken place, and that the majority of witnesses still survived; but does it necessarily follow that the report was true? The survivors were certainly not within reach of the Corinthians, and could not easily be questioned. The whole of the argument of Paul which we are considering, as well as that which follows, was drawn from him by the fact that, in Corinth, Christians actually denied a Resurrection, and it is far from clear that this denial did not extend to denying the Resurrection of Jesus himself. That they did deny this we think certain, from the care with which Paul gives what he considers evidence for the fact. Another point may be mentioned. Where could so many as 500 disciples have been collected at one time? The author of Acts states (i. 15) the number of the Christian community gathered together to elect a successor to Judas as "about 120." Apologists, therefore, either suppose the appearance to 500 to have taken place in Jerusalem, when numbers of pilgrims from Galilee and other parts were in the Holy City, or that it occurred in Galilee itself, where they suppose believers to have been more numerous. This is the merest conjecture; and there is not even ground for asserting that there were so many as 500 brethren in any one place by whom Jesus could have been seen.

The appearance to James is not mentioned in any of our Gospels. Jerome preserves a legend from the Gospel of the Hebrews, which states that James, after having drunk the cup of the Lord, swore that he would not eat bread until he should see him risen from the dead. When Jesus rose, therefore, he appeared to James; and, ordering a table and bread to be brought, blessed and broke the bread, and gave it to James.¹ Beyond this legendary story there is no other record of the report given by Paul. The occasion on which he was seen by "all the Apostles" is indefinite, and cannot be identified with any account in the Gospels.

It is asserted, however, that, although Paul does not state from whom he "received" the report of these appearances of the risen Jesus, he must have heard them from the Apostles themselves. At any rate, it is added, Paul professes that his preaching on the

¹ Hieron., *De vir. ill.*, ii.

death, burial, and Resurrection is the same as that of the other Apostles.¹ That the other Apostles preached the Resurrection of Jesus may be a fact, but we have no information as to the precise statements they made. We shall presently discuss the doctrine from this point of view, but here we must confine ourselves to Paul. As for the inference that, associating with the Apostles, he must have been informed by them of the appearances of Jesus, we may say that this by no means follows so clearly as is supposed. Paul was singularly independent, and in his writings he directly disclaims all indebtedness to the elder Apostles. He claims that his Gospel is not after man, nor was it taught to him by man, but through revelation of Jesus Christ.² Now Paul himself informs us of his action after it pleased God to reveal his Son in him that he might preach him among the Gentiles. It might, indeed, have been reasonably expected that Paul should then have sought out those who could have informed him of all the extraordinary occurrences supposed to have taken place after the death of Jesus. Paul does nothing of the kind. He is apparently quite satisfied with his own convictions. "Immediately," he says, in his characteristic letter to the Galatians, "I communicated not with flesh and blood; neither went I away to Jerusalem to them who were Apostles before me, but I went away to Arabia, and returned again unto Damascus. Then, after three years, I went up to Jerusalem to visit Cephas, and abode with him fifteen days; but other of the Apostles saw I none, save James the brother of the Lord. Now the things which I write, behold before God I lie not.....Then after fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem"³—upon which occasion, we know, his business was not of a nature to allow us to suppose that he obtained much information regarding the Resurrection.

We may ask: Is there that thirst for information regarding the facts and doctrines of Christianity displayed here, which entitles us to suppose that Paul eagerly and minutely investigated the evidence for them? We think not. Paul made up his own mind in his own way, and, having silently waited three years, it is not probable that the questions which he then asked were of any searching nature. The protest that he saw none of the other Apostles may prove his independence, but it certainly does not prove his anxiety for information. When Paul went up to make the acquaintance of Cephas his object clearly was not to be taught by him, but to place himself in communication with the man whom he believed to be the chief of the Apostles, and, we may assume, largely with a view to establish a friendly feeling, and secure recognition of his future ministry. We should not, of

¹ 1 Cor. xv. 11, 12.

² Gal. i. 11, 12.

³ Gal. i. 16, 18, ii. 1.

course, be justified in affirming that the conversation between the two great Apostles never turned upon the subject of the Resurrection; but we think that it is obvious that Paul's visit was not in the least one of investigation. He believed; he believed that certain events had occurred "according to the Scriptures"; and the legitimate inference from Paul's own statements must be that, in this visit after three years, his purpose was in no way connected with a search for evidential information. The author of Acts, it will be remembered, represents him as, before any visit to Jerusalem, publicly and boldly preaching in Damascus that Jesus is the Son of God, and "confounding the Jews.....proving that this is the Christ."¹ This representation, it will be admitted, shows an advanced condition of belief little supporting the idea of subsequent investigation. When all conjectures are exhausted, however, we have the one distinct fact remaining that Paul gives no authority for his report that Jesus was seen by the various persons mentioned, nor does he furnish any means by which we can judge of the nature and reality of the alleged phenomena. We continue here to speak of the appearances to others, reserving the appearance to himself, as standing upon a different basis, for separate examination.

What is the value of this evidence? The fact to be proved is that, after a man had been crucified, dead, and buried, he actually rose from the dead, and appeared alive to many persons. The evidence is that Paul, writing some twenty years after the supposed miraculous occurrences, states, without detailed information of any kind, and without pretending to have himself been an eye-witness of the phenomena, that he has been told that Jesus was, after his death and burial, seen alive on the occasions mentioned! As to the Apostle Paul himself, let it be said in the most emphatic manner possible that we do not suggest the slightest suspicion of the sincerity of any historical statement he makes. We implicitly accept the historical statements, as distinguished from inferences, which proceed from his pen. It cannot be doubted that Paul was told that such appearances had been seen. We do not question the fact that he believed them to have taken place; and we shall hereafter discuss the weight to be attached to this circumstance. Does this, however, guarantee the truth of the reports or inferences of those who informed the Apostle? Does the mere passage of any story or tradition through Paul necessarily transmute error into truth—self-deception or hallucination into objective fact? Are we—without any information as to what was really stated to Paul, as to the personality and character of his informants, as to the details of what was believed to have occurred,

¹ Acts ix. 20, 22, 27.

as to the means taken to test the reality of the alleged phenomena, without an opportunity of judging for ourselves on a single point—to believe in the reality of these appearances simply because Paul states that he has been informed that they occurred, and himself believes the report?

So far as the belief of Paul is concerned, we may here remark that his views regarding the miraculous Charismata in the Church do not prepare us to feel any confidence in the sobriety of his judgment in connection with alleged supernatural occurrences. We have no reliance upon his instinctive mistrust of such statements, or his imperative requirement of evidence, but every reason to doubt them. On the other hand, without in any way imputing wilful incorrectness or untruth to the reporters of such phenomena, let it be remembered how important a part inference has to play in the narrative of every incident, and how easy it is to draw erroneous inferences from bare facts.¹ In proportion as persons are ignorant, on the one hand, and have their minds disturbed, on the other, by religious depression or excitement, hope, fear, or any other powerful emotion, they are liable to confound facts and inferences, and both to see and analyse wrongly. In the case of a supposed appearance alive of a person believed to be dead, it will scarcely be disputed, there are many disturbing elements, especially when that person has just died by a cruel and shameful death, and is believed to be the Messiah. The occurrence which we at any time see is, strictly speaking, merely a series of appearances, and the actual nature of the thing seen is determined in our minds by inferences. How often are these inferences correct? We venture to say that the greater part of the proverbial incorrectness and inaccuracy which prevail arise from the circumstance that inferences are not distinguished from facts, and are constantly erroneous. In that age, under such circumstances, and with Oriental temperaments, it is absolutely certain that there was exceptional liability to error; and the fact that Paul repeats the statements of unknown persons, dependent so materially upon inference, cannot possibly warrant us in believing them when they contradict known laws which express the results of universal experience. It is infinitely more probable that these persons were mistaken than that a dead man returned to life again, and

¹ We may merely in passing refer to the case of Mary Magdalene in the fourth Gospel. She sees a figure standing beside her, and infers that it is the gardener; presently something else occurs which leads her to infer that she was mistaken in her first inference, and to infer next that it is Jesus. It is a narrative upon which no serious argument can be based; but had she at first turned away, her first inference would have remained, and, according to the narrative, have been erroneous. We might also argue that, if further examination had taken place, her second inference might have proved as erroneous as the first is declared to have been.

appeared to them. We shall presently consider how much importance is to be attached to mere belief in the occurrence of such phenomena; but with regard to the appearances referred to by Paul, except in so far as they attest the fact that certain persons may have believed that Jesus appeared to them, such evidence has not the slightest value, and is indeed almost ludicrously insufficient to establish the reality of so stupendous a miracle as the Resurrection. It will have been observed that of the Ascension there is not a word—obviously for Paul the Resurrection and Ascension were one act.

Having so far discussed Paul's report that Jesus rose from the dead and was seen by others, we turn to his statement that, last of all, he was seen also by himself. In the former cases we have had to complain of the total absence of detailed information as to the circumstances under which he was supposed to have been seen; but it may be expected that, at least in his own case, we shall have full and minute particulars of so interesting and extraordinary a phenomenon. Here, again, we are disappointed. Paul does not give us a single detail. He tells us neither when, where, nor how he saw Jesus. It was all the more important that he should have entered into the particulars of this apparition, because there is one peculiarity in his case which requires notice. Whereas it may be supposed that in the other instances Jesus is represented as being seen immediately after the Resurrection and before his Ascension, the appearance to Paul must be placed years after that occurrence is alleged to have taken place. The question, therefore, arises: Was the appearance to Paul of the same character as the former? Paul evidently considers that it was. He uses the very same word when he says "he was seen ($\omega\phi\theta\eta$) by me," that he employs in stating that "he was seen ($\omega\phi\theta\eta$) by Cephas" and the rest, and he classes all the appearances together in precisely the same way. If, therefore, Paul knew anything of the nature of the appearances to the others, and yet considers them to have been of the same nature as his own, an accurate account of his own vision might have enabled us in some degree to estimate that of the others. Even without this account, it is something to know that Paul believed that there was no difference between the earlier and later appearances. And yet, if we reflect that in the appearances immediately after the Resurrection the representation is that Jesus possessed the very same body that had hung on the cross and been laid in the sepulchre, and that, according to the Gospels, he exhibited his wounds, allowed them to be touched, assured the disciples of his corporeality by permitting himself to be handled, and even by eating food in their presence, and that in the case of Paul the appearance took place years after Jesus is said to have ascended into heaven and sat down at the right hand of

God, the identity of the apparitions becomes a suggestive feature.

The testimony of Paul must at least override that of the Gospels, and, whatever may have been the vision of Paul, we may fairly assume that the vision of Peter and the rest was like it. Beyond this inference, Paul gives us no light with regard to the appearance of Jesus to himself. He merely affirms that Jesus did appear to him. "Have I not seen Jesus our Lord?" he says in one place.¹ Elsewhere he relates: "But when he was pleased, who set me apart from my mother's womb, and called me through his grace, to reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the Gentiles; immediately, I communicated not with flesh and blood.....but I went away into Arabia and returned again unto Damascus."² Various opinions have been expressed regarding the rendering of ἀποκαλύψαι τὸν υἱὸν αὐτοῦ ἐν ἐμοί. The great majority of critics agree that the direct and natural sense must be adopted: "to reveal his Son in me," that is to say, "within me," "in my spirit."³ Others maintain that ἐν ἐμοί must be rendered "through me,"⁴ giving ἐν the sense of διὰ; but in that case the following context would be quite unnecessary. Hilgenfeld⁵ thinks that the meaning is "in his person"; and Rückert and a few others read "to me." The liberties taken by interpreters of the New Testament with the preposition ἐν, too frequently from preconceived dogmatic reasons, are remarkable. The importance of this passage chiefly lies in the question whether the revelation here referred to is the same as the appearance to him of Jesus of the Corinthian letter. Some critics incline to the view that it is so,⁶ whilst others consider that Paul does not thus speak of his vision, but rather of the doctrine concerning Jesus which formed his Gospel, and which Paul claimed to have received, not from man, but by revelation from God.⁷ Upon this point we have only a few remarks to make. If it be understood that Paul refers to the appearance to him of Jesus, it is clear that he represents it in these

¹ 1 Cor. ix. 1.

² Gal. i. 15-17.

³ So Alford, Bisping, Ellicott, Ewald, Holtzmann, Jowett, Meyer, Olshausen, Schrader, Usteri, de Wette, Wieseler, Winer, Wordsworth, ad l.; Baur, *Paulus*, i., p. 75 f.; Holsten, *Zum Ev. Paulus, u. s. w.*, p. 42 f., anm.; Meijboom, *Jezus' Opstand.*, p. 105; Neander, *Pflanzung*, p. 117.

⁴ Grotius, *Annot. in N. T.*, vi., p. 553; Baumgarten-Crusius, *Br. an die Gal.*, p. 26; Lightfoot, *Galatians*, p. 82.

⁵ *Der Galaterbr.*, p. 121.

⁶ Baur, *Paulus*, i., p. 75 f.; Meijboom, *Jezus' Opstand.*, p. 105 f.; Jowett, *Eps. of St. Paul*, i., p. 216 f., 230 f.; Ewald, Holtzmann, Schrader, Usteri, Wieseler, etc., in l.

⁷ Holsten, *Zum ev. Paul. u. s. w.*, p. 42, anm.; Neander, *Pflanzung*, p. 117; Alford, Bisping, Hilgenfeld, Lightfoot, Meyer, de Wette, Wordsworth, etc., in l.

words as a subjective vision, within his own consciousness. If, on the other hand, he do not refer to the appearance, then the passage loses all distinct reference to that occurrence. We do not intend to lay any further stress upon the expression than this, and it is fair to add that we do not think there is any special reference to the apparition of Jesus in the passage, but simply an allusion to his conversion to Christianity, which the Apostle considered a revelation in his mind of the true character and work of the Christ which had previously been so completely misunderstood by him. We may as well say at once that we desire to take the argument in its broadest form, without wasting time by showing that Paul himself uses language which seems to indicate that he recognised the appearance of Jesus to have been merely subjective. The only other passage which we need now mention is the account which Paul gives, 2 Cor. xii. 2 f., of his being caught up to the third heaven. A few critics consider that this may be the occasion on which Jesus appeared to him, to which he refers in the passage of the former letter which we are considering;¹ but the great majority are opposed to the supposition. In any case there is no evidence that the occasions are identical, and we therefore are not entitled to assume that they are so.

It will have been observed that we have hitherto confined our attention wholly to the undoubted writings of Paul. Were there no other reason than the simple fact that we are examining the evidence of Paul himself, and have, therefore, to do with that evidence alone, we should be thoroughly justified in this course. It is difficult to clear the mind of statements regarding Paul and his conversion which are made in the Acts of the Apostles, but it is absolutely essential that we should understand clearly what Paul himself tells us and what he does not tell us, for the present totally excluding Acts. What, then, does Paul himself tell us of the circumstances under which he saw Jesus? Absolutely nothing. The whole of his evidence for the Resurrection consists in the bare statement that he did see Jesus. Now, can the fact that any man merely affirms, without even stating the circumstances, that a person once actually dead and buried has risen from the dead and been seen by him, be seriously considered satisfactory evidence for so astounding a miracle? Is it possible for anyone of sober mind, acquainted with the nature of the proposition, on the one hand, and with the innumerable possibilities of error, on the other, to regard such an affirmation even as evidence of much importance in such a matter? We venture to say that, in such a case, an affirmation of this nature, even made by a man of high character and ability, would possess little weight. If the person making it,

¹ Dr. Jowett thinks this not improbable (*The Epistles of St. Paul*, i., p. 229).

although of the highest honour, were known to suppose himself the subject of constant revelations and visions, and if, perhaps, he had a constitutional tendency to nervous excitement and ecstatic trance, his evidence would have no weight at all. We shall presently have to speak of this more in detail in connection with Paul. Such an allegation, even supported by the fullest information and most circumstantial statement, could not establish the reality of the miracle; without them, it has no claim to belief. What is the value of a person's testimony who simply makes an affirmation of some important matter, unaccompanied by particulars, and the truth of which cannot be subjected to the test of even the slightest cross-examination? It is worth nothing. It would not be received at all in a Court of Justice. If we knew the whole of the circumstances of the apparition to Paul, from which he inferred that he had seen the risen Jesus, the natural explanation of the supposed miracle might be easy. We have only the bare report of a man who states that he had seen Jesus, unconfirmed by any witnesses. Under no circumstances could isolated evidence like this be of much value. The facts and inferences are alike without corroboration, but on the other hand are contradicted by universal experience.

When we analyse the evidence, it is reduced to this: Paul believed that he had seen Jesus. This belief constitutes the whole of Paul's evidence for the Resurrection. It is usual to argue that the powerful effect which this belief produced upon his life and teaching renders it of extraordinary force as testimony. This we are not prepared to admit. If the assertion that Jesus appeared to him had not been believed by Paul, it would not have secured a moment's attention. That this conviction affected his life was the inevitable consequence of such belief. Paul eminently combined works with faith in his own life. When he believed Jesus to be an impostor, he did not content himself with sneering at human credulity, but vigorously persecuted his followers. When he came to believe Jesus to be the Messiah, he was not more inactive, but became the irrepressible Apostle of the Gentiles. He acted upon his convictions in both cases; but his persecution of Christianity no more proved Jesus to be an impostor than his preaching of Christianity proved Jesus to be the Messiah. It only proved that he believed so. He was as earnest in the one case as in the other. We repeat, therefore, that the evidence of Paul for the Resurrection amounts to nothing more than the belief that Jesus had been seen by him. We shall presently further examine the value of this belief as evidence for so astounding a miracle.

We must not form exaggerated conceptions of the effect upon Paul of the appearance to him of Jesus. That his convictions and

views of Christianity were based upon the reality of the Resurrection is undeniable; and that they received powerful confirmation and impulse through his vision of Jesus is also not to be doubted; but let us clear our minds of representations derived from other sources, and understand what Paul himself does and does not say of this vision; and for this purpose we must confine ourselves to the undoubted writings of the Apostle. Does Paul himself ascribe his conversion to Christianity to the fact of his having seen Jesus? Most certainly not. That is a notion derived solely from the statements in Acts. The sudden and miraculous conversion of Paul is a product of the same pen which produced the story of the sudden conversion of the thief on the cross—an episode equally unknown to other writers. Paul neither says when nor where he saw Jesus. The revelation of God's Son in him not being an allusion to this vision of Jesus, but merely a reference to the light which dawned upon Paul's mind as to the character and mission of Jesus, there is no ground whatever, from the writings of the Apostle himself, to connect the appearance of Jesus with his conversion. The statement in the Epistle to the Galatians simply amounts to this: When it pleased him who elected him from his mother's womb, and called him by his grace, to reveal to his mind the truth concerning his Son, that he might preach him among the Gentiles, he communicated not with flesh and blood, neither did he go up to Jerusalem to those who were Apostles before him, but immediately went away to Arabia, and after that returned again to Damascus. It can scarcely be doubted that Paul here refers to his change of views—to his conversion—but as little can it be doubted that he does not ascribe that conversion to the appearance to him of Jesus spoken of in the Corinthian letter.

Let any reader who honestly desires to ascertain the exact position of the case ask himself the simple question whether, supposing the Acts of the Apostles never to have existed, it is possible to deduce from this, or any other statement of Paul, that he actually ascribes his conversion to the fact that Jesus appeared to him in a supernatural manner. He may possibly in some degree base his apostolic claims upon that appearance, although it may be doubted how far he does even this; if he did so, it would only prove the reality of his belief, but not the reality of the vision; but there is no evidence whatever in the writings of Paul that he connected his conversion with the appearance of Jesus. All that we can legitimately infer seems to be that, before his adoption of Christianity, he had persecuted the Church;¹ and further it may be gathered from the passage in the Galatian letter that at the time when this change occurred he was at Damascus. At least he

¹ 1 Cor. xv. 9.

says that from Arabia he "returned again to Damascus," which seems to imply that he first went from that city to Arabia. When we consider the expressions in the two letters, it becomes apparent that Paul does not set forth any instantaneous conversion of the character related elsewhere. To the Galatians he describes his election from his mother's womb and call by the grace of God as antecedent to the revelation of his Son in him: "When he who separated me from my mother's womb and called me by his grace was pleased to reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the Gentiles," etc. And if the reading "through me" be adopted, the sense we are pointing out becomes still more apparent. In the Corinthian letter again, the expressions should be remarked: Verse 8. "And last of all he was seen by me also, as the one born out of due time. 9. For I am the least of the Apostles, that am not fit to be called an Apostle, because I persecuted the Church of God; 10. but by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was (bestowed) upon me was not in vain, but I laboured more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God with me. 11. Whether, therefore, it were I or they, so we preach, and so ye believed."¹ Peter sees Jesus first, Paul sees him last; and as the thought uppermost in his mind in writing this Epistle was the parties in the Corinthian Church, and the opposition to himself and denial even of his Apostleship, the mention of his having seen Jesus immediately leads him to speak of his apostolic claims. "Am I not an Apostle? have I not seen Jesus our Lord?" he had just before exclaimed, and proceeded to defend himself against his opponents: here, again, he reverts to the same subject, with proud humility calling himself, on the one hand, "the least of the Apostles," but, on the other, asserting that he had "laboured more abundantly than they all." He is led to contrast his past life with his present; the time when he persecuted the Church with that in which he built it up. There is, however, no allusion to any miraculous conversion when he says, "by the grace of God I am what I am." He may consider his having seen the Lord and become a witness of his resurrection one part of his qualification for the Apostolate, but assuredly he does not represent this as the means of his conversion.

We shall not pause to discuss at length how far being a witness for the Resurrection really was made a necessary qualification for the apostolic office. The passages, Luke xxiv. 48, Acts i. 22, ii. 32, upon which the theory mainly rests, are not evidence of the fact which can for a moment be accepted. It is obvious that the Twelve were Apostles from having been chosen disciples of the Master from the commencement of his active career, and not from

¹ 1 Cor. xv. 8.

any fortuitous circumstance at its close. If Paul says, "Am I not an Apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord?" he continues: "Are ye not my work in the Lord? If I am not an Apostle unto others, yet I am at least to you: for the seal of mine Apostleship are ye in the Lord. My defence to them that examine me is this."¹ There can be no doubt that the claims of Paul to the Apostolate were, during his life, constantly denied, and his authority rejected. As we have elsewhere pointed out, there is no evidence that his Apostleship was ever recognised by the elder Apostles, nor that his claim was ever submitted to them. Even in the second century the *Clementine Homilies* deny him the honour, and make light of his visions and revelations. All the evidence we possess shows that Paul's vision of Jesus did not secure for him much consideration in his own time—a circumstance which certainly does not tend to establish its reality.

What weight can we, then, attach to the representation in the Acts of the Apostles of the conversion of Paul? Our examination of that work has sufficiently shown that none of its statements can be received as historical. Where we have been able to compare them with the Epistles of Paul, they have not been in agreement. Nothing could be more obvious than the contradiction between the narrative of Paul's conduct after his conversion, according to Acts, and the account which Paul gives in the Galatian letter. We need not repeat the demonstration here. Where we possess the means of comparison we discover the inaccuracy of Acts. Why should we suppose that which we cannot compare more accurate? So far as our argument is concerned, it matters very little whether we exclude the narrative of the conversion of Acts or not. We point out, however, that there is no confirmation whatever in the writings of Paul of the representation of his conversion by means of a vision of Jesus, which, upon all considerations, may much more reasonably be assigned to a somewhat later period. If we ventured to conjecture, we should say that the author of Acts has expanded the scattered sayings of Paul into this narrative, making the miraculous conversion by a personal interposition of Jesus, which he therefore relates no less than three times, counter-balance the disadvantage of his not having followed Jesus in the flesh. It is curious that he has introduced the bare statement into the third Synoptic, that Jesus "was seen by Simon" (ὡφθη Σίμωνι),² which none of the other Evangelists mentions, but which he may have found, without further particulars, ὡφθη Κηφᾶ, in the Epistle whence he derived, perhaps, materials for the other story. In no case can the narrative in Acts be received as evidence of the slightest value; but in order not

¹ 1 Cor. ix. 1-3.

² Luke xxiv. 34.

to pass over even such statements in silence, we shall very briefly examine it.

The narrative is repeated thrice : in the first instance (ix. i f.) as a historical account of the transaction ; next (xxii. 4 f.) introduced into a speech supposed to be delivered by Paul to the Jews when taken prisoner in consequence of their uproar on finding him in the Temple purifying himself with the four men who had a vow—a position which cannot historically be reconciled with the character and views of Paul ; and, thirdly, again put into the mouth of the Apostle (xxvi. 9 f.) when he pleads his cause before King Agrippa. Paul is represented in the headlong career of persecuting the Church, and going with letters from the high priest empowering him to bring Christian men and women bound unto Jerusalem. "And as he journeyed, it came to pass that he drew nigh to Damascus, and suddenly there shone round about him a light out of the heaven, and he fell upon the earth and heard a voice saying unto him : Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And he said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest. But rise and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do."¹ In the second account there is so far no very wide discrepancy, but there, as in the third, the time is said to be about noon. There is a very considerable difference in the third account, however, more especially in the report of what is said by the voice : xxvi. 13. "At mid-day, O King, I saw in the way a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun, shining round about me and those journeying with me ; 14. and when we all fell to the earth, I heard a voice saying unto me in the Hebrew tongue : Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? it is hard for thee to kick against pricks. 15. And I said : Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said : I am Jesus whom thou persecutest. 16. But rise and stand upon thy feet ; for I was seen by thee for this purpose, to choose thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou sawest, and of the things in which I will appear unto thee ; 17. delivering thee from the people and from the Gentiles, unto whom I send thee ; 18. to open their eyes, that they may turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and a lot among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me."²

It will be admitted that this address is widely different from that reported in the two earlier accounts. Apologists argue that in this third narrative Paul has simply transferred from Ananias to Jesus the message delivered to him by the former, according to the second account. Let us first see what Ananias is there represented as saying. Acts xxii. 14 : "And he said : The God of our

¹ Acts ix. 3 ; cf. xxii. 6-8, 10.

² Acts. xxvi. 13.

fathers chose thee, to know his will and to see the Righteous One;¹ 15. for thou shalt be a witness to him unto all men of what thou hast seen and heard."² Now, Paul clearly professes in the speech which he is represented as delivering before Agrippa to state what the voice said to him: "And he said," "and I said," "and he said," distinctly convey the meaning that the report is to be what was actually said. If the sense of what Ananias said to him is embodied in part of the address ascribed to the voice, it is strangely altered and put into the first person; but, beyond this, there is much added which appears neither in the speech of Ananias nor anywhere else in any of the narratives. If we further compare the instructions given to Ananias in the vision of the first narrative with his words in the second and those ascribed to the voice in the third, we shall see that these again differ very materially. Acts ix. 15. "But the Lord said unto him: Go; for this man is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before Gentiles and kings, and the sons of Israel: 16. For I will show him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake."³ What must we think of a writer who deals so freely with his materials, and takes such liberties even with so serious a matter as this heavenly vision and the words of the glorified Jesus?

In the third account Jesus is represented as saying: "It is hard for thee to kick against pricks."⁴ This is a well-known proverbial saying, frequently used by classical Greek and Latin authors,⁵ and not altogether strange to Hebrew. It is a singularly anthropomorphic representation to put such a saying into the mouth of the divine apparition, and it assists in betraying the mundane origin of the whole scene. Another point deserving consideration is that Paul is not told what he is to do by the voice of Jesus, but is desired to go into the city to be there instructed by Ananias. This is clearly opposed to Paul's own repeated asseverations. "For neither did I receive it from man nor was taught it, but through a revelation of Jesus Christ,"⁶ is his statement. The details of the incident itself, moreover, are differently stated in the various accounts, and cannot be reconciled. According to the first account, the companions of Paul "stood speechless"

¹ It will be remembered that this epithet occurs in Acts iii. 14, vii. 52, and nowhere else in the New Testament.

² Acts xxii. 14.

³ *Ib.*, ix. 15.

⁴ xxvi. 14. This phrase was introduced into Acts ix. 5 of the Authorised Version by Erasmus from the Vulgate; but it is not found there in any Greek MS. of the slightest authority.

⁵ Cf. Æsch., *Prom.*, 323; *Agamem.*, 1633; Eurip., *Bacch.*, 791; Pindar., *Pyth.*, ii. 173; Terent., *Phorm.*, i. 2, 27; Plaut., *Truc.*, iv. 2, 59. Baumgarten, Beelen, Grotius, Hackett, Humphrey, Kuinoel, Meyer, Olshausen, Overbeck, Wetstein, De Wette, Wordsworth, etc., in l. Zeller, *Apog.*, p. 193, anm. 1.

⁶ Gal. i. 11 f.

(ix. 7); in the third, they "all fell to the earth" (xxvi. 14). The explanation that they first fell to the ground and then rose up fails satisfactorily to harmonise the two statements; as does likewise the suggestion that the first expression is simply an idiomatic mode of saying that they were speechless, independent of position. Then again, in the first account, it is said that the men stood speechless, "hearing the voice (*ἀκούοντες τῆς φωνῆς*), but seeing no one."¹ In the second we are told: "And they that were with me saw indeed the light; but they heard not the voice (*τὴν φωνὴν οὐκ ἤκουσαν*) of him speaking to me."² No two statements could be more contradictory. The attempt to reconcile them by explaining the verb *ἀκούω* in the one place "to hear" and in the other "to understand" is inadmissible, because wholly arbitrary. It is quite obvious that the word is used in the same sense in both passages, the difference being merely the negative. In the third account the voice is described as speaking "in the Hebrew tongue,"³ which was probably the native tongue of the companions of Paul from Jerusalem. If they heard the voice speaking Hebrew, they must have understood it. The effort to make the vision clearly objective, and, at the same time, to confine it to Paul, leads to these complications. The voice is heard, though the speaker is not seen, by the men in the one story, whilst the light is seen and the voice not heard in the other, and yet it speaks in Hebrew according to the third, and even makes use of classical proverbs, and uses language wondrously similar to that of the author of Acts.

We may remark here that Paul's Gospel was certainly not revealed to him upon this occasion; and, therefore, the expressions in his Epistles upon this subject must be referred to other revelations. There is, however, another curious point to be observed. Paul is not described as having actually seen Jesus in the vision. According to the first two accounts, a light shines round about him, and he falls to the ground and hears a voice; when he rises he is blind.⁴ If, in the third account, he sees the light from heaven above the brightness of the sun shining round about him and his companions,⁵ they equally see it according to the second account.⁶ The blindness, therefore, is miraculous and symbolic, for the men are not blinded by the light.⁷ It is singular that Paul nowhere refers to this blindness in his letters. It cannot be doubted that the writer's purpose is to symbolise the very change from darkness to light, in the case of Paul, which, after Old Testament prophecies, is referred to in the words ascribed, in the third account,⁸ to the voice. Paul, thus, only sees the

¹ Acts ix. 7.² *Ib.*, xxii. 9.³ *Ib.*, xxvi. 14.⁴ Acts ix. 3, 4, 8, xxii. 6, 7, 11.⁵ xxvi. 13.⁶ xxii. 9.⁷ xxii. 11 does not refute this.⁸ xxvi. 18.

light which surrounds the glorified Jesus, but not his own person, and the identification proceeds only from the statement: "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest." It is true that the expression is strangely put into the mouth of Jesus, in the third account: "for I was seen by thee (*ὡφθην σοι*) for this purpose," etc.;¹ but the narrative excludes the actual sight of the speaker, and it is scarcely possible to read the words just quoted, and their context, without being struck by their incongruity. We need not indicate the sources of this representation of light shrouding the heavenly vision, so common in the Old Testament. Before proceeding to the rest of the account, we may point out in passing the similarity of the details of this scene to the vision of Daniel x. 7-9.

Returning to the first narrative, we are told that, about the same time as this miracle was occurring to Paul, a supernatural communication was being made to Ananias in Damascus: ix. 10. "And to him said the Lord in a vision: Ananias. And he said, Behold I am here, Lord. 11. And the Lord said unto him: Rise and go to the street which is called Straight, and inquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul, of Tarsus; for, behold he prayeth; 12. and he saw a man named Ananias, who came in and put his hand on him that he might receive sight. 13. But Ananias answered, Lord, I heard from many concerning this man, how much evil he did to thy saints in Jerusalem: 14. And here he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call on thy name. 15. But the Lord said, Go, etc. (quoted above). 17. And Ananias went away, and entered into the house; and having put his hands on him said: Brother Saul, the Lord hath sent me, even Jesus that appeared unto thee in the way by which thou camest, that thou mightest receive sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit. 18. And immediately there fell from his eyes as it were scales; and he received sight, rose up, and was baptised, and having taken food was strengthened." We have already had occasion to point out, in connection with the parallelism kept up in Acts between the Apostle of the Gentiles and the Apostle of the Circumcision, that a similar double vision is narrated by the author as occurring to Peter and Cornelius. Some further vision is referred to in v. 12; for in no form of the narrative of Paul's vision on the way to Damascus is he represented as seeing a man named Ananias coming to him for the purpose described. Many questions are suggested by the story just quoted. How did Ananias know that Paul had authority from the chief priests to arrest any one? How could he argue in such a way with the Lord? Did he not then know that Jesus had appeared to Paul on the way? How did he get

¹ xxvi. 16.

that information? Is it not an extraordinary thing that Paul never mentions Ananias in any of his letters, nor in any way alludes to these miracles? We have already referred to the symbolic nature of the blindness and recovery of sight on receiving the Holy Spirit and being baptised, and this is rendered still more apparent by the statement: v. 9. "And he was three days without sight, and neither did eat nor drink."

We may further point out that in immediate connection with this episode Paul is represented, in the second account, as stating that, on going to Jerusalem, he has another vision of Jesus: xxii. 17. "And it came to pass that, when I returned to Jerusalem and was praying in the Temple, I was in a trance, 18. and saw him saying unto me: Make haste, and get thee quickly out of Jerusalem; for they will not receive thy witness concerning me. 19. And I said: Lord, they themselves know that I was wont to imprison and beat in every synagogue them that believe on thee. 20. And when the blood of Stephen, thy witness, was shed, I also was standing by and consenting, and keeping the garments of them that slew him. 21. And he said unto me: Go, for I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles." It seems impossible, considering the utter silence of Paul, that the apparition to which he refers can have spoken to him as described upon these occasions. We have elsewhere remarked that there is not the slightest evidence in his own or other writings connecting Stephen with Paul, and it may be appropriate to add here that, supposing him to have been present when the martyr exclaimed, "Lo, I behold the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God,"¹ it is singular that he does not name him as one of those by whom Jesus "was seen."

To resume this discussion, however: we have already shown that the statements of the Acts regarding Paul's conduct after this alleged vision are distinctly in contradiction with the statements of Paul. The explanation here given of the cause of Paul's leaving Jerusalem, moreover, is not in agreement with Acts ix. 29 f., and much less with Gal. i. 20 f. The three narratives themselves are full of irreconcilable differences and incongruities, which destroy all reasonable confidence in any substantial basis for the story. It is evident that the three narratives are from the same pen, and betray the composition of the author of Acts. They cannot be regarded as true history. The hand of the composer is very apparent in the lavish use of the miraculous, so characteristic of the whole work. Such a narrative cannot be received in evidence.

The whole of the testimony before us, then, simply amounts to this: Paul believed that he had seen Jesus some years after his

¹ vii. 56.