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*The Rev D^r McLeod
With the Author's
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THE FOUR EVANGELISTS;

WITH

THE DISTINCTIVE CHARACTERISTICS OF

THE GOSPELS.

MURRAY AND GIBB, EDINBURGH,
PRINTERS TO HER MAJESTY'S STATIONERY OFFICE.

THE FOUR EVANGELISTS:

WITH THE

DISTINCTIVE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE GOSPELS.

BY

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New and Revised Edition.

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PREFACE.



THIS Volume consists of a Series of Lectures which were delivered in the ordinary course of Sabbath-morning ministration, and they are here published very much as originally written. This will account for their popular character and peculiar form.

The author has not adverted to many questions connected with the Gospels which are being anxiously canvassed at the present day. They did not come across him in the prosecution of his object, and he did not turn aside to seek them. At the same time, he is disposed to think that some of them may indirectly receive elucidation from the results of his investigations. To instance one of the most difficult,—that of *the Origin of the Gospels*,—it is not unlikely that the peculiar aspect in which Christ is exhibited in the

Gospel according to Mark may be held to corroborate the opinion that that Gospel is a translation and continuation of original Notes or Memoranda which had been made by the Apostle Peter during the life-time of his Master. It is quite the aspect in which, with his fellow-disciples, Peter would then most naturally regard the Saviour ; at least, it does not seem easy to understand how a Gospel, in which, up till the resurrection, the higher aspects of the Person of Christ are kept so much in the background, could have been originally written by either Peter or Mark subsequent to the Ascension. No doubt, it has been said that the idea of translation and editorship is inconsistent with the doctrine of inspiration, of plenary inspiration. But the affirmation is unwarrantable. It is surely quite gratuitous. For if inspiration is consistent with Book-composition, why not with one kind of it as well as another ? The book of Genesis is believed to have been ultimately edited, as well as originally written, under Divine inspiration ; and why not the Gospel according to Mark as well ? Yet after all, this question, along with many others, is not so much as mentioned in the following pages. Nor is it to be understood that any positive judgment is at present passed upon it. What has been said is by way of explanation or suggestion only.

The books which have been consulted by the author need not here be specified. He does not pretend to be independent of the labours of others ; and it will be found that, generally, his obligations have been acknowledged. But, while freely availing himself of help as it came in his way, he has also thought for himself ; and the product may now be helpful to others in their turn. It is accompanied with his sincerest prayers for a blessing in the perusal of it.

“Thy testimonies are wonderful ;—therefore doth my soul keep them. The entrance of Thy words giveth light ;—it giveth understanding unto the simple. I opened my mouth, and panted ;—for I longed for Thy commandments. Look Thou upon me, and be merciful unto me ;—as Thou usest to do unto those that love Thy Name. Order my steps in Thy word ;—and let not any iniquity have dominion over me. Deliver me from the oppression of man ;—so will I keep Thy precepts. Make Thy face to shine upon Thy servant ;—and teach me Thy statutes.”

PREFACE TO THE STEREOTYPED EDITION.

THIS edition is very nearly a reprint of the former. The only alteration of any consequence occurs in the chapter on "The Diversity of the Gospels," from which the greater portion of the remarks which were made on the views of the Fathers and others on the relation of the four living creatures in Ezekiel and the Apocalypse to the Gospels has been transferred to a Note. By this transference, it will be seen that the author does not over-estimate the value of these views, although, from the attention they have always commanded, he considered it his duty to notice and to express his judgment regarding them. Perhaps he should add that, while, as he has shown, the Gospels are characteristically different from one another, he does not regard their differences as the effect of any scientific arrangement on the part of the Evangelists. Science occupies as little place in the Word of God as

in the works of God ; but this does not preclude the existence of an orderly system in both the one and the other, or the practical use of such a system.

The author must repeat that his book is intended for popular use. Scholars may not find in it the erudition in which they very properly delight, but they cannot be disappointed when it was not prepared for them. The object he had in view was one far higher than any display of scholarship would have been likely to accomplish,—the establishment of Christian disciples in the faith and love of their Divine Master, as exhibited to them so specifically and so fully in the Gospels ; and in proportion as this object may be gained, he will be more than satisfied.

“FATHER GLORIFY THY SON.”

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THE FOURFOLD DIVERSITY

OF

THE GOSPELS.

THE four Gospels form in some respects the most important portion of the Bible. Their value partly arises out of their relation to other portions of it. All its earlier revelations flow into them. All its later revelations flow out of them. They are, as it were, the heart through which, like life's blood, all its revelations circulate. But it is in their relation to Christ that their value pre-eminently consists. "In other parts of Scripture we hear Christ by the hearing of the ear, but here our eye seeth Him. Elsewhere we see Him through a glass darkly, but here face to face."*

On this account they claim the most affectionate as well as reverent perusal of the Church. The ancient Church recognised this claim at a very early period, by giving to each of them the name of "Gospel," a name which they did not originally bear: "The Gospel according to Matthew,"—"The Gospel according to

* Dr David Brown.

Mark,"—"The Gospel according to Luke,"—"The Gospel according to John." The claim may also be said to be particularly recognised in our own day. Never was there a period in the history of the Church when they were more carefully examined, more closely studied. The theological press teems with works relating to one or other of the numerous questions connected with their origin, their authenticity, their harmony, their literary and other characteristics; and "The Life of Christ" is a favourite topic of investigation with both the friends and the enemies of Christianity. The volumes which have been published of late under that title and on that subject form quite a library. It would require a lifetime to master them.

After all, the Gospels deserve our ever-renewed and increasingly attentive study. The same topics in them which have been perhaps most dwelt upon, will always bear fresh and fuller investigation. There is an exhaustless fulness in them. Besides, there are multitudes every where who read the Gospels so perfunctorily, so carelessly, that they can hardly be said to know them, except in a very general way. For example, it may fairly be assumed that many Bible readers have never observed anything singular or striking in the diversity by which the four canonical Gospels are distinguished from one another. That they were written by different authors, respectively named Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, and that, with much that is common to all, there are certain circumstances which are only to be found in one or other of them, is no doubt generally known; but that there is anything in their diversity which is at all remarkable, in either one

way or other, may very probably have been wholly unobserved,—so common is it for familiarity to produce negligence of observation, as well in reading as in other matters.

Now here is a topic which may not unprofitably engage attention :—the fourfold diversity of the Gospels ; the individual characteristics of each ; along with the historical unity which nevertheless binds them together, as in reality, with all their differences, the Gospel—the one Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

It might have been anticipated that the Spirit of God would not have admitted so many as four Gospels into so small a book as the Bible without having a distinct object to serve by each of them ; and it is really wonderful how this object should be so little recognised when, so far from being a latent impress, discernible only to a studious observation, it stands out as a most prominent feature in every Gospel, which may be easily perceived and also appreciated by the simplest reader. Here are four likenesses, photographed on a single card. The same face appears in all—only taken, one in profile, one in full, and the other two from different sides ; so that, though representing the face of but a single person, there are not two of them alike—they are, so to speak, the same, but different. Or, here are different pictures of the same landscape by different artists ; and the separate production of each of them, although perfect after its own manner, is found to be distinguished by manifold varieties, owing partly to the different stand-points occupied by the artists in doing their work, and partly

to such causes as the peculiarity of gifts, the diversity of tastes, and other obvious differences in the individual painters. The same thing occurs in literature. Take any biography of the same person, as written, independently of one another, by different authors; and while, no doubt, with the unity of subject there will be found a substantial unity of representation in their respective publications, there will, at the same time, be also found in each of them many circumstantial varieties, sharply enough defined, according to the amount of acquaintanceship with the person in question possessed by the different biographers, or according to the features of his character which may have severally most impressed them, and which they have endeavoured to exhibit or reproduce in their several narratives. It has been usual to cite in illustration the well-known case of Socrates, one of the most eminent characters of Grecian antiquity, whose life as written by two of his immediate followers, Xenophon and Plato, has descended to our times, but as differently represented by each of them as can well be imagined without destroying the personal identity of their common hero. For whereas, according to Xenophon, who was a soldier, a man of action, his master appears to have been quite a practical sort of person, always bringing out his principles in the various activities of daily life; according to Plato, who was a philosopher of contemplative and profoundly thoughtful mind, he appears to have been a deep, studious, penetrating thinker, who was for ever inquiring into the principles of action, the why and wherefore of everything. Now, when the life of any of the world's heroes, or any of the Church's

worthies, is thus found to present in ordinary human biography so many distinctly varied aspects, quite harmonious withal, if the object or stand-point of the different biographers is considered,* how much more ought it to be expected that a similar, or rather a much greater, variety of view should distinguish the biography of Christ! His was the most wonderful life ever spent on earth; there was a fulness of development in it, a richness of phenomena, which far exceeded the perceptive power of any individual mind; there was no merely human being of sufficient comprehension to take in the whole; there was no one adequate to produce a complete representation of it; the task required more minds than one; and hence the Divine provision of the four evangelists, without whose fourfold plenitude we should have manifestly had an imperfect or but a partial view of His person, character, and life.

The mutual relationships of the Gospels, along with their special diversities, were perhaps more distinctly recognised by the ancient Church than they are now; at least, it was then common to speak of them as the four books of the one Gospel, or, more frequently, the four-sided Gospel—the four-cornered Gospel—the four-square Gospel.

It was also common, and the practice is still followed, to set forth their united yet diversified characteristics by various emblematical illustrations. Irenæus, one of the earliest fathers of the Church, compares them

* For no one doubts that the two accounts of Socrates are, notwithstanding their diversity, perfectly consistent with one another; that, as separately represented by his biographers, he was both a man of thought and a man of action, philosophical and practical together.

to the four quarters of the world, and the four principal winds which blow over the earth. Augustine, the great divine of the early Church, compares them to the four great trumpets which are sounded together into the four quarters of the world to summon and gather the Church from the East and West and North and South into a holy unity of faith. Calvin, the Reformer, compares them to a triumphal chariot, drawn by four steeds, in which Christ rides forth in great magnificence, and with rapid progress, before the whole Church to review the world. Bengel, the eminent expositor of the New Testament, compares them to the quartette which forms a perfect harmony in vocal music, and in which the voices may sometimes sing apart, although in general the four unite in tuneful concert. Another favourite and ancient emblem was taken from the river which flowed in a united stream through the garden of Eden to water it, and then separated into four channels as it issued out into the world. But perhaps the emblem most generally used in all ages, from as far back as the times of Irenæus,* who may not have been even then the first to use it, is that of the four living creatures with the four faces—of a man, a lion, an ox, and an eagle—which appeared in the visions of Ezekiel, moving as they were directed by the Spirit, and upholding with their interlaced and outspread wings the throne of the Man who is “the likeness of the glory of the Lord;” and which again appeared in the apocalyptic visions of John as in the midst of the throne and round about the throne; or rather, as an old expositor of the Reformation explains

* Irenæus against Heresies, Book III., chap. II., sec. 8.

this account of their position, as between the throne and the elders, and round about the throne.*

Neither is it wrong to use Scriptural incidents or facts in the way of figurative illustration, when this may help the elucidation of any portion or doctrine of the Bible, provided the facts of history are not transmuted by the process into the mere fable of an allegory. We find that, in the Epistle to the Galatians, Paul allegorises the story of Hagar and Sarah with their sons Ishmael and Isaac; and we may imitate his example,—taking care, however, to make our comparison but subordinate and subservient as a mere figure, or as no other than an allegorical application of the proper verity.

In this way, or just as a time-honoured similitude, we may adopt the comparison between the faces of the living creatures in their order, as seen by John, and the peculiar characteristics of the Gospels in the order in which we have them in the Bible. “The first creature was like a lion.” The lion is the emblem of Judah’s royalty. Judah was the royal tribe. And in the Gospel *according to* Matthew, Christ is seen as “the Lion of the tribe of Judah,” “the Root of David,” the “Shiloh,” who is at once “King and Lawgiver” in Judah; in other words, He is the promised royal Seed, “the Son of David, the Son of Abraham;” “and of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end,” for His “kingdom is not of this world;” it is “the kingdom of heaven.” “And the second creature was like a calf,” or “an ox,” as it is in Ezekiel. This is the emblem, at least the ori-

* See Note to this Chapter.

ental emblem, of patient, productive, profitable labour. And the Gospel *according to Mark* is pre-eminently the practical Gospel—the Gospel of action, as it is sometimes called. There is nothing royal in it, nothing great, nothing but the record of constant laborious exertion and endurance in ways of well-doing ; that is to say, we have in it the narrative of the outward active ministry of Christ ; not His ministry of words, for there are no long sermons, and but a few short parables in it ; but His ministry of deeds, as one labouring even unto death on behalf of others, and for their good ; He makes Himself of no reputation, and takes upon Him the form of a servant, “the Lord’s servant,” according to a familiar view or aspect of His character, in which many of the prophecies exhibit Him. “And the third creature had a face as a man.” Here we have the human aspect, an emblem of humanity in its broadest relationships, and without any distinction of class or country. And in the Gospel *according to Luke*, it is as “the Son of man” that Christ is brought before us ; not so much as “the Son of David ;” or as “the Minister of the circumcision,” “the Servant of the Lord ;” but as “the Son of Adam,” the partaker of a common humanity with the whole family of mankind, and therefore the kinsman-Redeemer of the race, without respect to the old distinction of Jew and Gentile ; “the priest after the order of Melchisedec,” for the seed of Canaan under the curse as well as for the seed of Abraham under the blessing. “And the fourth creature was like a flying eagle.” Here is the emblem of far-seeing and high-soaring knowledge. Named of old “the bird of heaven,” and

“the king of birds,” the eagle is said to fly higher than any of them, with unwinking vision right in the eye of the sun itself, till it is completely out of sight beyond the clouds. And in the Gospel *according to John*, are we not carried to a much loftier and sublimer height than in any of the other Gospels? For while in them the three evangelists walk with Christ as it were on earth, here John ascends with Him as it were to heaven, and to the very throne of God; he speaks of Him most of all in the transcendent and ineffable mystery of His Divine relations; not as “the Son of David;” not as “the Son of Abraham;” not as “the Son of Adam;” but as “the Son of God.”

But we shall prosecute the examination of these various characteristics of the evangelists, one after another, in their separate individuality. There are other characteristics which might also be separately and profitably examined; but we must pass them by, or but slightly advert to them in their connexion with those to which our attention will be more particularly directed.

At present we desire to urge the consecutive, conscientious, and careful perusal of all the Gospels. Let it be remembered that they are all alike inspired, and separately intended for instruction. It is no work of supererogation when we have read one to read the next—and then the next, and the next also, till we have read all four. It is not reading the same thing over and over again, like the wearisomely vain repetitions of the Roman breviary. There are not two of the Gospels alike in their style of narrative, in

their mode of representation, in their system of arrangement; and viewed in connexion with the Divine plan, the differences are intentional. So far from being staggered by them, we ought to be instructed by them all the better in the knowledge of Christ, established by them all the more in the faith of Christ. This is the gracious design of the Spirit of God in them; and once we obtain the key, the clue, to their elucidation, we shall find that there is not one of them which is not more or less subservient in its own peculiar place and way to that design.

And here we may be permitted to offer one or two remarks on what are commonly called "Lives of Christ," "Harmonies of the Gospels."

From an early period in the history of the Church, their unity of subject has induced many to attempt the combination and condensation of the four Gospels into one continuous narrative or complete whole as the one Gospel of Jesus Christ. Nor can there be a question that various advantages are to be derived from comparing the various Gospels, and exhibiting their entire consistency with one another in what they relate in common.

At the same time, if they be viewed, not as histories complete in themselves so far as respects the particular purpose they were designed to serve, but just as so many repertories or magazines of material, so to speak, out of which we have to draw up a properly complete history for ourselves, there can be as little question that we have set ourselves a task which God never meant us to undertake, and which, moreover, with the means at our command, is alto-

gether beyond the compass of our utmost energies. "Scripture," says a writer of our day,—and what he says is so far applicable to the Gospels as part of Scripture,—“Scripture cannot, as it were, be mapped, or its contents catalogued ; but after all our diligence to the end of our lives and to the end of the Church, it must be an unexplored and unsubdued land, with heights and valleys, forests and streams, on the right and left of our path and close about us, full of concealed wonders and choice treasures.”*

At all events, a harmony of the Gospels in strict chronological order is impracticable. We cannot possibly work it out, at least with any thing like scientific certainty ; for this plain and obvious reason, that with the exception of the beginning and the end of their narratives, which, as connected with a biography, almost necessarily correspond, the evangelists do not write chronologically :—each of them has his own distinct plan and system of arrangement, and this so independent of chronological order, that if we attempt to put them together in such an order we find ourselves at once entangled in inextricable difficulties, and expose ourselves to the caustic rebuke of a sagacious citizen respecting an old minister of the High Church of Edinburgh, who was engaged for many years in constructing a Harmony of the kind : “He is a minister *that*, who spends his time and strength in trying to make four men agree that never quarrelled.” Then, in addition to this, there is the all-decisive consideration—it has pleased God to give us four Gospels. He might have given us but one, complete

* Quoted in Trench’s Hulsean Lectures, p. 102.

and perfect in itself; or He might have given us four in such exact concordance, both verbal and chronological, that no other harmony would have been required,—we should have had what is sought for ready made to us. Instead of this we have the four, all different, and portraying so many different sides or aspects of the life of Christ, perfectly harmonious no doubt, but not to be proved harmonious by being unified or blended into one without diversity or difference. If you have four different portraits of the same person, taken in different lights and from different stand-points, would you ever think of demonstrating the harmony or unity of their object by cutting them to pieces, and then amalgamating the different pieces into one new whole? Would that ever produce a likeness? You keep them separate; you look at them apart; and their very diversities harmonise themselves by remaining as diversities. In the same way the harmony of the Gospels is evinced, not by the destruction, but by the preservation, in their own place and for their own purpose, of their very diversities. Compare them as much as you please, illustrate and explain them by one another as much as you please, but never do away with their separate individuality; never obliterate any of their peculiar characteristics, not even so much as the least important in your regard. Whatever you may do in the way of exhibiting their consistency or harmony with one another, let it be in the way of keeping them distinct, of reading them one by one, and of retaining every one of even their widest distinctions, and also of even their least manifest as well as most manifest

diversities. The wisdom of God meant that. The inspiration of God meant that. There they are with the Divine stamp on them, and we must not efface one word, one letter, of the stamp. We must take them as they stand. They have their own lessons to teach ; let us learn them—every one. Sometimes we may be at a loss about them, but even then our very difficulties may supply instruction to us, most invaluable instruction. It was said by a wise and good man of another,—by Richard Baxter of Judge Hale,—that more might be learned from his questions than from another man's answers. The same thing may much more be said of the Holy Scriptures, of the Holy Gospels, which “oftentimes say much,” as one remarks, “by saying nothing—like a dial in which the shadow as well as the light informs us,”* and from which, if you take away either the light or the shadow, it is of no use at all. At any rate, that saying, “Blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in Me,” is as applicable here as elsewhere ; and besides, when we turn to the Lord for light, when we apply to the Divine Spirit to guide us into all truth according to the promise of Jesus Christ, we shall find that, sooner or later, veils, doubts, difficulties, shall be taken away ; and that then “We all, with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.”

* Boyle : quoted in Trench's Hulsean Lectures, p. 109.

NOTE.

There are many interpreters, ancient and modern, who hold that the four-faced living creatures of Ezekiel and John were really intended by the Spirit of God to symbolize the four evangelists, or, as we should rather say, those aspects of the person and the office of Christ which they severally exhibit in their respective narratives.

We are not prepared to adopt the views of these interpreters. They appear to savour more of the sallow mysticism of the cloister than of the salutary meditation of the closet. We must not suppose that everything in the Bible which is capable of an allegorical adaptation and application to Christ bears a typical character, or was intended by the Spirit of God to exhibit Him in that peculiar manner to our believing view. Such a notion has often led men to despise and decry the obvious interpretation of Scripture as superficial, marrowless, carnal, and to seek after a hidden mystical meaning as alone worthy of being considered the teaching of the Spirit. Various evils have flowed from this:—more particularly, Scriptural study has been prosecuted by many under the guidance of fancy rather than in the exercise of faith; a false craving has been extensively engendered for something more piquant, and perhaps also more recondite, than is supplied by the obvious sense of Scripture; and the Word of God, instead of being the plain book which he that runneth may read, has been turned into an enigma, a riddle, a book of conundrums, the sense of which is best discovered by those who are most skilful in the art of guessing; and hence also the Church of Rome has been furnished with the semblance of an argument in favour of her prohibition of the circulation and perusal of the Scriptures. We are satisfied that Luther had every reason to denounce on this account the mystical interpretations of the monks and schoolmen, however spiritual and profound

they may appear to many, as "trifling and foolish fables," with which, as he says, "they rent the Scriptures into so many and diverse senses, that poor silly consciences could receive no certain doctrine of any thing;"* and that Calvin too was fully justified in saying that the true meaning of Scripture is the natural and obvious meaning, by which we ought resolutely to abide, and that "the licentious system" of the mystics, as he strongly expresses it, is "undoubtedly a contrivance of Satan to undermine the authority of Scripture, and to take away from the reading of it the true advantage." †

Accordingly, we do not recognize in the four living creatures, as seen in vision by Ezekiel and John, the types of the four-fold representation of Christ in the four Gospels. It is enough to notice the analogy which has been pointed out, and to employ it as an appropriately felicitous illustration of that representation. To this extent the use which has been made of it for centuries in the Church, and more particularly by the old painters, may be still followed; but, without better evidence than that of a dogmatic assertion, it is manifestly improper to regard it as other than a happy accommodation of human ingenuity to help the memory.

We can only accept it as a comparison, which may be useful to illustrate the unity of the Gospels along with their characteristic diversities. As to the manner of its application, we may notice the different order in which the faces are represented by Ezekiel and John. In the vision of Ezekiel the order is:—"As for the likeness of their faces, they four had the face of a man, and the face of a lion, on the right side; and they four had the face of an ox on the left side; they four also had the face of an eagle." (Chap. i. 10.) In the vision of John the order is:—"And the first beast," or rather, as the word ought to be rendered, "the first living

* Luther on Galatians, iv. 26.

† Calvin on Galatians, iv. 22.

creature was like a lion, and the second living creature like a calf, and the third living creature had a face as a man, and the fourth living creature was like a flying eagle." (Chap. iv. 7.) To which of these representations does the order of the Gospels correspond? or does it correspond to any of them? We need not wonder that some should adopt one view, and some another, and some another; for, as it is said of the living creatures, that they four had one likeness, and that two wings of every one were joined one to another, so with all their diversity of representation the evangelists relate but one history, the history of the same Christ, and therefore the view of each, while quite distinct, is at the same time found to run into, and more or less to take in also, the respective views of all the others. The Church of Rome, following Jerome and others of the Fathers, adopts, not very discriminatively, the order in Ezekiel. We take her interpretation from the Roman Catholic commentary of the Rhemist fathers; and those who are acquainted with the pictures of the evangelists in her illuminated missals, and on her church walls and windows, as on the interior of the dome of St. Peter's, will at once perceive how much she makes of it;—the pictures are also often copied in the engravings of family Bibles, and on the enamelled dial-plates of German clocks:—"St. Matthew is likened to a man, because he beginneth with the pedigree of Christ, as He is a man; St. Mark to a lion, because he beginneth with the preaching of St. John the Baptist, as it were the roaring of a lion in the wilderness; St. Luke to a calf, because he beginneth with a priest of the Old Testament, (to wit, Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist,) which priesthood was to sacrifice calves to God; St. John to an eagle, because he beginneth with the Divinity of Christ, flying as high, as more is not possible." This is obviously childish; and, could no closer resemblance be discovered between the faces of the creatures and the characteristics of

the Gospels, it would be just as well to pass by the thing as a comparison no less than as a type. For this reason we make no reference to the different ways in which the order is put by Irenaeus, Augustine and others. If any thing is to be made of it as an emblem, the order in the Apocalypse is that which is to be preferred as really answering to the order of the Gospels. Let the lion remind us that in Matthew we have "the King," "the Lion of the tribe of Judah," "the Root and Offspring of David." Let the calf or ox remind us that in Mark we have the "Man that goeth forth unto His work and to His labour," "the Workman that needeth not to be ashamed," One who has taken upon Him "the form of a servant," "the Servant of the Lord." Let the man-face remind us that in Luke we have "the Man Christ Jesus," "the Goel," the Brother of humanity, the kinsman-Redeemer of our race. In fine, let the flying eagle remind us that in John we have "the Lord from heaven," "the Word who in the beginning was God and with God," "the only-begotten Son which is in the bosom of the Father." It may be added, that if the cherubim or four living creatures are to be regarded, according to the generally received interpretation, as types of redeemed humanity in the plenary perfection of its glorified existence, we have in this fourfold, and as it were cherubic, representation of the evangelists the all-perfect One in whom, as at once its prototype and its life-source, that plenitude of perfection is attained and realised. The redeemed are made like Him, and hence we find the reflection of His likeness in theirs, as in the cherubim.

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MATTHEW.

THE diversity of the Gospels is an evidence of their authenticity; at least we had not so readily received them, had they not evinced quite plainly that, like all other men, the evangelists differed in their modes of thought and statement, as well as in their natural and spiritual endowments.

It is, however, as bringing out so many various views of that wondrous life which required them all in order to express, or, as perhaps we should rather say, to suggest the idea of its exhaustless fulness, that we have at present to do with their diversity.

The Gospel according to Matthew, as that which comes first in order, will here occupy our attention. A few notices of the evangelist will preface the consideration of it. They will, in part, prepare us for some of the peculiarities of the Gospel.

I. THE EVANGELIST.

Of his personal history there is very little known. That he was originally a publican, that he was called by Christ to be one of His disciples, that he was

afterwards constituted one of the twelve apostles, and finally one of the four evangelists, comprises the whole that we know of him, so far at least as his history may be gathered from the Scriptures.

But the way in which he adverts to the few facts which he has occasion to mention regarding himself,—there are but two,—deserves some notice.

1. Take the account of *his call to become a disciple of Christ*. The account is given in chap. ix. 9, 10—“And as Jesus passed forth from thence, He saw a man, named Matthew, sitting at the receipt of custom : and He saith unto him, Follow Me. And he arose, and followed Him. And it came to pass, as Jesus sat at meat in the house, behold, many publicans and sinners came and sat down with Him and His disciples.” This account ought to be compared with that in the Gospel according to Mark, and that also in the Gospel according to Luke. Mark’s is given in chap. ii. 14, 15—“And as He passed by, He saw Levi, the son of Alphæus, sitting at the receipt of custom, and said unto him, follow Me. And he arose and followed Him. And it came to pass, that, as Jesus sat at meat in his house, many publicans and sinners sat also together with Jesus and His disciples.” Luke’s is given in chap. v. 27-29—“And after these things He went forth, and saw a publican, named Levi, sitting at the receipt of custom ; and He said unto him, Follow Me. And he left all, rose up, and followed Him. And Levi made Him a great feast in his own house ; and there was a great company of publicans and of others that sat down with them.” In comparing these accounts, the following things may be noticed :

—It is from Matthew himself we learn that he was originally a publican. The other two evangelists, in relating the fact, do not call him Matthew; they give him what appears to have been his Jewish name, Levi; so that but for his own account we could not have identified him as having once followed an occupation which was universally and most justly regarded as dishonourable and even infamous in a Jew. Then Mark and Luke give us to understand that, after he left the receipt of custom, he took Christ to his house and hospitably entertained Him. Mark also tells us that he was the son of Alphæus, and likely enough, therefore, the brother or step-brother of James, and a near kinsman, perhaps a blood kinsman, of our Lord; the Lord's brother or cousin, as James is called. From Luke, too, we gather that he was quite in the way of becoming rich; for, when relating how he responded to the call of Christ, he does not simply say, with the others, that he arose and followed Him, but with emphasis,—as if to intimate that it was no small sacrifice that he made in doing so,—that “he *left all*, and rose up, and followed Him;” and then again, as showing how completely he had risen above the mean, miserly; penuriousness of a rapacious publican, that the entertainment which he immediately provided for Christ was “a great feast in his own house.” Not one of these things is mentioned by himself; not his relationship; not his wealth; not even that the feast was given by himself; that it was in his own house; that it was a great feast; or that it was a feast at all. Called to be a disciple, but originally a publican; *that* is what he says of himself; he has no more to say;

and the grace of our Lord, as exceeding abundant in calling one like him, is the only thing we are thus allowed to think of in connexion with his call.

2. The same self-abasing spirit comes out no less distinctly in the record of *his appointment to the apostleship*. We have three accounts of that appointment; one by himself, another by Mark, and the third by Luke, from all of which it would appear that the apostles were appointed in couples, and that Matthew belonged to the fourth couple; but, while both Mark and Luke name him first, and without any reference to his original profession, "Matthew and Thomas," he puts himself second, "Thomas and Matthew," and at the same time adds, as if, by putting the black mark upon his name, he would, in the spirit of that apostle who says of himself, "Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious," bring out in contrast the riches of the grace of Christ—"Matthew *the publican*." We can have no idea of the opprobrium attached to such a designation. Somehow it has come to be enshrined in the Christian mind as the symbol of humility and honesty, of penitence and prayer. The publican of the Gospel; which of us thinks ill of him, or speaks ill of him? It is the Pharisee, the religionist of his day, for whom we reserve our contemptuous thoughts and our epithets of abuse. The story of Zaccheus, the honest publican who restored fourfold to all whom he had at any time defrauded by over-taxation, and who received Christ into his house so joyfully; and the parable of the Pharisee and the publican, in which the contrast between the two is so put as to commend the publican

to our most Christianly affectionate regard, present our ideal of a publican. It is remarkable that neither the story nor the parable is to be found in this, the Gospel by the publican. They are both to be found in the Gospel according to Luke. Had they been recorded by Matthew, it might have been said that he was desirous of extenuating the ignominy of his profession, and therefore he makes no mention of them. It is not from him that we derive our favourable impression of publicans. It is in his Gospel that these impressions are completely removed; for while in the other Gospels we read of publicans as associated with sinners—an association which does not much offend our propriety or our taste—here, in that memorable sentence of our Lord's which Matthew as a publican could never forget, however others might, and which he, therefore, alone records, we read of them as associated with harlots (chap. xxi. 31, 32,)—"Verily, I say unto you, That the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you. For John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not, but the publicans and the harlots believed him." Observe the association—the harlots, the most depraved of women; beyond all question, the publicans, as alongside of them, were in general the most depraved of men. It would be wrong to say, or to suggest, that Matthew was a person of profligate character when called by Christ. Had he been *that*, it is not likely that he would have been placed, at least so early as he was, among the Twelve. But the post he occupied under the alien heathen government of Rome as a collector

of its odious tolls and customs was quite as bad in the estimation of at least the Pharisees as profligacy itself. He may have sought, like Zaccheus and others, to be an honest publican ; to be even a religious publican. No matter. By the Pharisees, and probably by many more, if not by all, of the orthodox among the Jews, he was, as it were, excommunicated, or at least shut out from every thing like friendly fellowship ; and every one who has observed the moral influence of such exclusion, so depraving in its operation and effects, will readily recognise the obligation of this publican to that grace which called him away from so much that was perilous to his eternal interests to follow Christ.

So much for the evangelist. He was originally a publican. Only from himself do we learn that he was so. It is, by the way, a singularly impressive testimony to the genuineness of his Gospel ; to the fact that he was most certainly the author of it. None but himself would have been silent upon what has done so much to reflect credit upon the publicans ; and none but himself would have been so careful to let it be known, when he was recording his name among the apostles of Jesus Christ, that he was originally a publican.

The ex-scriptural notices of his later life and labours are of no historical value. They simply amount to this, that after a fifteen years' residence in Jerusalem, or somewhere in Palestine, where he wrote this gospel, he went abroad and preached the Word in different countries, and at length, according to a somewhat doubtful legend, died a martyr's death.

We need not attempt to make any thing of these traditions. Enough for us that his Gospel stands first in the New Testament canon. If it was not the first which was committed to writing, it was, in all probability, the first which was authoritatively published to the world. At all events, it is the first which claims our attention and regard.

II. THE GOSPEL.

It is inscribed "The Gospel *according to Matthew* ;" that is, the Gospel in that aspect or view of Christ which Matthew undertook to exhibit to his readers. It is not believed that the inscription was prefixed to the Gospel by Matthew himself, but it has been so prefixed from the earliest ages, and it has also been always regarded as correctly ascribing the Gospel to Matthew as its author.

1. Almost the first peculiarity which strikes a reader in the perusal of it is *its systematic form*. Every part of it is distinguished by its orderly arrangement. The chronological order is set aside to a considerable extent, and a topical order is adopted which is quite as valuable in its own way and for its own purpose. Discourses, parables, prophecies, miracles, are grouped together by themselves in separate chapters. We have whole chapters devoted to each of them in succession,—chapters with nothing in them but sermons,—chapters with nothing in them but miracles,—chapters with nothing in them but parables, and so on,—all classified according to their subject, and all bearing on the illustration of some

particular feature of the official character of our Lord, or the demonstration of some particular claim, or other circumstance connected with it. In connection with this peculiarity of arrangement, it has also been observed that this Gospel is not so minutely graphic in its details as the other Gospels; but the perfection of finish and the sublimity of effect produced by its admirable combinations are quite sufficient to compensate for the comparative generality of its descriptions; and besides, these combinations are often accompanied with such sharp and striking contrasts that both our instruction and our interest are most felicitously secured. We may add, that this methodical arrangement bears upon it the unmistakeable impress of its authorship. As a publican, Matthew must have been trained to the practice of methodising his business-transactions according to some sort of rule or order. If he did not keep accounts in the way that tax-collectors now do, it may be at least presumed that he had learned the art of writing; and that in his office, or at the receipt of custom, he was more or less habituated to the practice of systematic business arrangement, if not also of orderly official book-keeping.* Perhaps it was on this account that, of all the apostles, he was honoured, as being the best qualified in point of acquirement, to be the author of the first Gospel in the canon;—first, it is believed, in point of publication, as it is in point of order. At any rate,

* That he occasionally *pluralises* what is mentioned by other evangelists in the singular has also been referred, not unwarrantably, to his habits of professional exactness. *Vide* Smith of Jordan-hill's Dissertation on the Gospels, pp. 288, 298.

the orderly habits of his profession and the orderly character of his Gospel are strikingly harmonious ; so that here again we have another singularly impressive testimony to the genuineness of the Gospel.

2. But the main peculiarity of the Gospel is to be observed in *its distinct representation of Jesus as the Christ,—the Messiah promised to the fathers, and so often spoken of as such, in the prophecies of the Old Testament Scriptures.* This was the representation which was specially required to secure and to confirm the faith of pious Israelites who sought in Christ for “the Son of David, the Son of Abraham ;” and, accordingly, there is reason to believe that Matthew primarily intended his Gospel for Jews, or at least for Christian Jews. On this account it may be called, not improperly, the Hebrew Gospel. Some, indeed, believe, on the testimony of certain of the Fathers, that it was originally written in the Hebrew language, or rather the Aramaic, as commonly spoken in Judea at the time ; and, although this is controverted by others with much effectiveness, it does not appear an unlikely thing ; nor does it conflict with the inspiration of the Greek original, if that also was, as has been conclusively proved, the production of Matthew. It is quite plain that, as a native Jew and a Roman official, Matthew must have been qualified to write both his own language and that of the government with facility ; and considering how both languages were then spoken and written in Judea—as, at the present day, both Dutch and English are very commonly used in speech and writing at the Cape of Good Hope, and Gaelic and English in the Highlands

of Scotland—the patristic evidence for a Hebrew as well as a Greek Gospel by Matthew may be accepted without any great demur. We know that, in order to its being generally useful, a Hebrew as well as a Greek History of the Jewish War was written by Josephus, and the same thing may have been done by his contemporary, the evangelist. At all events, this Gospel is unquestionably the Gospel for the Hebrews, the Gospel particularly designed for them. We do not find in it such explanations of Jewish localities and Jewish usages as are common in the Gospel according to Luke and the Gospel according to John, which were addressed in the first instance to Gentile readers. There is, on the contrary, a variety of allusion in it, which seems to presuppose, on the part of its readers, an acquaintance with Jewish manners and peculiarities, such as could hardly belong to others than Jews. There is also a much greater frequency of reference in it than in the other Gospels to the fulfilment of Old Testament prophecy, together with other indications of a design to establish, on grounds specially adapted to command the conviction of Jews, the claim of Jesus as the Christ to the kingdom of His father David. Perhaps it is on this account that dates and minute details are not given in it as in the other Gospels. The object of the evangelist is evidently to furnish, not a chronological history of the life of Christ, but rather a doctrinally historical survey of it, so to speak. Hence we have in it, as already noticed, a grouping together of the words and the deeds of Jesus,—of His sermons and parables, of His miracles and movements,—without

much regard to localities and dates, but as plainly proving in the plenitude of their combination, that the ancient prophecies were fulfilled in Him, that He was the very Messiah foretold in them, and that it is therefore vain, and worse than vain, to look for any other. Then, in addition to this bringing and blending together of the prophecy and the history, so that they appear as if no more twain but one in Christ, there is also a continuously sustained reference in almost every chapter to the kingship and the kingdom of the Lord Jesus, as that in which He was pre-eminently proved to be the true Messiah. It must be obvious that this was absolutely necessary in a Gospel designed for Jews. They could receive no Saviour, welcome no Messiah, but such as answered to the character of "the Son of David, the Son of Abraham," of One who was at the same time "both Lord and Christ."

3. Accordingly, this Gospel, as designed to command the faith of the Jews in Jesus as the true Messiah, is distinctly *the Gospel of His Messianic royalty*. As such, the memorial or symbol of it is the lion-face of the cherubic symbol; at least, as the emblem of Judah's royalty, this hieroglyph most appropriately distinguishes or describes the peculiar aspect of the character and office of Christ which we have here portrayed.

This may be demonstrated very easily: the most cursory examination of the Gospel may indeed suffice to verify it.

(1.) *Let us take a general survey of the Gospel.* To begin with the first chapter:—the first verse, even

although it should be held to be but the designation of the genealogical table of which it is the heading, may be said to form the motto of the whole Gospel, to announce by anticipation the subject of it, the burden of it, "The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, *the Son of David*, the Son of Abraham ;" that is to say, of Jesus Christ, who is at once the Root and the Offspring of David, the Heir and the Possessor of the Davidical kingdom in its very utmost extent, as embracing, according to the original promise to the father and founder of the Jewish race, "all the nations of the earth." Turning to the second chapter, we there read, "Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, saying, Where is He that is born *King of the Jews?*" Then looking into the third chapter, we hear "John the Baptist preaching in the wilderness of Judea, and saying, Repent ye, for *the kingdom of heaven* is at hand." Then in the fourth chapter, after the account of the temptation in which the offer of "all the kingdoms of the world" is mentioned last, as, according to the idea of this Gospel, the climax of the temptation, we read of Jesus Himself beginning to preach; and the subject of His preaching is precisely the same as John's, "From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent, for *the kingdom of heaven* is at hand." Observe, the devil would have had Him to prefer "all the kingdoms of this world," but His "kingdom is not of this world,"—"The kingdom of heaven is at hand."—"And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching *the Gospel of the kingdom.*" Then in the fifth, sixth, and

seventh chapters, we have the sermon of this Gospel of the kingdom. The sermon begins with the beatitudes of the kingdom, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is *the kingdom of heaven*;" "Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is *the kingdom of heaven*." Proceeding with the laws of the kingdom, it delivers them in that autocratic style which belongs to Christ as King, "Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time,"—"But *I* say unto you." Towards the conclusion there occurs this description of the subjects of the kingdom, "Not every one that saith unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into *the kingdom of heaven*, but he that doeth the will of My Father which is in heaven," The whole is wound up by the evangelist in the final remark which will be seen, as thus considered, to be most emphatic, "For He taught them as One *having authority*"—the authority of One who was King as well as Prophet,—“and not as the scribes.” Then in the eighth and ninth chapters His miracles are recorded in a manner which illustriously sets forth His royal majesty, and at the end we read, "Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching *the Gospel of the kingdom*, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people." Then in the tenth chapter we have the ordination of the twelve apostles with their commission, "Go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, and as ye go, preach, saying, *the kingdom of heaven* is at hand." Then again, in the eleventh chapter we read that "since the days of John the Baptist *the kingdom of heaven* suffereth violence, and the violent take it by

force ;” and in the twelfth chapter that He vindicated His authority as Lord of the Sabbath, when on that day, His disciples, being an hungered, plucked and ate the ears of corn in the fields, by appealing to “what *David* did,” and that upon His healing “one possessed with a devil, blind and dumb,” “all the people were amazed, and said, Is not this *the Soñ of David?*”

(2.) But not to refer thus particularly to the remaining chapters, although similar illustrations might be cited from all, or almost all of them, *we may perhaps still better see the distinctive characteristic of this Gospel by comparing it with the other Gospels.* We always see objects best by contrast—at least their peculiarities. Take the genealogy of our Lord as given by both Matthew and Luke. In Luke it runs up to *Adam*, for there He is the Son of man; in Matthew, where He is seen not so much in His mere humanity as in His covenant royalty, it goes no higher than *Abraham*. Then from *David*, who is twice over in it called “*the king*,” down to the captivity, it runs in the line of the royal seed who occupied the throne of *David*; while in Luke, who gives the lineal, not the legal genealogy, the royal dignity of *David* is not so much as mentioned; and the line also diverges from the royal branch of his family and household, and only touches it again at the period of the *Babylonish* captivity, when the *Davidical* kingdom came to an end. Turn, in the next instance, to the notices in the same evangelists of the infancy of Christ. In Luke He is the “*Child born*;” in Matthew He is the “*King born*.” In Luke His birth is the visit of “the dayspring, to give

light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death," the dawn of "a Light to lighten the Gentiles;" whereas in Matthew it is the advent of "*a Governor to rule My people Israel,*" "*the King of the Jews.*" Then pass to the preaching of John the Baptist:—it is in Matthew, "Repent, for *the kingdom of heaven* is at hand;" in Mark and Luke it is "the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins,"—no mention is made of the kingdom; while in John, whose notice is also characteristic of his Gospel as the Gospel of the Divinity of Christ, it is, "This is He of whom I spake; He that cometh after me is preferred before me; for He was before me." Then just to notice the sermon on the mount, the substance of which, as given by Matthew, is repeated by Luke:—the expression in the beatitudes, "For theirs is *the kingdom of heaven,*" occurs only in Matthew; and the doxology to the Lord's prayer,* "For thine is *the kingdom,* and the power, and the glory, for ever, Amen," is also peculiar to this Gospel, being omitted by Luke altogether. Then pass over to the scenes of Calvary. The only one of the seven sayings of the cross which is recorded by Matthew is that from the 22d Psalm, "Eli! Eli! lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" but we have only to turn to the psalm itself, which is not unreasonably supposed to have been repeated by Christ from beginning to end, in order to see how appropriately

* This doxology does not occur in the manuscripts, but, as still holding its place in our English version, which forms the text of pulpit exposition, it is here quoted as appropriately illustrative of the point in hand. The question of its genuineness is another matter.

He fell back upon it, or at least took the saying from it as related in this Gospel. It is distinctively the psalm of the kingdom, of the kingdom founded upon His sufferings, upon the atonement-sacrifice of the Lord Messiah. Sorrowful as is its beginning, how triumphantly does it end,—exactly like the history of the cross in Matthew. “All the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the Lord; and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before Thee. For *the kingdom* is the Lord’s, and He is *the Governor among the nations*,”—so the psalm. “*All power is given unto Me* in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach *all nations*, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you,”—so the Gospel. Then to pass over other facts and incidents—such as the entry of Jesus into Jerusalem, along with His trial, condemnation, and crucifixion—which are related by the evangelist in common, but by each of them with his own characteristic distinctiveness; let a glance be taken of some of the parables as found in the different Gospels. Take, for example, the parable of the marriage supper. In Matthew (xxii. 2) it is, “*The kingdom of heaven* is like unto a certain king which made a marriage for his son.” In Luke (xiv. 16) it is simply—without any reference to royalty—“*A certain man* made a great supper, and bade many.” All the parables in Matthew, with three exceptions, are, in fact, parables of the kingdom of heaven, while in none of the other Gospels is there even one parable in which the kingdom of heaven is

so much as mentioned. There are parables of the kingdom related in the other Gospels; but while in Matthew it is "the kingdom of heaven" that is spoken of,—the kingdom of which Christ occupies the throne, as Himself the monarch of it,—in them it is "the kingdom of God," a designation under which He seems to subordinate Himself, as it were, to the position of a subject of the kingdom. Thus in the parables of the mustard seed and the leaven, Matthew writes (xiii. 31), "*The kingdom of heaven* is like to a grain of mustard seed;" (xiii. 33), "*The kingdom of heaven* is like unto leaven:" but Mark (iv. 30-31), "Whereunto shall we liken the kingdom of God? or with what comparison shall we compare it? It is like a grain of mustard seed;" and Luke (xiii. 18), "Unto what is the kingdom of God like? and whereunto shall I resemble it? It is like a grain of mustard seed;" (xiii. 20), "Whereunto shall I liken the kingdom of God? It is like leaven." Even in those parables of Matthew which are not parables of the kingdom of heaven, because they immediately refer to periods and events antecedent to the actual establishment of that kingdom, when Jesus was personally exalted as both Lord and Christ to the right hand of God the Father, there are characteristic allusions and expressions not to be found in the other Gospels. For example, in the parable of the sower, which refers to the work of Christ as a Prophet on earth before He was a King in heaven, and in which therefore the kingdom of heaven is not the subject of illustration, the seed is interpreted as "The word of *the kingdom*;" whereas in Mark it is simply called "The

word ;” and in Luke, “The word of God.” Again, in the parable of the vineyard, which also in its subject precedes the establishment of the kingdom of heaven, Matthew begins, “There was a certain *householder*,”—“house-lord”—it is a title of authority,—“which planted a vineyard;” while both Mark and Luke drop the idea of dignity, and say, “A certain *man*.” Then again in the parable of the two sons, which makes no reference in any form to the kingdom, it is added by way of explanation, “Jesus saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, that the publicans and harlots go into *the kingdom of God* before you.” The kingdom here occurs in the explanation; but it is not “the kingdom of heaven;” it is “the kingdom of God,” because the parable refers to the times of John the Baptist, which preceded “the kingdom of heaven.” “For John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not; but the publicans and harlots believed him.” Let us here remark, in passing, that the phrase, “the kingdom of God,” as it occurs in Matthew, will be always found on examination to refer to the kingdom before it became “the kingdom of heaven” by the rejection of its King from earth and His reception into heaven. To instance two passages (xii. 28), “But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then *the kingdom of God* is come unto you.” “The kingdom of God,”—*that* had come, because the King—the Divine King Himself—was there among them; but not “the kingdom of heaven;” *that* was at hand only: it did not come unto them till Christ “sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high.” (xxi. 43,) “Therefore say I unto you,

The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof." "The kingdom of God;" the Jews had that. God was their King; His theocracy was their boast, their glory; but they never had "the kingdom of heaven." They might have had it, and they would have had it, had they not rejected the counsel of God against themselves, so that others were preferred; it was set up among the Gentiles.

(3.) But the subject is too vast to admit of further illustration: there are so many suchlike characteristic and equally significant modes of expression in Matthew which distinguish his view from that of the other Gospels. We shall only refer to a very few additional passages and phrases by way of showing that *the evangelist's view of the Son of David, "the King of the Jews," is not that of the carnal or secular traditionalism of his day, but that of the Old Testament prophecies* which the Scribes and Pharisees with all their pretence of scriptural erudition did not understand—that of the king whose kingdom is founded on atonement-sacrifice, on atonement righteousness—whose kingdom is constantly opposed and rejected by the rulers of the world—whose kingdom, in short, is not of this world,—while at the same time, and in the highest sense, it embraces it—it embraces all heaven and earth together.

There is, first, *the significant expression itself*—"The kingdom of heaven." This expression occurs in Matthew only, being used as many as thirty times, and never so much as even once in the other Gospels. Is not this significant? We may surely learn some-

thing from it, as thus the uniform designation of the kingdom in the Gospel of the Messianic royalty. "The kingdom of heaven!" Can the miserable kingdom of Papal Rome—can any secular kingdom, whatever it may be, and wherever it may be,—ever be held to stand for that? Had it been "the kingdom of God," it might have been said that a State-organization, such as the Papacy with its temporal power, was required as the New Testament counterpart of the old Israel-theocracy; but when in the Gospel of the kingdom it always appears as "the kingdom of heaven," the argument is gone. It is a kingdom which is quite distinct from the kingdoms of the world, which is above them altogether.

Then there is also *the equally significant expression, "The Church."* This expression also occurs in Matthew only. The other evangelists never name it. Here it is named over and over again, and always in connexion with the kingdom of heaven, and as, in fact, identical with it. The Divine prescience comes out in this quite unmistakeably. It obviates by anticipation the argument with which we are sometimes met, that, because the kingdom of Christ is the kingdom of heaven, He is not yet a King, or He has not, at least as yet, a kingdom; and that therefore the corporate organisation of Christians into a visible Church, or spiritual kingdom, in immediate subjection to Himself, is not a matter of Christian duty. But no. It is here, in the Gospel of the kingdom, that we find the Church invested by Christ with the functions of discipline and self-government,—*"The kingdom of heaven,"*—and, as such, established and sustained

even on earth by the spiritual sanctions of a Divine authority. "And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock will I build *My Church*, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." "Moreover, if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone. If he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the *Church*. But if he neglect to hear the *Church*, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican. Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."

Then, in the next place, alongside of the spiritual independence of the Church—"the kingdom of heaven"—and quite in harmony with it, there is *the due recognition of civil authority as paramount within its own sphere of action*, and not to be resisted in the legitimate exercise of its functions under any pretence of allegiance to the kingship and kingdom of Jesus Christ. It is in this Gospel only, for example, that the duty of paying tribute to the civil power is expressly taught by both the precept and the example of our Lord. When the Herodians and Pharisees tempted Him to teach sedition by the crafty question,

“Is it lawful to give tribute unto Cæsar or not?” Mark and Luke represent Him as saying, “Bring Me a penny,” “Show Me a penny;” and it has been alleged that His admirable reply, when it was brought to Him, “Render therefore unto Cæsar the things which be Cæsar’s, and unto God the things which be God’s,” was only an ingenious evasion of the question put to Him; but as Matthew puts it, He said, “Show Me *the tribute money*,” so that it was with the penny in His hand as tribute money that His reply was given; and accordingly it was no evasion, but an explicit inculcation of the duty of payment. If any doubt of this should still remain, it is completely removed by the fact that our Lord actually paid tribute, and also on one occasion wrought a miracle to provide the means of doing so. The fact is only recorded in this Gospel—in the Gospel by the publican; and it is so like the publican to record it (xvii. 24-27): “And when they were come to Capernaum, they that received tribute money came to Peter and said, Doth not your Master *pay tribute*? He saith, Yes. And when he was come into the house, Jesus prevented him, saying, What thinkest thou, Simon? Of whom do the kings of the earth take custom or tribute? Of their own children, or of strangers? Peter saith unto him, Of strangers. Jesus saith unto him, Then are the children free. Notwithstanding, lest we should offend them,”—notice the reasoning here; it matters not what the tribute in question may be said to be; be it that it was an assessment for religious objects rather than a tax for civil purposes; those who, as under the theocracy of Christ, refuse the payment of

civil and religious dues may perhaps learn a lesson,* —“Notwithstanding, *lest we should offend them*, go thou to the sea, and cast an hook, and take up the fish that first cometh up, and when thou hast opened his mouth, thou shalt find a piece of money . that take, and give unto them for Me and thee.” Again, it is in this Gospel only that the authority of Pilate is expressly recognised. In the other Gospels he is simply named Pilate; here he is “*the governor*,” or “*Pilate the governor*.” Then again, it is in this Gospel that we find the words of Christ, when He rebuked the unlawful resistance of Peter on the occasion of His apprehension, “Put up thy sword into his place;” words which are, indeed, to be also found in the Gospel according to John, but not as accompanied by the following, which are to be found in this Gospel only, “the Gospel of the kingdom,” “For all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword.”

But we cannot condescend on all the references which we had marked. We pass from references to *the kingdom as founded on atonement-righteousness*, the key-note of which may be found in that significant utterance which is peculiar to this Gospel, “Suffer it to be so now, for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness;” from references also to *the kingdom as constantly opposed and rejected by the rulers of this world*, the first of which meets us in the persecu-

* There is a difference between levying an assessment and paying it. The assessment may be one that ought not to be imposed or demanded. Still it may be dutiful to pay it, “Lest we should offend them.”

tion of Herod when "*the King of the Jews*" was but an infant, and the last in the crucifixion, when Pilate ordered that inscription to be put upon the cross, "This is Jesus, *the King of the Jews.*" We shall only notice further one or two explicit references to *the catholic extension of the kingdom* beyond the consecrated boundaries of the land of Israel to the utmost boundaries of the Gentile world. In the opening genealogy we find the names of four Gentile women, Tamar of Timnath; Rachab of Jericho; Ruth of Moab; and Bathsheba of Gath; all of them aliens by birth to the Abrahamic family; and we thus see, at the very outset, how Matthew, Jew and publican as originally he was, distinctly understood that, according to the Abrahamic covenant, more than the Abrahamic family, even "all the families of the earth," are to be "blessed" in Christ. Then on the birth of the King of the Jews, it is not the Jews, but "wise men *from the east,*" the first-fruits of the Gentiles, who come to worship Him; and again we see how Matthew had altogether risen above the exclusive bigotry and traditionalism of his nation and his day, and how he should have been so careful to record these and other sayings of his Lord and Master, which are only to be found in his Gospel,—“And I say unto you that many shall come *from the east and west,* and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven. But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” “All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore and teach *all nations,* baptizing them in the name of the

Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world."

NOW TO CONCLUDE. Let us not fail to *make a practical use of the view of Christ which is thus exhibited in this Gospel*. It is not enough, in our examination of the several Gospels, that we can place ourselves in the proper standing point of contemplation, so as to view each separate likeness as it has been drawn, and in the very light and shade in which it was intended to be seen. Let us remember that the Gospel has been committed to writing for the accomplishment of other and much higher purposes, and let us read and study it for these purposes. In the Gospel according to John we behold Christ as the Son of God, and we are expressly told that that Gospel was written that we should believe in Him as such, and receive power to become ourselves the sons of God. In the Gospel according to Luke we behold Him as the Son of man, and we come to know that as such He was the Pattern-man, and that, as He was, so should we be in the world. In the Gospel according to Mark we behold Him in the form of a servant, the Servant of God; and we learn of Him, as such, the lesson of patient endurance, and un murmuring obedience, and unwearied exertion, in the duties of our station and our vocation, whatever that may be. And so in the examination of this Gospel, the Gospel according to Matthew, where we behold Him as the King of Israel, let us bow to His authority; let us

touch, in token of our submission, the outstretched sceptre of His grace ; let us prove ourselves to be “a willing people,” willing to be for Him, and willing to do for Him, as He may command in the day of His kingly power.

And with this view, let us here read a passage, which is only to be found in this Gospel, and certainly as precious a passage as is to be found in any of the Gospels ;—it shows, too, in its peculiarly affectionate style, that the Jesus of Matthew, however differently viewed by him, is in reality the same as the Jesus of John, for it reads like a passage from the pen of the beloved disciple ; only that, as occurring in Matthew, the Gospel of royalty, it is invested with the majesty of royalty : (xi. 27-30.) “All things are delivered unto Me of My Father ; and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father ; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him. Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me ; for I am meek and lowly in heart : and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For My yoke”—observe, He speaks of His yoke, of the service which He requires, for it is as the King that He here addresses us—“For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light.” The wise man saith, “Where the word of a king is there is power.” So here. ‘I counsel thee to keep the King’s commandment, and that in respect of the oath of God. Be not hasty to go out of His sight ; stand not in an evil thing, for He doeth whatsoever pleaseth Him.”

And let us also read another passage, equally

gracious, and equally royal too. We take it from the last of the parables of the kingdom—a parable only to be found in this Gospel—the parable of the final judgment, in which the Son of man is introduced as sitting upon the throne of His glory, and passing sentence upon “all nations” who are gathered before Him. “Then shall the King”—“the King!”—“say unto them on His right hand, Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom,”—“the kingdom!”—“prepared for you from before the foundation of the world.” “And the King”—“the King!”—“shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me.” How this glorious representation should win us over to the side of Christ. Like Amasai to David, when the Spirit came upon him, and he said of himself and the men that were with him, “Thine are we, O David, and on thy side, thou son of Jesse,” may every one of us now say,—O that the Spirit would come upon us, that we may say it, each one for himself, and every one together,—“Thine are we, O Jesus, and on Thy side, Thou Son of David, Thou Son of God.”

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MARK.

THE fulness of the life of Christ was such as plainly required the record of more than one biography. Hence we cannot be said to know Him, or at least to know Him well, till we have examined all of the Gospels—till we have ascertained their specific representations as well as identified them in Him.

Let us turn to the Gospel according to Mark. As with Matthew, we shall introduce our examination of the Gospel with a brief notice of its author.

I. THE EVANGELIST.

From the earliest ages it has been generally believed that he was the same with Marcus, who is mentioned in one of the Epistles of Peter as his son in the faith, and with John Mark, sister's son to Barnabas, who is mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles as the occasion of the unhappy variance between that singularly eminent disciple and the Apostle Paul, which issued in their separation from one another in missionary labour among the Gentiles. We shall assume this belief to be correct. It would lead us away from our present object to investigate the grounds upon which other opinions have been based. It is enough to say that

the common belief appears to be well sustained by every kind of trustworthy evidence.

1. We accordingly *identify the Evangelist with the sister's son of Barnabas, and the convert, or son in the faith, of the Apostle Peter.* We know nothing of his father. He is not mentioned in Scripture—by name even. Possibly he was a Gentile; for the name Mark, by which his son was best known, was not Jewish but Roman. His wife was certainly a Jewess. Her name was Mary, not an uncommon name among the women of the Gospel. She appears to have been a person of means or property. Her house is spoken of in the Acts of the Apostles as if it were her own. It was also a resort of the disciples in Jerusalem. When Peter was miraculously liberated from prison, into which he had been thrown by Herod, he went at once to it, and found many gathered together, praying for him, so that it must have been a house of considerable size and accommodation. At all events, whether wealthy or not, Mary was unquestionably a Christian disciple, and on this account we cannot but be prepossessed in favour of her son. With such a mother, may we not believe that he had had a Bible-education and a moral training, which went far to fit him, when he was brought over to the Christian faith, to become the companion and fellow-labourer of apostles, and ultimately one of the four who were honoured of the blessed Spirit to be the Evangelists of the life of Christ?

That he should not be identified with the Evangelist, because of the quarrel of Paul and Barnabas about him, is a position which evidently rests on very

insufficient grounds. It cannot be maintained that an evangelist must have been a person of entirely faultless character. Do we not find faint-heartedness and vacillancy on the part of Peter, perhaps the most courageous of the apostles, exposing him on one occasion to the open rebuke of the Apostle Paul; and when such an instance of shortcoming is found in the history of even an apostle, how should it be made a ground of objection that a similar instance should have occurred in the history of an evangelist? Besides, we should not forget that, while Paul was opposed to Mark on the occasion referred to, Barnabas was of a different mind,—and he may have been right in the matter,—and that Paul himself, as we learn from several of his Epistles, came afterwards to have the utmost confidence in Mark, and found him a singularly energetic and useful coadjutor in the ministry of Christ.* We therefore see no difficulty in recognising Mark, the nephew of Barnabas, the coadjutor of Paul, and the convert, and also companion for a time, of Peter, as the Christian evangelist of that name.

2. It may be right to mention that *there is a very old and perhaps universally received tradition that this Gospel, although attributed to Mark, was written by him as the amanuensis of Peter*,—some say, as the translator and continuator, or editor,† of an original Hebrew or Aramaic Gospel-memoir by Peter, and that it was received into the canon of Scripture

* “Take Mark, and bring him with thee: for he is profitable to me for the ministry,” (2 Tim. iv. 11.) See also Col. iv. 10.

† “Ἑρμηνευτὴς Πέτρον:” so called by the Fathers.

by the primitive Church as thus of properly apostolical or Petrine authorship.

There are not a few things in the Gospel itself which go far to confirm this tradition.

For example, we often find the apostle's name mentioned in this Gospel in connexion with various incidents and circumstances which indicate, if not dictation on his part, the appearance of something like it,—at least, as some would say, revision. Here the house at Capernaum, into which Jesus withdrew with His disciples after his first appearance there as a public teacher, is said to have been the house of Simon and Andrew—*Andrew's* as well as Simon's;—the other Evangelists simply mention it as Peter's; here we are told that Peter was the disciple who first noticed the withered condition of the fig-tree which had been blasted by our Lord, and first drew attention to it by his exclamations; here we obtain the very names of the four disciples, Peter and James, and John, and Andrew, who inquired of our Lord as to the time at which the temple would be destroyed; and here, once more, we see Peter most pointedly singled out in the expostulation with the disciples in the garden, “Simon, sleepest thou? couldst not thou watch one hour?”

Several things mentioned in the other Gospels which appear to reflect honour on Peter, are likewise omitted in this Gospel, as if a feeling of modesty had obliterated them; while there is the utmost explicitness in detailing other circumstances which were fitted to humble him as one that had no reason to be set above his brethren. We find in it no mention, as in

Matthew, of his attempt to walk upon the sea, or of the benediction which was given him on occasion of his explicit confession of the Messiahship and Divine Sonship of the Saviour; whereas what passed when he tried to dissuade his Master from going to Jerusalem to be "killed" is most faithfully related, with this additional statement, which is not to be found in the other Evangelist who records the incident, that, while our Lord looked round about upon His disciples, He *rebuked* Peter. Neither do we find any mention made in it of his having been the first apostle to whom the Lord appeared after His resurrection; whereas the distinction of Mary Magdalene in this respect is related with the utmost explicitness. On the other hand, we have in it the fullest account of his denial of Christ, with the addition, not to be found in any other of the Evangelists, of the circumstance, which so aggravated his sin in the matter, that the cock crew twice before he was awakened to repentance; while at the same time all that is said of his repentance is that he wept; there is no reference to the bitterness of his tears, as if the thought of its being something like an affectation of humility to mention *that* had prevented it. Once more, it is only in this Gospel that that touching expression of the angel's after the resurrection is mentioned, "But go your way, tell His disciples and Peter,"—how must Peter have delighted in that "And Peter!"—"that He goeth before you into Galilee."

These, along with many other references of a similar kind, make it a not unlikely thing that the Apostle Peter had a hand in perhaps the composition, or at least the revision, of this Gospel.

At the same time, the individuality of Mark's own characteristic editorship, if we may not say authorship, is everywhere apparent in it; and whatever hand Peter may have had in its composition or revision,—if he had any,—it is enough to establish its canonical inspiration that it was received as of undoubted authority in apostolic times, and that it has ever since been handed down from age to age as an integral portion of the Scriptural canon.

So much for the *authorship* of this Gospel. It has been said that Mark was one of the seventy disciples; but on what authority, if other than traditionary, we have been unable to discover. Probably the minuteness of his narrative, which appears to indicate the closest personal observation, may have suggested the idea to those who wished to assert his independence as an author. He has also been identified with the young man whom he alone mentions—*anonymously* mentions—as having followed our Lord on the occasion of His betrayal and apprehension, clothed in a light night-dress, which he hastily left in the hands of those who sought to apprehend him also. It has been supposed that his mother's house may have been in the neighbourhood—perhaps in the garden of Gethsemane—and that, being roused from sleep by the tumult in the garden, he had impulsively hastened out to see what was going on, and then again—as on the occasion which so much displeased Paul, and made him quarrel with Barnabas about him—as impulsively hastened back again when he found himself in danger. But this is merely a supposition, likely enough, but nothing more than likely. That he travelled far and

wide as a missionary-evangelist is the only thing we can further say of him. At one time we find him far west, with Paul in Rome; at another time we find him far east, with Peter in Babylon; and if we may believe the traditions of antiquity, according to which he finally settled as bishop or pastor of the church in Alexandria, there seems every reason to believe that he was thus, as he is commonly regarded, and as other parts of his history appear to hint, an ardent and energetic, perhaps somewhat impulsive, Christian labourer, —glad, if not always ready, to have a hand in planting the gospel in the great centres of civilization, the capitals of the world.

II. THE GOSPEL.

Of the four Gospels, this has perhaps been least appreciated, and for two reasons. First, It is the shortest of the Gospels. As divided into chapters, it has only sixteen, while John has twenty-one, and Luke twenty-four, and Matthew twenty-eight; and, indeed, when the length of the chapters is taken into account, Matthew's is nearly twice as large. Secondly, Most of the events recorded in it, along with numerous additional facts of eventful import, are found in the other Gospels. This circumstance has perhaps contributed even more than the other to throw it into the shade, as if it were comparatively valueless.

Certain it is that, in comparison of the other Gospels, it is very much overlooked in the Bible expositions of the pulpit and the press; and how can we wonder that private Christians know but little of its peculiar

excellencies? Matthew Henry, careful student of the Bible as he was, finds himself constrained to offer something very like an apology for it, and tells us, that "when many witnesses are called upon to give testimony to the same facts, we are not to think it *tedious*, but highly *necessary*, that they should relate the facts in their own words over and over again, in order to establish the truth by their concurrent testimony." And then he goes on to say—and this seems with him to be the only distinctive purpose served by the Gospel—"It is written to put us in mind of things which we have had in the foregoing Gospel, that we may give the more earnest heed to them, lest at any time we should let them slip; and even pure minds have need to be thus stirred up by way of remembrance. It was fit that such great things should be spoken and written once, yea, twice, because man is so unapt to perceive them, and so apt to forget them." Thomas Scott also seems to think that nothing remains to the Christian expositor, in taking up this Gospel after the former, "except to note variations."

It may be added that many have regarded it as but an abridgement or epitome of Matthew's Gospel, any additions which they may have noticed as necessarily drawn from independent observation being disregarded as comparatively unimportant. And yet no idea could be more erroneous. Take away the first two chapters of Matthew which bear on the infancy of Christ, with the chapters which record nothing but parables and sermons, the most of which are entirely omitted by Mark, and it will be found that the Gospel according to Matthew is by far the smaller of the two, and that,

as a chronicle of facts, Matthew's Gospel is much more likely to be the abridgement than Mark's, if either the one or the other may be looked upon as bearing such a character. Of course, the idea of Matthew epitomising or abridging Mark cannot be entertained for a moment. Even supposing him to have seen the Gospel memoirs of Peter,* which Mark is sometimes said to have translated, his Gospel is in the truest sense his own,—quite an original and independent Gospel; and, as its place in the canon is designed to indicate, it was unquestionably the first published. Properly, neither should be spoken of as an abridgement of the other. Most certainly Mark, although later than Matthew, in at least respect of publication, cannot be said to have either copied or abridged Matthew; there are such distinctive characteristics, particularly such minuteness and fulness of personally witnessed and attested detail in almost everything which he records, as irresistibly lead us to conclude that his Gospel is also in the proper sense original—the fruit of independent observation, of independent authorship. The concluding remarks of Alford's preliminary dissertation are on this point most excellent:—“I regard the existence of the Gospel of Mark as a gracious and valuable proof of the accommodation by the Divine Spirit of the records of the life of our Lord to the future necessities of the Church. While it contains little matter of fact which is not related in Matthew and Luke, and thus, generally speaking, forms only a confirmation of their complete histories, it is so

* *ἁπομνημονεύματα Πέτρου*. So Justin Martyr and Eusebius, &c., as quoted by Smith of Jordanhill.

far from being a barren duplicate of them which is contained in it, that it comes home to every reader with all the freshness of an individual mind, full of the Holy Ghost, intently fixed on the great object of the Christian's love and worship, reverently and affectionately following and recording His positions and looks and gestures, and giving us the very echoes of the tones with which He spoke. And thus the believing student feels, while treating of and studying this Gospel, as indeed he does of each in its turn, that—without venturing to compare with one another in value these rich and abiding gifts of the Holy Spirit to the Church—the Gospel of Mark is at least as precious to him as any of the others, serving an end and filling a void which could not, without spiritual detriment, be left uncared for.”

Let us proceed to notice its *various characteristics* :—

1. The first of these may be said to be determined by *the parties for whose use it seems to have been published*. Formerly it was generally believed to have been published at Rome for the use of the Roman Christians, but latterly this opinion has been shown to be incorrect.

There are internal evidences in the Gospel which go far to prove that it must have been published in Palestine for Gentile Christians there.

The evidences are such as these :—Throughout the Gospel the geography of Palestine is supposed to be familiar to its readers. Even comparatively obscure localities are not marked by any accompanying references, as are common in the Gospel according to Luke,

which was certainly written for the use of a Roman Gentile Christian. There is not one instance of such a geographical explanation in it as might have been looked for in a Gospel written in Rome for the use of Roman Christians. On the contrary, the whole topography of the Gospel is that of one resident in the neighbourhood of the various places mentioned, and unaware of any reason for accompanying his references with explanations. A partial acquaintance with Jewish rites and customs is also supposed to be possessed by his readers. There are particular references in it to the Sabbath, and the Preparation, and the Jewish festivals, which must have required explanation—it distinguishes, for example, between the feast of the passover and the feast of unleavened bread (chap. xiv. 1,) without giving any explanation of the distinction, as must have been required—had the Gospel been immediately intended for the use of entire strangers to the Jewish faith.

At the same time, there are several references to the Jews, together with explanations bearing mainly on their minuter customs, which plainly prove that the author, or perhaps translator and editor, had in view the information of persons who, by residence in Judea, might be supposed to know the localities of the country, and also the more public and prominent of the national customs; while at the same time they were not familiar with those which were more private and less known, or which, like the religious washing of hands before meat, of cups and pots, brazen vessels, and tables, had no Scriptural authority—had no higher authority than the tradition of the elders,

which the parties in question could not be expected to know so well as they knew the Scriptures,

Now, if you turn to the history of the Church as contained in the Acts of the Apostles, it will not be difficult to ascertain these persons. Among the first Gentile converts to the faith were Roman soldiers resident in Palestine and its neighbourhood. The name of Cornelius at Cesarea, with his friends and his household servants, and—may we not suppose?—some of his soldiers too, for we read of a devout soldier who waited upon him continually, will at once occur. During the years which immediately followed the conversion of Cornelius, we cannot doubt that the work of conversion made considerable progress among the foreign military and civil residents in Cesarea and other parts of Palestine, and more especially among the devout portion of them, the proselytes—who seem to have been numerous—to the Jewish faith.

For such persons it was highly necessary that a Gospel should be prepared and published; just as necessary as that that of Matthew should be published for converts among the Jews, and that that of Luke should be published for converts among the Gentiles; and the Gospel according to Mark answers all the conditions of such a Gospel as would be required for them. It refers occasionally to the prophets, but not often; because the faith of the proselytes, although strengthened by their testimony, was not, like that of the Jews, so dependent on it; and it needs not be said how different it is in this respect from the Gospel according to Matthew, the Gospel of the circumcision. It occupies itself with a faithful record of the mighty

deeds by which Jesus at once demonstrated and fulfilled His mission, and it records them in such a form as was most admirably adapted to command the faith of those residents in Palestine who, although not Jews, had been gained over, first to the Jewish, and then to the Christian faith. Altogether it is just such a Gospel as may be said to be described by its central position in the canon between Matthew and Luke. Matthew gives us the Gospel for the Jewish Christians. Luke gives us the Gospel for the Gentile Christians. John Mark, who may have been, like Timothy, a Jew by his mother's side, and a Gentile by his father's side—and hence perhaps his two names, the one Jewish, and the other, as already mentioned, Roman*—gives us between them the Gospel of the transition-period, the middle Gospel, for those who, although Gentiles in point of birth, were devout men or Jews in point of faith, the Gentile proselytes resident in Palestine who had been converted to Christianity; some of whom would, in all likelihood, carry it with them to Rome on their return thither, and thus give rise to the old tradition that it had actually been written there.†

2. Another characteristic of this Gospel is to be seen in *its vividness of portraiture*, the singularly

* The numerous Latinised expressions and forms of expression employed in this Gospel, may be also thus accounted for without having recourse to Da Costa's hypothesis, that its author was a Roman, the devout soldier mentioned in the Acts as the servant of Cornelius.

† Simon, the Cyrenian, who was compelled to bear the cross, is called in this Gospel "the father of Alexander and Rufus," who are named in the Epistle to the Romans as then resident in Rome; and these young men may have taken it with them to that city.

picturesque and life-like way in which its narrative surrounds the events which it records with minute and circumstantial details, always interesting, often tenderly touching, sometimes most impressive, and generally indicative of the autoptical or personal observation of its author. For the appreciation of this peculiar characteristic, it might be enough to compare the narrative with that of the other Gospels in any event or circumstance which they happen to relate in common, such as the resuscitation of the daughter of Jairus, the restoration of sight to blind Bartimeus, and the contribution by the widow of her two mites into the treasury of the temple. But we must leave the work of comparison to personal examination.

We can only instance a few incidental details by way of specimen. "He was *with the wild beasts*:"—so in a merely passing way, yet with eminently graphic effect, it is here mentioned in the account of the wilderness-temptation. "And all the city *was gathered together at the door*." "And again He entered into Capernaum after some days; and it was noised that He was *in the house*.* And straightway many were gathered together, insomuch that there was no room to receive them, *no, not so much as about the door*:" †—so we have it here related, or rather pictured out from personal knowledge and observation, in the accounts of the crowds which followed Him when the fame of His miracles began to be spread abroad. "And they

* "*εἰς οἶκον*,"—"In doors"—"At home"—"Gone home:"—so Blomfield, Alford, and Smith of Jordanhill.

† *τὰ πρὸς τὴν θύραν*,—"the before the door,"—"the front of the door,"—outside as well as inside the door.

come unto Him, bringing one sick of the palsy, *which was borne of four. And when they could not come nigh unto Him for the press, they uncovered the roof where He was, and when they had broken it up, they let down the bed wherein the sick of the palsy lay:*—so here again, in the account of the paralytic brought to Him for healing, we have the scene spread out, in the minute embodiment of living reality before us, by one who had evidently been an eye-witness. Then in the account here given of the tempest on the sea of Galilee, we also have some very graphic touches of autoptical detail:—“And when they had sent away the multitude, they took Him *even as He was* in the ship. And there were also with Him *other little ships*. And there arose a great storm of wind, and the waves beat into the ship, *so that it was now full*. And He was in the hinder part of the ship, *asleep on a pillow.*” * Then in the account of the miracle of the feeding of the five thousand upon the five loaves and two fishes, we have also here in the similarly graphic style of an eye-witness:—“And He commanded them to make all sit down *by companies upon the green grass. And they sat down in ranks, by hundreds, and by fifties.*” Then here again we read, in equally minute and as evidently autoptical description, that when His disciples were tempest-tossed on the

* Mr Smith of Jordanhill has very clearly shown that the various references in this Gospel to nautical matters are professional, such as might be expected from a fisherman like Peter, and that the parallel references in Matthew and Luke are those of landmen, as these Evangelists are known to have been.—*Vide* his Dissertation on the Origin and Connection of the Gospels, pp. 206, 281, 294, *et passim*.

passage to Bethsaida, whither He had constrained them to go while He remained to send away the people, "He saw them *toiling in rowing*:" that, when He went to Gennesaret, "*they began to carry about in beds those that were sick where they heard He was* ; and whithersoever He entered, into villages, or cities, or country, *they laid the sick in the streets* : " that, when He had compassion on the great multitude that had been with Him three days, and said, " If I send them away fasting to their own houses, they will faint by the way," "*divers came from far* : " that, on one occasion when the disciples had forgotten to take bread with them for a voyage across the sea of Galilee, "*neither had they in the ship with them more than one loaf* : " that the young man who came to Him with the question, " Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life ! " "*came running and kneeled to Him* : " that when He sent two of His disciples for the colt on which He made His last entry into Jerusalem, they "*found the colt tied by the door without in a place where two ways met* : " that they who passed by when he was crucified, and railed on Him, wagging their heads, said, "*Ah!* Thou that destroyest the temple "—what insult is embodied by Mark in this one word, "*Ah!*" which he alone records : and that the reason why the women said among themselves, when they were on the way to the tomb of Christ, " Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulchre ? " was, "*For it was very great.*"

It may be further mentioned, before passing from these notices, that Mark often gives an additional touch of, as it were, dramatic reality to his delineations,

by preserving the very words which were used by Christ, adding, however, the explanation as perhaps necessary for some of his readers:—“*Talitha cumi*,* which is, being interpreted, Damsel, I say unto thee, Arise!” “It is *Corban*—that is to say, a gift;” “*Ephphatha*—that is, Be opened;” “*Abba*, Father;” “*Eloi ! Eloi ! lama sabachthani ?*† which is, being interpreted, My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?” and by also describing, with the minute detail of an eye-witness, the very looks, and feelings, and gestures of Christ on many occasions:—“And Jesus, *moved with compassion, put forth His hand, and touched him:*” “And when He had *looked round about on them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts:*” “And He *looked round about to see her who had done this thing:*” “And He could there do no mighty work, save that *He laid His hands upon a few sick folk, and healed*

* This occasional record of the very words employed by Christ would have been unnecessary in a Gospel written for Jews, to whom the Aramæan language was familiar as their mother tongue; it would have been quite useless in a Gospel written for Gentiles, who were altogether ignorant of the language; but it is perfectly natural in a Gospel written for Roman residents in Palestine, by whom the language may be presumed to have been partially known. The parallel of it may be often met with in foreign expressions, as occasionally introduced into *translated* and other books intended for readers who may be expected to appreciate their introduction; and certainly, if Mark was the translator of Peter, its frequent occurrence in his Gospel is in this way at once accounted for.

† By Matthew, this is given in the Hebrew proper—“*Eli ! Eli !*” &c.; and along with “*Immanuel*” and “*Golgotha*,” also Hebrew words, is translated by him, because pure Hebrew was very much with the Jews, even then, a dead language, perhaps confined to the services of Divine worship.

them : And *He marvelled*, because of their unbelief :” “And He took him aside from the multitude, and *put His fingers into his ears, and He spit, and touched his tongue, and looking up to heaven, He sighed :*” “And they brought young children to Him that He should touch them ; and His disciples rebuked those that brought them ; But when Jesus saw it, He was *much displeased ; and He took them up in His arms :*” “Then Jesus *beholding him, loved him :*” “And Jesus entered into Jerusalem, and into the temple, and when He had *looked round about upon all things, and now the eventide was come, He went unto Bethany with the twelve.*”

3. But, without entering into further details,—for to exhaust the subject would require us to quote well-nigh the entire Gospel,—we must now proceed to notice the *distinctive characteristic of this Gospel, considered in that peculiar aspect in which it portrays or exhibits Christ to us.* This characteristic does not stand out so conspicuously as that of each of the other Gospels ; but on examination it will be found to be no less real and no less expressive. The symbol of it, according to the mnemonic figures of the cherubim, we have identified with that of the ox, as indicative of steady, strenuous labour—humble, patient, faithful servitude. The lion steps forth with majestic tread, the king and lord of all in its own domain. The man looks out with intelligent catholic sympathy upon the world around, and recognises in every fellow-man his brother-man. The eagle soars on high, and, as if it belonged to another and a higher world than this, gazes with unwinking eye on the

mid-day sun. But the ox has a yoke upon its neck, and it goes along with head bent downwards to the earth, dragging the plough through the farm land, or treading out the corn in the thrashing-floor. To this symbol, the Gospel according to Mark exactly corresponds. It is distinctively practical—not royal, or catholic, or divine. There are references in it which are no doubt royal, and catholic, and divine; but they are neither numerous nor explicit. The view throughout is that of Christ in the constant, laborious, unwearied activity of His daily outward ministry. If He is the Son of God, it is as in a state of profound humiliation—"who made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant,"—the Servant of the Lord, faithful, diligent, always at His work. We may here offer some illustrations.

1. *First*, we may instance, according to a plan pursued by others, *a few of the more remarkable omissions in this Gospel*, that is, as compared with the other Gospels. We may often learn not a little from Scriptural omissions. The silence of the Bible is, in many cases, as expressively significant as its explicit statements. Here the significance of silence is certainly instructive.

1. *Look at the beginning of the Gospel*.—There is nothing here that answers to the introduction in Matthew, or the introduction in Luke, or the introduction in John. The royal genealogy, the immaculate conception, the birth of the King of the Jews, the visit of the magi with their gifts and worship, the *Benedictus* of Zacharias, the *Magnificat* of Mary, the *Nunc dimittis* of Simeon, the whole infancy, child-

hood, and youth of Jesus, together with His pre-existence as the Eternal Word, and His glory as of the Only-begotten which is in the bosom of the Father—are all omitted; they are not in keeping with the idea of this Gospel, and are therefore silently passed over; and at once we have, instead, “The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ” in the full activity of His energetic efficient ministry.

2. *Look also at the sermons of the Gospel.*—There are hardly any here, at least of any considerable length; for the ministry in question is not the ministry of words, but the ministry of deeds, the ministry of action. The sermon on the mount is omitted. All the long parables are omitted. The parable sermons also, on the bread of God which came down from heaven and on the Good Shepherd, with those on the Divine equality and unity of the Son with the Father, and those on the Father’s house with many mansions, and those on the mission of the Holy Ghost, with the farewell promises of answers to prayer, of peace, of fruit-bearing, and fulness of joy—there is not one word of any of them here recorded; they might have made us lose sight of the Servant in the authority of the Teacher, of the Master.

In the few discourses which are recorded, they are not only abbreviated, but comparatively little in them is expressive of independent personal authority; there are, in fact, not a few expressions in them which indicate inferiority rather than authority, the subordination of the Servant rather than the sovereignty or majesty of the Lord. We may instance two or three passages. When, after the confession of Peter that

He was the Christ, He went on to show how much would be lost—life, even the soul itself—by unfaithfulness to the Gospel, He thus concluded one of the most solemn warnings He ever uttered,—“Whosoever, therefore, shall be ashamed of Me and of My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed when He cometh in the glory of His Father with the holy angels.” Matthew adds the words, “And then He shall reward every man according to his works.” Luke characteristically omits the additional words, and simply records—“When He shall come in His own glory, and in His Father’s, and of the holy angels.” Mark, quite as characteristically, takes notice of the glory of the Father only; because the servant does not claim a glory which is his own, or other than his lord’s,—“When He cometh in the glory of His Father with the holy angels.” Again: When He took a little child in His arms, in order to rebuke His disciples for their strivings about pre-eminence, He said, “Whosoever shall receive one of such children in My name, receiveth Me,” and then added, as here recorded, quite characteristically, “and whosoever shall receive Me, receiveth not Me, but Him that sent me.” “Receiveth not me,” are words which are to be found in Mark only; it is the Servant’s to say, “Not Me, but Him that sent Me.” Again: When He sat upon the Mount of Olives, and uttered His memorable prophecy of the destruction of Jerusalem, and the coming of the Son of man, He said, as recorded here, “But when they shall lead you, and deliver you up, take no thought beforehand what ye shall speak, neither do

ye premeditate ; but whatsoever shall be given you in that hour, that speak ye ; for it is not ye that speak but the Holy Ghost :”—there is no reference to Himself, or to His own aid, such as we have in the parallel passage in Luke, “For I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay and resist.” Then again on the same occasion, and also as only recorded here, “But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father.” “Neither the Son !” that is, as characteristically, the Servant, “for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth.”

3. *Look at the manner in which Christ is addressed in the Gospel.* The ordinary term of address in the other Gospels is Lord, sometimes Master : “Ye call Me Master and Lord ; and ye say well, for so I am.” But in this Gospel,—although He is often addressed as Master, that is, as so rendered in our version ; for in the original it is never the word which properly stands for Master ; it is only Rabbi or Teacher,—He is never once addressed as Lord. Matthew makes the leper say, “Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean.” Mark omits the “Lord” in his account. Matthew makes the disciples say at the supper-table, “Lord, is it I ?” Mark again very strikingly omits the “Lord ;” his account is, “They began to say unto Him one by one, Is it I ? and another said, Is it I ?” Matthew makes the disciples say when they awoke Him in the tempest, “Lord, save us, we perish.” Luke makes them say, “Master, Master, we perish.” Mark sinks both terms in Teacher, and makes them

speak also in complaining tones, as if they thought it wrong in Him who was always working to be then sleeping ; “Teacher”—“Master,” in our version, is wrong ; it is always wrong—“Teacher, carest Thou not that we perish ?” The same distinction occurs in the three accounts of the transfiguration. Matthew makes Peter say, “Lord, it is good for us to be here :” Mark, “Rabbi, it is good for us to be here :” Luke, “Master, it is good for us to be here.” There are, indeed, three passages in our version in which He is addressed as Lord ; but incorrectly, improperly, in two, and by a stranger or foreigner in the third. In one passage, the word is spurious. It occurs in the address of the father of the demoniac child to Christ, “Lord, I believe ; help Thou my unbelief.” “Lord” should not be inserted here ; it is not in any of the oldest and best manuscripts. In another passage, it is improperly translated. Blind Bartimeus is represented as praying, “Lord, that I may receive my sight ;” but the word is “Rabboni,”—not a title of nobility, of authority, but merely of reverential courtesy. In the third passage it is, “Yes, Lord !” but the speaker is not a disciple or a Jew ; it is the Syrophenician woman to whom, as a Jew and a prophet, He was really a lord, if not the Lord. The only occasion on which even our Lord *unequivocally** speaks of Himself in this Gospel as

* We say, “unequivocally,” because there are two other passages in which he speaks of the Lord, chapters v. 19, and xi. 3, only the reference is not explicit ; it may be understood, not of Himself, but of God. Compare the first of these passages with Luke viii. 30. The second occurs in the record of His triumphant entry into Jerusalem, which, as compared with the other evangelical accounts of it, will be found in Mark to be quite characteristic.

Lord is in the passage—the first part of which, with the argument dependent on it, is also peculiar to this Gospel—where He says, “The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath, therefore the Son of man is Lord also of the Sabbath;” but even here, as the “therefore” of the passage plainly indicates, the Lordship is a delegated one; it is a Lordship acquired from the Sabbath being made for man, and therefore a Lordship in which every man, the servant as well as his master, alike participates. “No man may take the Sabbath from me. It is as much mine as his. Be he who he may, or what he may, my master, my lord, my king even—no matter; I am lord of the Sabbath as well as he,—lord of it under God, by whom it was made for me, for man—for the servant-man as well as for the master-man.” It is not till the very close of the Gospel that the evangelist himself applies the term “Lord” to Christ; and there only when, after having finished the work which was given Him to do on earth, the Servant of the Lord is exalted from a subordinate position to that of sovereign authority, is proved by His ascension into glory to be “both Lord and Christ.” “So then, after the Lord”—He is “the Lord” now—“had spoken unto them, He was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God. And they went forth, and preached everywhere, the Lord”—observe again, “the Lord”—“working with them, and confirming the word with signs following.”*

* It might have been noticed here also, that, although this Gospel is called, in its opening sentence, “the Gospel of Jesus Christ the Son of God,” He is never addressed in it as the Son of God. The details

We must pass over many other omissions, no less significant, such as the omission of woes and blessings. Woes are not seemly on the lips of servants, or of any in subordinate position; hence Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum are not here threatened and denounced as in other Gospels.* Blessings do not befit them either, except in relation to the children of whom they have the charge, for "the less is blessed of the greater;" hence, also, the only case of blessing related in this Gospel is that of the young children which "they brought to Him that He should touch them," and it is said, and only here said, "And He took them up in His arms, and blessed them."

II. Let us, *in the second place*, proceed to instance a few of the additions which are peculiar to this Gospel, and which are also illustrative of its properly distinctive character.

of the temptation which turned on this, "If Thou be the Son of God," are omitted. The taunting expression, as addressed to Him on the cross, "If Thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross," is also omitted. Even on His trial, the high priest's adjuration is, as it were, modified; at least, it is not, "Art Thou the Son of God?" but, "Art Thou the Son of the Blessed?"

Perhaps it may not be amiss to add that, whatever may be said of the rest of the Gospel, both the beginning and the end of it are evidently from Mark's own hand. The genuineness of the concluding paragraph, chap. xvi., ver. 9-20, has been much disputed; and it is certainly different in its style from the preceding portion of the Gospel; but, if Mark was the translator and continuator of Peter, the difference is rather a proof of its genuineness as an addition by Mark himself to his translation of Peter's original memoranda.

* Da Costa's view is not inconsistent with this. He thinks that Mark, whom he believes to have been a Roman, or at least a Gentile by birth, did not record them from motives of delicacy. The same motives would hold, if, as we suppose, Mark was the son of a Gentile by the father's side.

1. *Look at the narrative of facts in this Gospel.* We shall, as it were, but tabulate a few of the more outstanding which bear on the point in hand.

Here we learn that He began the business of life at an ordinary handicraft. We read of Him as "*the Carpenter.*"* In the other Gospels He is called "the carpenter's son."

Here we see Him again and again using His hands in His ministry. When He healed Simon's wife's mother of a fever, it is said, "And He came and *took her by the hand, and lifted her up.*" When He opened the eyes of the blind man of Bethsaida, it is said, "And He took the blind man *by the hand:*" "And He *put His hands* upon him:" "After that He *put His hands* upon his eyes." When He cured the demoniac child, it is said, "But Jesus *took him by the hand and lifted him up.*" These details are given in this Gospel only, along with the similar reference in the remark of the astonished multitude, "From whence hath this Man these things? and what wisdom is this which is given unto Him, that *even such mighty works are wrought by His hands?*" His is a ministry of *active* labour. It is always seen to be performed by Himself and wrought by His hands.

Here we often behold Him seeking retirement in His work, as if it were unseemly in Him to let it be seen of men. When He went into the borders of Tyre and Sidon, where the Syrophenician woman so successfully prevailed on Him to heal her daughter,

* It has been noticed, that it was His townsmen, not Mark, that called Him the Carpenter. Still it is in Mark's Gospel that the fact is mentioned, and our reference is, therefore, quite in point.

it is said, He "entered into an house, and *would have no man know it*, but He could not be hid." When He healed the deaf man in Decapolis, it is said, "He took Him *aside from the multitude*:" and again, in the case of the blind man at Bethsaida to whom He gave sight,—He "*led him out of the town.*" It was the praise, not of man, but of God He sought.

Here we find Him at times so occupied with His work that the ordinary opportunities of repose and refreshment are denied to Him. He gets up early in the morning for prayer; because in this is to be found His strength for service, and He has no time for it during the day,—then it is work, work,—"*And in the morning rising up a great while before day*, He went out and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed." Again and again He is interrupted and called away when He seeks some rest, but He never complains. When He went out to a solitary place and there prayed, "Simon and they that were with him followed after Him,"—literally, *hunted after Him*,—"and when they had found Him, they said, All men seek for Thee," and at once He answered, not, "Let us rest awhile," but, "*Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also.*" When, on another occasion, He said unto the apostles. "Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest awhile;" "and they departed into a desert place by a ship privately;" "the people saw them departing, and many knew Him, and ran afoot thither out of all the cities, and outwent them, and came together unto Him," and then it is added, "And Jesus, when He came out, saw much people, and *was moved with compassion*,"—no vexa-

tion, no fretfulness, at the interruption,—“was moved with compassion toward them, because they were as sheep not having a shepherd; and *He began to teach them many things.*” Sometimes the interruptions, and the occupations connected with them, interfered even with His meals:—“And the multitude cometh together again, so that they *could not so much as eat bread:*” “For there were many coming and going, and *they had no leisure so much as to eat.*” All these references are peculiar to this Gospel. There is nothing parallel to them in the other Gospels.

Here we have many things which indicate that it was hard work He had to do, and that He felt it to be so. Let the cases brought to Him for cure as described with so much minuteness, and in terms also which are meant to show that they were extreme, be examined and compared with the narratives of the other Gospels, and the proof of this point will be held to be complete. We can only advert to the following things. Here He finds it necessary to ask for faith when His ability to help, although earnestly requested, is limited and questioned:—“If Thou canst do anything, have compassion on us, and help us. Jesus said unto him, *If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth.*” There is not a word of this in the other Gospels. Here He is actually hindered in His work by unbelief; it stays His hand; it disables it; He becomes, as it were, unable to do even what He would:—“And He *could* there do no mighty work, save that He laid His hands upon a few sick folk, and healed them, and *He marvelled* because of their unbelief.” Matthew says, “He *did*

not many mighty works there because of their unbelief," but Mark's expression is at once characteristic and significant, "He *could* not." Here He is distressed in His work, as workmen and servants often are; He feels it to be a burden; it oppresses Him; it wears Him out with sorrow. "*Being grieved for the hardness of their hearts:*"—This is noticed by Mark only. "And looking up to heaven, *He sighed:*"—No other evangelist records the sighs of Christ. "And He *sighed deeply* in His spirit:"—The expression in which this fact is noticed is peculiar to Mark. It nowhere else occurs in Scripture. Here also we read:—"And they bring Him unto the place Golgotha," or as it is in the original, more expressively, "And *they bear Him* unto the place Golgotha." John says, "And He, bearing His cross, went forth into a place called the place of a skull;" but it would appear that He had not sufficient strength to carry it all the way, and the other evangelists unite in telling us that a foot-passenger, Simon, a Cyrenian, was compelled to bear it for Him; while Mark here further seems to intimate, that at length His strength gave way altogether, and they had actually to carry Him to the cross,—to *bear* Him, faint, exhausted, spent,—just as Simon had "to *bear* His cross." Here, in short, the end of the Gospel corresponds to its beginning; it ends, as it had begun, with work:—"And they went forth, and preached everywhere, the Lord *working with* them, and confirming the word with signs following."

All these, along with many other additions, are singularly characteristic of this Gospel as the Gospel

of ministry, of service,—the faithful service, the laborious ministry, of “Jesus Christ the Son of God.”

2. *Look at the record of sayings in this Gospel.* It will be enough to notice the references to God. These are perhaps the most singularly characteristic; although others, not much less so, might also be instructively observed. We shall omit merely incidental references. In several passages, such references—left out of the parallel passages in the other Gospels, and not the less instructive on that account—will occasionally be found; but, from their apparently casual character, it may be as well to pass them altogether.

The following, as quite explicit and outstanding, may be simply mentioned.

Here the only parables of “the kingdom” which are recorded,—there are but four of them,—are parables of “the kingdom of GOD.” There is not one of them a parable of “the kingdom of *heaven*,”—the kingdom in which Christ is King. They all relate to the period which, as it were, precedes His coming to the kingdom. God is King in them, and He Himself is but a Servant in the work of subordinate ministration.*

Here the remark of the scribes, when they charged Him with blasphemy for saying to the sick of the

* One of these parables—that of the seed which groweth silently—is peculiar to Mark. It is strictly a parable of service,—patient service. The parable of the tares, in which Christ is “the Householder,”—“House-lord,”—and which would have therefore been out of place in Mark, occupies its place in Matthew. A comparison of the different Gospels here will be found to exhibit very distinctly their characteristic instructiveness.

palsy, "Son, thy sins be forgiven thee," is set down as, "Why doth this man thus speak blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but *God only?*" Matthew gives it as, "This man blasphemeth;" Luke, "Who is this which speaketh blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but *God alone?*"* but Mark characteristically, and to show how they sought to exclude the possibility of any kind of claim to Deity on the part of Christ, "Who can forgive sins but **THE ONE GOD?**"†

Here, once more, in the conversation between Him and the scribe who asked, "Which is the first commandment of all?" Jesus is related to have answered him, "The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; the Lord our God is one Lord:"—these words are not related by Matthew as quoted on this occasion; they are characteristically enough given by Mark only:—"Hear, O Israel; *the Lord our God is ONE LORD*; and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength; this is the first commandment. And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these. And the scribe said unto Him,"—the whole of what follows is quite characteristic of Mark; it is entirely omitted by Matthew, the only other evangelist who records this conversation;—"Well, Master, Thou hast said the truth; for there is **ONE GOD**; *and there is none other but He*; and to love Him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul,

"*μόνος ὁ θεός.*"

† The literal rendering of the original—"εἰς ὁ θεός."

and with all the strength, and to love his neighbour as himself, is more than all whole burnt-offerings and sacrifices." Plainly, in these as well as in other passages, Mark sets Him before us not as the Lord, but as the Servant.

"The conclusion of the whole matter" is plainly this,—that the Gospel according to Mark is "*the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God*;" "*who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*"

Let us, as we did in our examination of the Gospel according to Matthew, urge *a practical use of the view of Christ which is thus exhibited in this Gospel*. The practical character of the Gospel is such as of itself demands its practical improvement. We here, if any where in the Gospels, behold the example which Christ hath left us that we should follow His steps. It was a bright example. How we should delight to look on Him as our Forerunner, and our Companion also, in the service of the Lord.

It is encouraging to *ministers* to observe how in

this Gospel they are specially instructed to do so. For when He is said to have ordained the twelve to the apostleship, it is here added,—we do not find it so in the other Gospels,—“*that they might be with Him,*” as it were fellow-labourers with Him. And then again, when they went forth after His ascension to preach the gospel, it is also added here,—and nowhere else,—“*the Lord working with them,*” that is, as a fellow-labourer with them.

Let *servants* in every station, *workmen* in every occupation, also learn from Him in this Gospel to be faithful, zealous, untiring, uncomplaining, prayerful,—just like Him,—at their work. Even those who do not occupy an inferior position in life may here learn from Him how to serve the Lord in well-doing. Here is a text for them from this Gospel;—“For the poor ye have always with you.” Matthew and John also record these words; but Mark alone adds—and the addition, as noted by him, is characteristic—“and whensoever ye will, *ye may DO them good.*”

There is one word which is constantly used in this Gospel,—the word indifferently rendered in our version, “immediately,” “straightway,” “forthwith,” “anon,” “by and by,” “as soon as,”* from which also, as it shows us how Jesus was always ready for His work and always getting forward with it, *all of us* may learn promptitude, diligence, unwearied activity, and many other important virtues, in the various duties of our several places and relations. The duties

* *εὐθως* in the original,—It occurs about forty times in this Gospel, and only about other forty times in all the rest of the New Testament together.

devolving on us in these places and relations may, no doubt, be hard to perform, very hard ; but it is here, in this Gospel, that we are taught to look for that ; “ *And come, take up the cross, and follow Me ;* ”—these words are recorded by Mark only ; and again, “ There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for My sake and the Gospel’s, but he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, *with persecutions ;* ”—these words are in Mark only—“ and in the world to come eternal life.” “ The cross ! ” “ With persecutions ! ” Behold what is before us here. But then there is His own example to sustain us in bearing that cross, in suffering those persecutions ; and withal there is the blessed hope that, as in His case, so in ours, the cross will be followed with the crown, the persecutions with eternal life and glory, “ It is a faithful saying ; ”—“ If so be that we suffer with Him that we may be also glorified together. For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.”

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO LUKE.

THE inscriptions of the Gospels, though not original, were certainly prefixed at a date which warrants us to accept them as authentic.

The necessity of distinguishing the respective authorship of the Gospels, by prefixing to each the name of its author, must have become obvious at a very early period from the number of copies which required to be transcribed for circulation in the different churches; and we are assured by those who have investigated the subject, that the Christian fathers universally represent the four Gospels as written by the persons whose names are still prefixed to them in our printed copies of the Scriptures.

From the inscriptions we accordingly pass at once to the Gospels themselves; and, as that which comes in turn, the Gospel according to Luke will form the subject of present consideration.

I. THE EVANGELIST.

It is not much that we know of him. We know less of him than of any other writer of the New Testament Scriptures. His name never occurs in the Gospel narrative. According to an old tradition, he

is sometimes said to have been one of the seventy disciples whom our Lord sent out, two by two, to preach the gospel; but, except that he is the only evangelist who records the commission of the seventy, there appears to be no evidence for the tradition. We may briefly state the facts of his history, so far as they can be gathered from Scripture, whence our only certain knowledge of him is derived.

1. *He was a beloved companion and fellow-labourer of the Apostle Paul.* The first time we meet with him in this connexion is in the Acts of the Apostles, a portion of Scripture of which he was likewise the author. There in the course of the sixteenth chapter we learn, from his exchanging the historical for the autobiographical form of narrative, that he accompanied the apostle and the party who went from Troas to preach the gospel in Macedonia. That he had been a convert to Christianity for some time previous to this period is more than probable; but when or where he was brought to the knowledge of the truth we have no means of information. It is not likely that he was converted by the ministry of Paul, for the apostle never calls him his son, as he terms Timothy and Titus; but the general use of the autobiographical term "We," in the remaining portion of the Acts, as good as intimates that he continued to accompany the apostle in at least the most important of those missionary journeys with which the history of the Acts is occupied. From Troas we follow them to Philippi, where Paul and Silas were scourged and imprisoned, and had their feet made fast in the stocks. Again, we find them together at Assos; and we then follow

them to Miletus, where Paul had the very affecting meeting with the elders of the Church of Ephesus ; and thence to Tyre, where certain disciples said to Paul through the Spirit that he should not go up to Jerusalem ; and thence again to Cesarea, where the prohibition was, as it were, repeated by a prophet named Agabus, but in vain ; for Paul went on to Jerusalem ; and Luke, although he had endeavoured along with others to prevail on him to comply with the prohibition, accompanied him. It also appears that he afterwards went to Cesarea, and remained with the apostle in that city during the two years of his detention by order of Felix, the Roman governor. At all events, he accompanied him on the voyage to Rome, and shared in the shipwreck and sufferings of the voyage. On arriving in the city of the Cesars he drops all further notice of himself from the history ; but we may conclude that he remained with the apostle as a fellow-labourer in the Gospel, for his name appears in some of the epistles which Paul sent from Rome to distant churches, as a beloved brother who joined with him in his greetings and salutations.

2. From one of the epistles of Paul we learn, in quite an incidental way, that *he was a physician by profession*. Perhaps the attachment which subsisted between him and Paul may receive an explanation from this fact. Both were persons of education, superior in point of literary acquirement to the generality of Christians of their day, and therefore more likely to be profitable to one another in their companionship. The attainments of Luke, together with his modesty, amiability, and gentleness—for the honourable man-

ner in which Paul speaks of him as "Luke the beloved physician" would seem to indicate that he was a person of this character—point him out as the most suitable person of whom we know to be the friend of the apostle after his separation from Barnabas. In their affectionate companionship we are somehow reminded of that of Luther and Melancthon at the period of the Reformation. Paul, like Luther, is the grand actor, the moving spirit: he stands out prominently to public view, and all men behold with admiration the intrepidity of his character, the amount of his labours, and his unparalleled success; while Luke, like Melancthon writing in the back-ground his Common-places, the first system of divinity ever published by the Church of the Reformation, is a retiring spirit, also writing away, as it were, behind the scenes, and in his two volumes of the Gospel and the Acts, from which, unlike those who seek to immortalise their name with their work, he excludes all mention of himself by name, presents us with the first general history of the apostolic Church, from its foundation in the person, life, and work of Jesus Christ, to its erection and full development under the oversight and in the labours of the apostles.

It is not known whether the evangelist continued to follow his profession after he was converted to Christianity. Certain it is that he was advanced to the honourable degree of being a physician of souls, for in the Epistle to Philemon, (ver. 24,) Paul mentions him as one of his fellow-labourers,—“ Marcus, Aristarchus, Demas, Lucas,” or as we commonly Anglicise it, Luke, “ my fellow-labourers.” It is

generally admitted that he is the party referred to by the apostle in the Second Epistle of the Corinthians, (viii. 18.) "And we have sent with him (Titus) the brother whose praise is in the Gospel in all the churches," or, as some explain the reference, perhaps not quite correctly,* "whose praise for the Gospel is in all the churches," or "whose Gospel is the subject of praise in all the churches." The last Scriptural notice of him occurs in the Second Epistle to Timothy, It is very honourable to him as illustrative of his Christian courage, and, at the same time, of his strong affection for the apostle, who, after being brought before Nero the second time, exclaims with profound emotion, as, on the eve of martyrdom, he lies in his solitary dungeon bound with chains, and forsaken by all his other friends, (iv. 9-11,) "Do thy diligence to come shortly unto me. For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world, and is departed unto Thessalonica; Crescens to Galatia; Titus unto Dalmatia; *only Luke is with me.*"

3. These notices of the evangelist would be incomplete without a reference to *his national and religious connexions before he became a Christian*. Perhaps no question of a similar nature has been made the subject of so much inquiry and discussion as the question whether he were then a Jew, or a proselyte, or a heathen. The question is not without its interest, and we may be permitted to state the grounds on which we are disposed to agree with those who believe him to have been a Gentile.

* *Vide* Howson and Conybeare *in loco*, and Smith of Jordanhill on the "Voyage and Shipwreck of St Paul," p. 11.

In the Epistle to the Colossians the apostle distinguishes him from Aristarchus, Marcus, and Jesus, surnamed Justus, who are expressly said to have been "of the circumcision;" and the conclusion seems inevitable that he must have been by birth a Gentile. The conclusion is confirmed by his bearing a Greek name, by his proficiency in the use of the Greek language, and by the peculiar kind of dedication with which he begins both of his histories. In this last respect he stands alone in the sacred Scriptures. All the other Scriptural histories begin, according to the Hebrew style, without any dedication; whereas both of his histories begin in the Greek and Roman fashion, and the dedication of the Gospel has been particularly noticed by learned men as an excellent specimen of classic writing. On these grounds it seems reasonable to conclude that he was a Greek or Gentile.

Whether he was a proselyte to the Jewish faith before he became a Christian, or whether he passed over at once from Paganism to Christianity, or whether he may have been, like Timothy, a Gentile by his father's side, through whom he obtained his Greek name and his knowledge of the Greek tongue, but with a Jewish mother, who imparted to him his extensive acquaintance with the peculiarities of the Jewish character, laws, customs, and religion, is a question which must be left unsettled; there are not sufficient data to determine it. It has been supposed that he was the anonymous disciple who is mentioned in his Gospel along with Cleopas as walking with our Lord to Emmaus, and there is not a question that the supposition gives emphasis to the expressions,

“Art thou only a stranger in Jerusalem, and knowest not?” or, “Art thou *the only stranger* in Jerusalem who hast not known the things which are come to pass there in these days?” “We trusted that it had been He which should have redeemed *Israel*.” But this is no more than a supposition.

The fact that he was a Gentile, or at least of Gentile extraction on the father's side, is all that can be definitely ascertained. Even to this conclusion exception is sometimes taken, on the ground that none of the books of Scripture can be believed to have been written by Gentiles. Yet no good reason can be assigned to show that the Holy Spirit should not employ Gentiles as well as Jews in writing the volume of Inspiration. If the Book of Job was written by Elihu, as some believe, we have at least one book of the Old Testament written by a Gentile. We have, at all events, two Old Testament books, the books of Ruth and Jonah, which treat of Gentiles in a way which plainly pre-intimated their participation of Gospel-privileges in the time of the Messiah. And, when Gentiles have been admitted into the Church, was it not most befitting that one of their number should be employed as the writer of that portion of the Scriptures which has recorded the fact of their admission into the Church, and the important events connected therewith? Is not the fact, that the middle wall of partition between Jews and Gentiles has been completely broken down, proved all the better, when we are not merely furnished with the history of it by a Gentile, but when we have two whole books of the New Testament, and these among the most important

of them, written by a Gentile, or the son of a Gentile? The mystery is now made known that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs with Jews, and of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ by the Gospel.

The fact is still further confirmed when, on turning to the books written by Luke, we find that they are both addressed to a person who, like himself, was evidently a Gentile. It was once very commonly believed that Theophilus, to whom both books are addressed, was a fictitious name, which ought to be taken according to its literal signification—"a friend of God"—as descriptive of any disciple, or as comprehensive of all disciples; to whom the books should therefore be considered as dedicated. This opinion must be set aside as altogether unwarrantable. It is not consistent with the practice of the sacred writers to introduce ideal characters into their narratives. The opinion that he was a Gentile rests on the most conclusive evidence. He was unquestionably a stranger to Palestine, for when the evangelist has occasion to mention any country-town he uniformly specifies its locality, which he would not have done had he been writing to a native of Palestine, or to a Jew: "A city of Galilee, named Nazareth;" "Capernaum, a city of Galilee;" "Arimathea, a city of the Jews." He also mentions that the country of the Gadarenes is "over against Galilee;" and, in the account of the two disciples to whom Christ showed Himself after His resurrection, he says, "They went to a village called Emmaus, which was from Jerusalem about threescore furlongs." In like manner he relates that,

after the resurrection, the disciples "returned to Jerusalem from the mount Olivet, which is from Jerusalem a Sabbath-day's journey." It is he also who gives the Greek name "Calvary," instead of the Hebrew "Golgotha," to the mount where our Lord was crucified. Clearly this particularity respecting localities and distances proves that Theophilus was neither a Jew nor a native of Palestine. That he was an Italian may be held to be almost certain. This conclusion rests upon the fact that, while Luke is particular in specifying the situation of places in other countries, he dismisses all this particularity in his references to the cities of Italy. In the outset of the voyage of Paul to Rome, he marks the situation of the different places passed or touched at by the vessel, but as soon as he approaches Sicily or Italy he names places, as may be seen in the last chapter of the Acts, without saying a word respecting their situation,—Syracuse, Rhegium, Puteoli, and even the Appii Forum, and the Three Taverns in Rome,—places which would certainly have required some geographical notice or description if Luke had not had every reason to know that Theophilus, as an Italian, perhaps a Roman, was intimately acquainted with them.

4, To conclude these notices of Luke, we have only to add that *the remainder of his history is involved in great uncertainty*. There are several ancient traditions respecting him preserved by the early ecclesiastical historians, but they are so contradictory that little or no reliance can be placed on them. It is indeed a pretty generally received opinion that he was a native of Antioch in Syria, and his references in

the Acts of the Apostles to Antioch are such as serve materially to corroborate the opinion. It has also been affirmed that he was a painter as well as a physician; but the tradition on which the affirmation rests is not older than the fourteenth century, and is wholly unworthy of credence. Very likely it originated in a misunderstanding of some rhetorical allusions to the pen-portraiture, so to speak, which occurs so often in his Gospel. By one of the Fathers it is said that he died unmarried, at the advanced age of eighty-four; and the statement is not unlikely to be correct, but *that* is all that can be said about it.

II. THE GOSPEL.

It has characteristics, not a few, which have attracted a very general and deeply-interested observation. We cannot examine them at length. Some of them we shall hardly do more than mention.

1. *It has much more of a strictly historical cast than the other gospels, and as a chronicle of the facts of the life of Christ it is also much more complete.* Its historical character is expressly announced in the dedication. Then, in the body of the Gospel, we meet with numerous historical references. The historical phrase, "It came to pass," occurs in it well-nigh as often as the word, "Then" in Matthew, and "Straightway" or "Immediately" in Mark. Dates are also often given. One occurs in the first chapter, "There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judea, a certain priest named Zacharias;" and another in the second, "And it came to pass in those days, that

there went out a decree from Cesar Augustus that all the world should be taxed ; and this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria ;” and again another in the third, “ Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Cesar, (Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of Iturea and of the region of Trachonitis, and Lysanias the tetrarch of Abilene, Annas and Caiaphas being high priests), the word of God came unto John, the son of Zacharias, in the wilderness.” Others of a more private kind occur still more frequently. The circumcision of the infant Jesus is said to have taken place “ eight days ” after his birth ; and the presentation in the temple, “ when the days of the purification according to the law of Moses were accomplished.” Anna is said to have been “ a widow of about fourscore and four years,” and to have lived with an husband “ seven years from her virginity.” Jesus is said to have been “ twelve years old ” when he went to the passover, where He signalised Himself among the doctors by His understanding and answers ; and to have been about “ thirty years of age ” when He was baptised by John in Jordan. The daughter of Jairus is said to have been “ about twelve years of age ;” the woman having an issue of blood to have suffered “ twelve years ” from it ; and the woman which had a spirit of infirmity to have been bowed together “ eighteen years.” The facts of ex-scriptural history are also adverted to with considerable frequency. We can but mention the references to Cesar Augustus and Tiberius Cesar, to the various branches of the family of Herod, and to

events like the census when Cyrenius was governor of Syria, the fall of the tower of Siloam, and the massacre by Pontius Pilate of the Galileans on occasion of their sacrificial services at a Jerusalem-festival. In addition to these things, the history begins at an earlier period than in the other Gospels. It begins "from the very first," so to speak. There is nothing elsewhere to correspond to the history of the first two chapters, which is singularly full. There is also great fulness of detail in what follows. Some parts are no doubt epitomised as compared with the accounts of Matthew and Mark ; but others are very circumstantial and minute, sometimes indeed as picturesquely graphic as the accounts of Mark ; and nearly nine whole chapters, recording the incidents and discourses of the final journey to Jerusalem, are quite original ; that is to say, they have no parallel in the other Gospels. The history is also carried beyond the resurrection to the ascension. It traces out, in short, the whole history of redemption in the life of Christ from its beginning to its end, and in this respect is, above all the rest, the *historical* Gospel.

2. *The profession of the evangelist as a physician has also left traces of its impress on this Gospel.* It is here that the first text from which Christ preached is given at length, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He hath anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor ; *He hath sent Me to heal the broken-hearted*, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord ;" and that the proverb, "*Physician, heal*

thyself," is recorded as having been quoted by Him in the course of His sermon on that text. It is here also that in the account of His teaching on one occasion the singular expression occurs, "The power of the Lord was present to *heal*;" and that in the commission given to the twelve and to the seventy—the commission to the seventy is only recorded in this Gospel—it is said, "He sent them to preach the kingdom of God and to *heal the sick*:" "And into whatsoever city ye enter, and they receive you, eat such things as are set before you, and *heal the sick that are therein*." Like the other Gospels, this Gospel also records the miracles of healing which our Lord preformed, but more numerous, as well as with more minuteness of detail,—sometimes of technical detail, or in a way which very plainly indicates the physician. The fever of Simon's wife's mother is described, according to an old scientific distinction in certain cases, as "*a great fever*;"* and as a physician, who had carefully inquired into the facts of the case, would naturally remark, He is said to have "*stood over her*," when He "*rebuked the fever*." The leper is described in medical terms as "*full of leprosy*." The paralytic is described as taken "*with a palsy*;"—in the original the word is technical, and, although not exactly translatable, may be rendered "*struck with paralysis*." The centurion's servant who was dear unto him is described as "*sick and ready to die*."

* In his treatise on the difference of fevers, Galen says that physicians were accustomed to distinguish fevers as the *great* and *small* fevers. (Και συνηθες ηδη τοις ιατροις ομομαζειν εντουτω γενει τας διαφορας τον μεγαν τε και μικρον πυρετον,—Quoted by Smith of Jordanhill, in his Dissertation on the Life and Writings of St Luke, p. 2.)

The woman who had an issue of blood twelve years is described as having "spent all her living upon physicians;" but without casting any reflection on "the profession," as is done in another Gospel-account of the case, it is simply added, "*Neither could she be healed of any.*"* The woman which had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years is described as "*bowed together,*" so that she "*could in no wise lift up herself.*" It is here we are told that, when the devil sought to destroy the demoniac out of whom he was expelled, he "*hurt him not;*" that when Jesus said of the daughter of Jairus, "She is not dead, but sleepeth," those who laughed Him to scorn "*knew that she was dead;*" that when He was in the garden of Gethsemane, "being in an agony, He prayed more earnestly, and *His sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground;*" and that when Peter smote the servant of the high priest, and cut off his right ear, Jesus answered and said, "Suffer ye thus far; and He touched his ear and *healed him.*" In fine, it is here that allusions to the healing virtue which flowed from, as it were, the very body of Christ, alone occur. "Somebody hath touched Me, for I perceive that *virtue is gone out of Me.*" "And the whole multitude sought to touch

* The account of the case in Mark is just what might be expected from a fisherman like Peter, in writing, at the time and on the spot, of the probably inferior physicians who practised among the comparatively poor and illiterate community of a fishing town or village;— "And a certain woman, which had an issue of blood twelve years, and *had suffered many things of many physicians, and had spent*"—wasted—squandered—thrown away—"all that she had, and was nothing bettered, but rather grew worse."

Him; for *there went virtue out of Him and healed them all.*" These notices may seem trivial enough when taken by themselves, and any thing in them that is professional is certainly not obtrusive, but in their aggregate they are not without importance; they bear a silent but not ineffective testimony to the genuineness of the Gospel; and they also serve to illustrate very satisfactorily the fidelity of the evangelist in ascertaining the facts of his narrative to the most minute particulars.

3. As yet another characteristic of this Gospel, it may be mentioned that *the influence of Paul over the mind of Luke is remarkably conspicuous in the spirit of it, in the very form of its expressions, and not infrequently, we may also venture to say, in the selection of the materials of which it is composed.* There is an old tradition, according to which Luke is said to have been little other than the amanuensis of Paul in the composition of it;* and it is sometimes alleged that when Paul refers to his Gospel, as he does in more than one of his epistles, the reference is to this Gospel, as drawn up by Luke, under his superintendence, if not dictation. It would appear that the old heretical sect of the Marcionites, who owned no apostolical authority but that of Paul, received this Gospel as his, and rejected all the others; and, on this account also, it has been held and described to be the Pauline Gospel. But the preface of the Gospel expressly contradicts the idea of its Pauline authorship.

* *Vide* Smith's Dissertation on the Gospels, p. lii., and on the Writings of St Luke, p. 45, for the references of the Fathers to this tradition.

It asserts that it was drawn up by the evangelist himself from the testimony of those who "*from the beginning were eye-witnesses* and ministers of the word;" and we know that Paul was not one of those authorities. It is, as it has been always designated, "*The Gospel according to Luke,*" not "The Gospel according to Paul." At the same time, the connexion of Luke with Paul does come out in various portions and references of the Gospel, indicating the similarity of thought and feeling which obtained between them, and perhaps also some direction and information on the part of Paul.

Every one who has examined the subject has observed the almost verbal coincidence between Luke and Paul in their accounts of the institution of the Lord's Supper, a coincidence which appears the more remarkable when it is compared with the accounts of the institution in Matthew and Mark. References to Jesus as the Saviour, to the free forgiveness of sins and justification in the righteousness of faith, to the person and work of the Holy Spirit, to the exercise of holy Christian joy, and to the duty of glorifying God in every incident and event, are also much more numerous in this Gospel than in any of the others; and every one knows that the epistles of Paul are full of these very topics.

It has been noticed, too, that a resemblance may be traced between the apostle and the evangelist in the predilection which they both evince for the use of triplets. The faith, hope, and charity—the work of faith, the labour of love, and the patience of hope,—the one body and the one spirit in the one hope,—the

one Lord, the one faith, and the one baptism,—the one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in all,—the of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things,—the being strengthened by the Spirit in the inner man, the being able to comprehend the love of Christ, and the being filled with all the fulness of God,—the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all ;—these and many other trinities of expression which occur in the epistles of Paul must be quite familiar. In Luke the same kind of triune statement not unfrequently occurs. It is by him that the people and the publicans and the soldiers are recorded to have, one after another, or three times over, asked John the Baptist, “Master, what shall we do?” It is by him that the parable of the lost sheep is recorded along with the other two,—with which, as joined by him in triple combination, we always connect it,—the parables of the lost piece of silver and the prodigal son. With Matthew, he relates how, in the illustrations of two men separated from one another in the field and two women separated from one another at the mill, Christ forecast the unexpected character of the all-decisive separations which shall be made on occasion of the final Advent, and then he again makes up the triplet in the record of the additional illustration, “I tell you in that night there shall be two men in one bed ; the one shall be taken, and the other shall be left.” With Matthew he also relates, how Christ said to one who offered to follow Him, “Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man hath not where to lay His head ;” and

to another who wished first to go and bury his father, "Let the dead bury their dead, but go thou and preach the kingdom of God;" and then he goes on to relate, in a third example, how, when "another also said, Lord, I will follow Thee; but let me first go bid them farewell which are at home at my house; Jesus said unto him, No man having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the Kingdom of God."

But we must refer the further examination of this parallel between Luke and Paul to private reading and research.* Too much may be made of it; we must beware of *that*; but at the same time it will be found neither uninteresting nor unimportant as attesting in its own significant manner the close assimilative friendship of Paul and Luke, and in this respect also the genuineness of the Gospel.

4. Let us proceed to elicit *the distinctive characteristic of this Gospel, so far as it respects the particular aspect in which it contemplates and exhibits the history of Christ to us.* And here we may say at once that, according to the cherubic symbol of the man-face with which we have already identified it, *it presents Christ as the Son of man, the partaker of a common humanity with man, and therefore the kinsman Redeemer of the human family without respect to national distinctions, or the ancient separation of Jews and Gentiles,—the Author of a common salvation for lost sinners every where,—the Saviour of the world.* And here, too, we may say, in a single sen-

* *Vide* the three songs of Mary, Zacharias, and Simeon: and examine, Luke vi. 32-34; xi 11-12, &c., in connection with Matthew v. 46-47; vii. 9-10, &c.

tence, that from this fact we can understand how the Spirit of God should have selected a Gentile to write this Gospel, and led him, too, to address it to a Gentile. Nothing could have been more befitting in the Gospel designed to set forth Christ as the Saviour, not of the Jews only, but of the Gentiles also.

Some illustrations of the distinctively human characteristic of the Gospel—they will be no more than suggestive—must here be offered. Any thing like an exhaustive exposition is at present quite impossible.

(1.) *Every stage in the development of the veritable humanity of Christ is recorded in this Gospel with the utmost particularity.* Here only do we find the salutation of Elisabeth, “Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is *the fruit of thy womb.*” Here only do we find “*the Babe* wrapped in swaddling clothes.” Here only do we read of “the circumcising of *the Child.*” Here only do we read that “the Child grew,” or, as it should be rendered, that “*the Lad* grew and waxed strong in spirit;” that “the grace of God was upon Him;” that, “when He was *twelve years old,*” “His parents” took Him with them to Jerusalem to “the feast of the passover;” that, after His interview with “the doctors” in the temple, “both hearing and asking them questions,” “He went down” again with His parents and “came to Nazareth, and *was subject to them;*” that He “*increased in wisdom and stature,* and in favour with God and man;” and that, when He was baptised by John, He “*began to be about thirty years of age.*” Nor do these notices of veritable humanity terminate with the development and attainment of His manhood. They are followed

up by others equally specific. These will be found in numerous passages on to the very end of the Gospel. To instance some of them:—Here only do we read of “the *paps* which he had *sucked*,” and of “the place where He had been *brought up* :” here only of His “*rejoicing in spirit* ;” of His “*weeping over the city* ;” and of His “*kneeling down*” in prayer; here only that in Gethsemane “there appeared an angel unto Him from heaven *strengthening Him*,” and that, “being *in an agony*, He prayed more earnestly, and *His sweat* was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground ;” here only that, like “*a righteous man*,” which the centurion is here said to have called Him, He cried with His latest breath, when expiring on the cross, “Father, into Thy hands I commend *My spirit* ;” and here only, that after His resurrection He once and again verified the reality of His resurrection-body to His disciples, by “*sitting at meat with them*,” by taking “a piece of broiled fish and of an honeycomb, and *eating it before them*,” and by bidding them “*handle*” Him to see that it was Himself,—as He is here also, and here only, reported to have said,—“*It is I Myself; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones as ye see Me have.*”

(2.) *The human dependence of Christ on God as expressed by Him in prayers and supplications is most faithfully recorded in this Gospel.* The other evangelists also advert to His prayerful exercises, but not by any means so frequently, or in the same connexion, or even with the same object. Here only are we told that He was praying when the Spirit descended

upon Him at His baptism : “ Now when all the people were baptized, it came to pass that Jesus also being baptized, *and praying*, the heaven was opened, and the Holy Ghost descended.” Here only are we told that, when He had to seek retirement from the multitudes which resorted to Him, He betook Himself to prayer : “ But so much the more went there a fame abroad of Him ; and great multitudes came together to hear and to be healed by Him of their infirmities. And He withdrew Himself into the wilderness, *and prayed.*” Here only are we told that His choice of the twelve apostles was made after a night of prayer : “ And it came to pass in those days that He went out into a mountain *to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God.* And when it was day, He called unto Him His disciples, and of them He chose twelve, whom also He named apostles.” Here only are we told that it was at a time when He was engaged in prayer that Peter confessed Him to be the Christ : “ And it came to pass, *as He was alone praying*, His disciples were with Him, and He asked them, saying, Whom say the people that I am ? They answering said, John the Baptist ; but some say, Elias, and others say that one of the old prophets is risen again. He said unto them, But whom say ye that I am ? Peter answering said, The Christ of God.” Here only are we told that the Transfiguration occurred when He was praying : “ And it came to pass about an eight days after these things, He took Peter and John and James, and went up into a mountain to pray. And *as He prayed*, the fashion of His countenance was altered, and His raiment was white and glistening.” Here only are

we told that when He gave His disciples a pattern of prayer, in what is commonly called the Lord's Prayer, He had just before been giving them a pattern of prayer in His own example: "And it came to pass that, *as He was praying in a certain place*, when He ceased, one of His disciples said unto Him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples. And He said unto them, When ye pray, say, Our Father which art in heaven." Here only are we told of His prayer for Peter, "Simon, Simon, Satan hath desired to have you that he may sift you as wheat; but *I have prayed for thee* that thy faith fail not;" and of His repeated prayers in Gethsemane, "*He prayed more earnestly*;" and of His prayers when on the cross, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do;" "Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit." Nor is it only in these records of His own personal prayers that this Gospel evinces the spirit of prayer by which He was possessed and animated; it records His instructions on prayer more fully than any of the other Gospels. It is here only that we have the parable of the person who applied at midnight to a neighbour for the loan of three loaves, because a friend had unexpectedly arrived on a visit; the parable of the importunate widow; and the parable of the Pharisee and the publican; all bearing on the duty and the character of prayer. And it is here only that we also have the injunction repeated twice over to the disciples in Gethsemane, "Pray that ye enter not into temptation." "Why sleep ye? Rise and pray, lest ye enter into temptation." The Gospel has, in fact, been called *the Gospel of prayer*, and as

such it is emphatically the Gospel of humanity, of universal humanity ; and in this connexion it is worth while to notice and to remember that it is *the Gospel of the humanity of Christ*.

(3.) *The reality of His human sympathies and affections is brought out in this Gospel in a very great variety of most interesting details.* We can only condescend on some of these details ; but our selection will be made so as to assist a personal and more minute examination.

Take His affection for *children*. Other evangelists tell us how graciously He regarded them ; but Luke commonly adduces some additional circumstance which discovers a tenderness in His regard, very touching as well as human. For example, we learn from him that they were infants to whom our Lord gave His blessing on that memorable occasion, when He so winningly evinced Himself to be the children's Saviour : " And they brought unto Him also *infants* that He would touch them." We also learn from him that the daughter of Jairus, who was miraculously restored to life, was an only child : Matthew and Mark, as well as Luke, relate the miracle, but Luke alone mentions the fact in question : " For he had *one only daughter*, about twelve years of age, and she lay a-dying." A similar notice occurs in his account of the miracle wrought on the demoniac child, at the foot of the Mount of Transfiguration. Both Matthew and Mark relate this miracle also ; but Luke alone records the appeal with which the father of the child followed up his petition on its behalf, " Master, I beseech Thee, look upon my son, for he is *mine only child*." At

once we see in these and other tender references to children, only to be found in Luke, how the facts mentioned in them must have told on the human affection of our Lord; and can we wonder that the Gospel which contains them, containing as it also does the narrative of the Baptist's and the Saviour's childhood, should have been called "the children's Gospel?"

Women also appear in this Gospel to have shared in the affectionate regard of our Lord; and most certainly He appears to have largely shared in theirs. Those who ministered unto Him of their substance are here introduced to us by name: they are not named in the same connexion elsewhere: "*Certain women* which had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities, *Mary*, called Magdalene, out of whom went seven devils; and *Joanna* the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward; and *Susanna*, and many others, which ministered unto Him of their substance." Martha and Mary, the one cumbered about much serving, the other sitting at Jesus' feet, and hearing His word, are also for the first time introduced to us in this Gospel; and although we meet with them again in another Gospel, the account of them here is at once peculiar and unique: "*Martha, Martha*, thou art careful and troubled about many things; but one thing is needful; and *Mary* hath chosen that good part which shall not be taken away from her." It is in this Gospel that we read how, as He was speaking on one occasion, *a certain woman* lifted up her voice and said, "Blessed is the womb that bare Thee, and the paps which Thou hast sucked." And it is in this Gospel, too, that we read how, on a Sabbath-day,

He healed a woman which had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years, and how, when He was blamed for doing it on that day, He vindicated Himself in those telling yet touching words, "And ought not *this woman*, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan hath bound, lo, these eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath-day?" And again, it is in this Gospel that we read how women followed Him to the cross, and how He turned and said to them so tenderly, "*Daughters* of Jerusalem, weep not for Me, but weep for yourselves and for your children; for behold the days are coming in which they shall say, Blessed are the barren, and the wombs which never bare, and the paps which never gave suck." These notices, along with others, such as of Mary and Elisabeth, are all to be found, and only to be found in Luke; and they are quite in place in this distinctively human Gospel, demonstrating, as they do so finely, how the human heart of Christ went out in kindest affection and sympathy as occasion called.

He further appears in this Gospel to have shown a particularly tender and compassionate regard to *widows*. We do not refer to the attractively interesting story of Anna, "*a widow of about fourscore and four years*;" because, although we only read of her in this Gospel, she is introduced into it for the sake of showing, not His interest in her, but hers in Him. There are but three notices to which we shall advert. It is in this Gospel only that we find His first sermon at Nazareth with its reference in point: "But I tell you of a truth, *many widows* were in Israel in the days of Elias, when the heaven was shut up three years

and six months, when great famine was throughout all the land ; but unto none of them was Elias sent, save unto Sarepta, a city of Sidon, unto *a woman that was a widow.*" It is in this Gospel only that we find the parable of the unjust judge who was constrained by her importunity to do justice to a widow, because "he said within himself, Though I fear not God, nor regard man ; yet because *this widow* troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me." And again, it is in this Gospel only that we meet with the widow of Nain, whose touching story is told in such a way as most truly corresponds to the *humanness* of the Gospel. First, we are told that the "dead man," her son, who was "carried out" to be buried, was "*the only son of his mother;*" and we see at once how this was fitted to awaken in Christ the truest and the tenderest sympathy. Then we are told that "she was a *widow,*" an additional circumstance which could not fail to affect Him most deeply in His human sensibilities. Then again, we are told that "*when the Lord saw her He had compassion on her;*" and here we see how "the eye affecteth the heart," stirring up the fountain of benignant feeling, and making it overflow in the exercise of the most effective loving-kindness. And then again, after the resuscitation of the young man, we are told of the issue in the simple intimation, so exquisitely picturesque, so inimitably expressive of the finest human tenderness—" *And He delivered him to his mother.*" These notices, peculiar as they are to Luke, are most characteristic of him ; and in their way they also serve to unveil the out-

goings in most benevolent and blessed sympathy of the human heart of Christ.

Again, in this Gospel, *the poor* are shown to have been particularly and compassionately noticed by our Lord. Let the beatitudes be noticed in this connexion. In Matthew they are given in their deeper and more spiritual sense—"Blessed are the poor *in spirit*;" "Blessed are they that *mourn*;" "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst *after righteousness*;" but here more pointedly and plainly, and in this respect also more truly human, as well as more truly gracious, "Blessed be *ye poor*, for *yours* is the kingdom of God;" "Blessed are *ye* that *hunger* now, for *ye* shall be filled;" "Blessed are *ye* that *weep* now, for *ye* shall *laugh*." Let the injunction given at a chief Pharisee's table respecting feasts, as only to be found here, be also noticed—"When thou makest a feast, call *the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind*, and thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee, for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just." Let the parables for the poor, as we find them here, be noticed too; the human benevolence to be seen in them is so very gracious. There is the parable of the marriage-supper. The parable is also to be found in Matthew, but in regal form. Here it is purely human; and it gives at length—what Matthew omits, or puts in a most indefinite form—the command to gather in the poor for guests, when those who had been first invited refused the invitation, "Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither *the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind*." And then there is the

parable of the beggar Lazarus. The parable is to be found in no other Gospel. With what interest must the poor regard it. Can any but be thrilled by its simple story—"And it came to pass that *the beggar* died, and *was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom.*" "*Now he is comforted.*" All these references to the poor are most certainly here in place. It is from this Gospel we chiefly learn how for our sakes Christ Himself became poor,—"*laid in a manger*" at His' birth,—the sacrifice of poverty offered at His presentation, "according to that which is said in the law of the Lord, *A pair of turtle doves, or two young pigeons;*" and with these and other analogous notices of His humble life as here recorded, we cannot be surprised to find so many notices of His brotherly-kindness for the poor, illustrating and exemplifying, most expressively as they do, the fulfilment of His mother's song, which is also to be found here only—"He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted *them of low degree.* He hath filled *the hungry* with good things, and the rich He hath sent empty away."

To *outcasts* also He is seen in this Gospel to have manifested a most graciously benevolent regard. We might here refer to His friendly recognition of publicans, so abhorred as they were, on account of their professional character and occupation, by all the Jews. The parable of *him who stood afar off* in the temple, and with downcast eyes smote upon his breast, saying, "*God be merciful to me a sinner,*" is in this Gospel only. The story of *Zaccheus*, who "received him joyfully" when He offered to become his guest, is also

in this Gospel only. But we pass from these and other distinctively peculiar references to various notices of His tender-heartedness to those who were even more despised, and deservedly despised. It is in this Gospel only that we find the story of "*a woman in the city, which was a sinner,*" with its touching record of her humble penitence at His feet, and His gracious acceptance of her love and forgiveness of her sin. And it is in this Gospel only that we find that "Gospel within the Gospel," the parable of *the prodigal son*, with its inimitable portraiture of his profligacy, degradation, repentance, and welcome home. And, again, it is in this Gospel only that we find, what has been to many dying and despairing sinners the most blessed gospel-memoir in the Bible, the memoir of the penitent "*malefactor*" on the cross, with that humble prayer of his, so heart-affecting, "Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom;" and that soul-thrilling answer of our Lord's, so very, very gracious, "Verily, I say unto thee, to-day shalt thou be with Me in paradise." These various notices, as found only in this Gospel, are most remarkably distinctive; and he must be very slow of apprehension who does not discern, as reflected in them, the tenderly gracious exercises of that human heart, of which this Gospel is so much the mirror.

(4.) Once more, *in this Gospel the catholic relations of His humanity come out in very numerous references and incidents.*

Look at the table of His genealogy as it is here recorded. In Matthew it traces up His ancestry in

the *legal* line to *Abraham*, and there it stops: it is a strictly Jewish genealogy. Here it holds to the *natural* line; and, to show His relation to the entire family of man, runs up to the common father of the race in *Adam*, the first of men: it is a purely human genealogy. The first shows His relation to the nation, the second His relation to the world.

Look also at the parables as they are here recorded. The very *form* in which they begin is characteristic. Those which are recorded by Matthew, bearing as they do upon the royal dignity of Christ, begin, "The kingdom of heaven is like." "The kingdom of heaven is like unto a man which sowed good seed in his field." "The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard-seed." "The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven." "The kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field." "The kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchantman seeking goodly pearls."* In Luke, on the other hand, the royal formula is never used; every one begins with a distinctively human reference. "And the Lord said, Whereunto then shall I liken *the men* of this generation?" "A certain *man* went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves." "The ground of a certain rich *man* brought forth plentifully." "A certain *man* had a fig-tree planted in his vineyard." "What *man* of you, having an hundred sheep." "A certain *man* had two sons." "There was a certain rich *man*, which had a steward."

* There are but three parables in all, as given by Matthew, which do not begin with this peculiar form; but even in them there are royal references both characteristic and significant.

“There was a certain rich *man*, which was clothed in purple and fine linen.” The difference between the two Gospels in this respect may be still more impressively recognised by a comparison of such parables as happen to be contained in both. Take the parable of the Gospel-supper. As given by Matthew, it begins, “The kingdom of heaven is like unto a *certain king* which made a marriage for his son, and sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding;” whereas in Luke it begins, entirely stripped of its royal references, “A *certain man* made a great supper, and bade many.” That both expressions were used by our Lord on different occasions—sometimes the one, and sometimes the other—is not unlikely to be true; but whether or not, that which occurs in Luke most aptly answers to the object of his Gospel, as characteristically the Gospel of the Son of man. The *contents* of the parables, as recorded by him, will also be found to be as thoroughly characteristic in their human catholicity. Take the parables of the good Samaritan, of the rich man whose ground^e brought forth plentifully, of the prodigal son, of the rich man and Lazarus, of the importunate widow, of the Pharisee and the publican,—all of them peculiar to this Gospel,—and whether they be viewed in their outward form or in their specific meaning, it will be seen at a glance that their teaching is generically human, looking out on man as man, apart from national and sectarian connections,—in his catholic relations to the world at large.

And here, to conclude these references, look at the frequency with which the Gospel notices every thing

which bears a gracious aspect to the Gentiles. It is certainly not exclusive in this respect. It does not fail to notice gracious references to the Jews as well. It is quite catholic in its regards. Here are a few of the Jewish references: "And many of *the children of Israel* shall He turn to the Lord their God." "And the Lord God shall give unto Him *the throne of His father David.*" "Blessed be *the Lord God of Israel*, for He hath visited and redeemed His people." "And the glory of *Thy people Israel.*" "And ought not this woman, being *a daughter of Abraham*, whom Satan hath bound, lo, these eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath-day?" "This day is salvation come to this house, forso-much as he also is *a son of Abraham.*" "O *Jerusalem, Jerusalem*, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not." "If *thou* hadst known, *even thou*, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace." But the references to the Gentiles are much more numerous; and they are also most expressive. Here is the song of Zacharias, in which he welcomes the rise of "the day-spring," "to give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death." Here is the annunciation to the shepherds of the birth of Christ, "Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to *all people.*"* Here "just and devout

* This, it is true, may be rendered, "To all the people;" but still, even if it should not be considered as referring immediately to the Gentiles, the expression is characteristically human.

Simeon" speaks of the salvation of God in Christ as "prepared before the face of *all people, a Light to lighten the Gentiles.*" Here, in quoting from Isaiah the prediction regarding John the Baptist as "the voice of one crying in the wilderness,"—while Matthew and Mark stop short with the words, "Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make His paths straight,"—Luke completes the quotation, as looking out most benignantly on the Gentile world, "Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low, and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways shall be made smooth; and *all flesh* shall see the salvation of God." Here we have the discourse in the synagogue at Nazareth, in which our Lord so much provoked His townsmen by quoting the proverb, "No prophet is accepted in his own country," and reminding them in proof how, as typically predictive of His own case, the prophets Elias and Eliseus were sent on different occasions to bless Gentiles in preference to Jews: "But I tell you of a truth, many widows were in Israel in the days of Elias, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, when great famine was throughout all the land; but *unto none of them was Elias sent, save unto Sarepta, a city of Sidon*, unto a woman that was a widow. And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Eliseus, and none of them was cleansed saving *Naaman the Syrian.*" Here we have His rebuke of James and John when they proposed to consume with fire from heaven the village of the Samaritans, in which He was not received, because His face was as though He should go to Jerusalem,

“Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. For the Son of man is not come to destroy men’s lives” —how truly catholic His grace—“not come to destroy *men’s* lives, but to save them.” Here we read of “the times of the Gentiles”—that is, the times appointed for the full inbringing of the Gentiles along with the Jews into the Church of Christ: “And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations; and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, *until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.*” Here, in a word, we read of Jews and Gentiles being both addressed by the Gospel in the message of its mercy: “And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name, *among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.*” All these references to the Gentiles, as they are to be found only in this Gospel, are at once seen to be in their proper place, when we remember that Luke was a Gentile, and that he wrote his Gospel to a Gentile, and that his object was to exhibit Christ as the Son of man in His broad relations to the family of man, or as the kinsman-Redeemer, not of the Jews only, but of the Gentiles also.

And now, to wind up the examination of this Gospel, let us seek to *make a practical use of the view of Christ as seen to be presented by it.* It is not enough that we are able to trace the specific features of His character and life as they are here exhibited. We must receive into our heart and home the glorious One who is thus revealed; and we must look at Him, and look at Him again and again, until,

by the contemplation, we are transformed into His very likeness, until "we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." The Gospel has not been written to please our sense of beauty, or our emotions of taste and tender feeling; the object it has in view is our salvation,—our deliverance from sin,—our conformity to Christ,—our preparation for heaven.

In the study of it, as we have it here, let us therefore remember that its exhibition of Him, as the Son of man, is designed to show us what *we* should be as men,—*that as He was, so should we be in the world.* Let *children* look at Him,—the Child subject to His parents, and attending with them on the ordinances of God,—and learn a lesson of youthful piety and filial duty. Let *men* look at Him when on His knees,—at His baptism,—in choosing His apostles,—on the mountain apart,—in all circumstances, and on all occasions,—and learn that "men ought always to pray, and not to faint." Let *all* look at Him in the exercise of His human sympathy and compassion, and learn to be kind one to another, tender-hearted, pitiful, compassionate, merciful,—look at Him as the Saviour born unto "all people," "a Light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of His people Israel;" and learn to send the Gospel to both, Jews and Gentiles, so that they and we may share alike in the "common salvation" bestowed by Him.

In fine, let us "come unto God by Him," "the Man Christ Jesus," the one only Mediator. Let us hear Him say in answer to the prayer of the ancient Church, "O that Thou wert as my brother, that

sucked the breasts of my mother,"—"Behold, I am according to thy wish ; I also am formed out of the clay : behold My terror shall not make thee afraid, neither shall My hand be heavy upon thee ;" and as we believingly contemplate Him in this character, we shall find that He grows upon us, and that we ourselves grow in the contemplation of Him ; insomuch that,—while, as here seen in Luke to be the Son of man, He may be truly said to have become like us, —we at length may also be said to become like Him, as next He is seen in John to be the Son of God, warranting us then to say in the lively hope of the most jubilant expectation, "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God ; therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew Him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God ; and it doth not yet appear what we shall be ; but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him ; for we shall see Him as He is. And *every man* that hath this hope in Him purifieth himself, even as He is pure."

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JOHN.

LIKE the first of the Gospels, the last was written by an apostle. All the Gospels are the product of one and the same inspiration—the inspiration of the Holy Ghost. We receive them as alike of Divine authority. At the same time the *apostolical* Gospels have special claims on our attention. They were written by eye-witnesses, and in this respect their testimony is particularly valuable and welcome.

On this account we turn with special interest to an examination of the Gospel according to John. We not unreasonably expect to be well rewarded by the examination of it.

I. THE EVANGELIST.

Perhaps he is as well known to the Christian Church as any of the apostles. Even the Apostle Paul cannot be said to be better known. Hence in our notices we need not condescend to minute details. We shall confine ourselves to but a sketch of his history and character.

1. *His history* may be summed up in a few brief

sentences. He appears to have been born of respectable parentage in Bethsaida of Galilee.

We know nothing of his father, who was named Zebedee, except that he was a fisherman in apparently good circumstances; at least he was proprietor of the boat in which he carried on his avocation, and he had a number of hired servants or assistants in his employment.

Salome, the wife of Zebedee, appears to better advantage in the Gospel history. She is mentioned, along with other women of good standing in society, as having ministered to Jesus of her wealth or substance; and to her honour it is further related that she followed Him to the cross, and that she also accompanied the Marys on the morning of the resurrection with sweet spices and ointments, which she and they had bought to anoint His body in the sepulchre. Doubtless she was a singularly godly woman; and, as a wife and mother, an eminent blessing to her household.

John, the second of her sons, was at first one of the disciples of John the Baptist; but, true to his office and functions as but the forerunner of the Messiah, that prophet-preacher directed him to "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world;" and he then became a follower of the Lamb, to whom, in some way or other, probably by his natural disposition and the warmth of his attachment, he made himself so dear that he is commonly known as "the beloved disciple," or "the disciple whom Jesus loved." At the institution of the Lord's Supper, he "was leaning on Jesus' bosom;" that is, he was honoured with the

place next to Jesus, and on several other occasions he was also admitted by Him, along with his brother James and the Apostle Peter, into special confidence and fellowship ;—they were the chosen witnesses of the raising of the daughter of Jairus, of the transfiguration, and of the agony in Gethsemane. Like the rest of the disciples, he gave way to faint-heartedness on occasion of the apprehension of his Master ; but, with Peter, he soon rallied, and we find him true thereafter,—present at the trial in the palace of the high priest, to whom he seems to have been personally known ; and again at the crucifixion, where, as he stood with Mary, the mother of Jesus, beside the cross, Jesus commended her to his care, and we are told that he “took her unto his own home.” His acquaintanceship with the high priest, and his having a house of his own, may be here noticed in evidence of his occupying a good social position, probably better than his fellow-disciples.

After the resurrection and ascension of our Lord, he appears to have been associated for some time with the Apostle Peter in evangelistic labours ; but, while many of Peter’s words and sermons have been preserved, not one sermon, not one word, of his remains. Except as he is found in company with Peter, we have no Scriptural record of his discourses or of his labours anywhere.

Tradition endeavours to make up in some measure for this silence of the Scripture. We learn from it that during the persecution of the Emperor Domitian, he was banished to the island of Patmos, where he wrote the Apocalypse, as is stated in the beginning of

the Apocalypse itself. It further relates that he ultimately became a bishop of the Church of Ephesus, and died there in extreme old age. Various interesting incidents in his history, some of them evidently authentic, and others somewhat doubtful, are also preserved by it, but we cannot detail them here ; they will be found in the ordinary ecclesiastical histories of the early ages.

2. *His character* may be thought worthy of a passing reference. The ideal generally formed of him is that he was a soft, tender, almost femininely affectionate spirit. The painters have plainly had to do with this impression of him, which is not quite sustained by the view to be obtained of his character from Scripture.

There are two incidents in his earlier history, as found in the Gospels, which are not very honourable to him. The one is the request preferred to Christ by him and his brother, or by his mother in their name, for a princely pre-eminence in the Gospel-kingdom ; and the other is the request, again preferred by him and his brother, for permission to bring down fire from heaven in order to consume a village of the Samaritans, which refused a shelter on one occasion to their Master. Unquestionably there is abundant evidence to show that, notwithstanding these indications of the natural spirit, he was a most loving-hearted man. It is impossible to read his writings without discovering evidences of a profound intensity of affection which well entitles him to be regarded as the Apostle of love. Very probably this was one of the things which so much endeared him to his Master.

But the feebleness or effeminacy too frequently ascribed to him has no foundation in fact, at least in Scripture. We find him and his brother James surnamed by our Lord, Boanerges, "sons of thunder;" and if there was any correspondence between them and the name, we cannot associate the idea of feebleness or softness with them. We also find in his Gospel and in his Epistles the evidences of a severe moral earnestness which are utterly inconsistent with any thing of the kind. It is he who records these solemn words concerning the unbeliever, "The wrath of God abideth on him." It is he also who records these other very fearful words concerning Judas, "One of you is a devil."—"None of them is lost but the son of perdition." And in his Epistles, so redolent of love, he likewise speaks most vehemently and energetically against heretics and seducers, "Who is a liar, but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ?" "He is Antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son." "If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed; for he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds." It may be added that the traditionary incidents of his apostolical life, which have been handed down from the earliest ages, are quite in keeping with what may be gathered of his character from these and other references.

Altogether it would appear that, while it would be too much to affirm, with some, that he was a vehement and passionate, he was nevertheless a vigorous and energetic character, full of affection, but as full of mental and moral power, transformed by the grace of

God into a model of Christian loveliness, yet not the less, but all the more, a model of Christian manliness as well. From the grandeur of his conceptions in respect of God—of the Divine being, character, and ways—he is commonly called John the divine; and as such he was certainly in no sense a weakling—he was as masculine in intellect as he was affectionate in heart.

II. THE GOSPEL.

It is hardly necessary to say that this is, perhaps with most, the favourite Gospel.

One has called it "The heart of Christ." Another has said of it, "The hand of an angel has written it."* A modern writer has said of it, almost as enthusiastically, "Our fourth Gospel stands out from among the other three pre-eminent, as the Sabbath or feast-day in Israel among the days of the week, as the office of the priesthood among the functions of the Levites, or like the gleaning of the grapes of Ephraim, which was *better than the vintage of Abiezer.*"†

Let us turn from these and other testimonies to examine the Gospel for ourselves. We shall require to touch but briefly on the various points in it,—there are so many,—which present themselves for our consideration.

1. *It is generally believed that Ephesus, where John is said to have lived and laboured in his latter days,*

* Ernesti and Herder, quoted by Tholuck in his Commentary on the Gospel of John, p. 21.

† "The Four Witnesses," by Da Costa, p. 275.

was the place of its publication. Several of the fathers bear testimony to this effect, and there is no reason to doubt their testimony. From the Gospel itself, we can easily gather that it must have been written at a distance from Judea. Two facts may be noticed here in proof: first, that the Evangelist uniformly names the Jewish people "the Jews," a designation very seldom used by the other evangelists, who commonly call them "the people," or "the multitude;" and secondly, that, when he has occasion to refer to customs or circumstances peculiar to Judea or the Jews, he generally explains them; as in the account of the marriage in Cana of Galilee, where he says, "There were set there six water-pots of stone, *after the manner of the purifying of the Jews*, containing two or three firkins a-piece;" and again, in the account of the interview between our Lord and the woman of Samaria, where he parenthetically interjects such pieces of information as, When Jesus "left Judea, and departed again into Galilee," "*He must needs go through Samaria;*" "*The Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans.*" These and many similar explanations plainly show that the Gospel must have been published in some other country than Judea, for there they were not required; and we may therefore admit the traditionary reference of its publication to Ephesus.

2. Again, *it is commonly believed to have been written at a date posterior to the destruction of Jerusalem;* and by some of those who are given to the investigation of such subjects, it is even said to have been the latest of the New Testament writings.

The specification of Jewish localities in the past

tense, as if they were no longer extant, may be thus accounted for: "Bethany *was* nigh unto Jerusalem;" "He went forth with His disciples over the brook Cedron, where *was* a garden;" "Now in the place where He was crucified there *was* a garden." It is true that the pool of Bethesda is spoken of in the present tense, "Now there *is* at Jerusalem by the sheep-market, a pool, which is called in the Hebrew tongue Bethesda;" but there is historical evidence to prove that this pool remained long after the destruction of Jerusalem, so that the exceptional character of the reference to it seems intentional, and may be taken to be confirmatory of the fact that it still remained while other localities had been swept away by the ravages of war.*

Other peculiarities may be similarly accounted for. For example, it is only in this Gospel that Peter is named in the incidents of Gethsemane as the disciple who smote the high priest's servant with the sword, and that Malchus is said to be the name of that servant. The action was criminal, and, so long as the mention of names in connexion with it would have exposed any one to danger, they were prudently suppressed. That they occur here would seem to intimate that the record was not likely to endanger Peter in any way; if he was not dead, there was at least no risk of his undergoing a criminal prosecution in Jerusalem. Again, it is only in this Gospel that the resurrection of Lazarus is recorded. At first it seems difficult to account for the omission of so extraordinary a miracle from the other Gospels; but when we are told that the chief priests

* *Vide* Treffrey on the Eternal Sonship, p. 212.

consulted that they might put Lazarus as well as Jesus to death, we see at once how the public record of it would have exasperated them still more against him ; and how, from a regard to his safety, and that of his sisters, it was left to merely oral publication till the power of the priesthood was at an end, and Jerusalem destroyed. Once more, there is no mention in this Gospel of our Lord's predictions respecting the destruction of Jerusalem and the dispersion of the Jews, and it appears reasonable to conclude that this was owing to their having already been fulfilled.

After all, the main interest connected with the date of publication is the value imparted by the lateness of it to the Gospel. As the last of the Gospels, and although not last in order of the books of the New Testament, as one of the last of them, if not the last of them, in point of date, what a claim has its representation of the Saviour on our regard ; and with what importance is its testimony invested when, in its substance, it addresses us for God in what may be thus regarded as the farewell words of inspiration, "This is My beloved Son, hear ye Him."

3. *It is very generally believed to have been written for Christians as such.* On this account it evidently occupies its appropriate position as the last in order of the Gospels. The Gospel according to Matthew was written for Christian Jews ; the Gospel according to Mark for Christian proselytes ; the Gospel according to Luke for Christian Gentiles ; but when Jerusalem was destroyed, and the Jewish nationality broken up by the dispersion, these, along with other peculiar distinctions, were soon lost in the oneness of

the catholic Christian brotherhood ; and hence this Gospel,—the Gospel according to John,—was written for Christians in their catholic relations, and is therefore distinguished by quite a different kind of characteristics from the former ; by characteristics which are certainly not Jewish, or Gentile, or transitional, but, if we may so put it, positively Christian, purely Christian.

4. *It will be universally acknowledged that the characteristics of this Gospel are in general somewhat prominent.* We may proceed to notice a few of the most inviting as well as most outstanding.

1. *There is no mention made in the Gospel of the author's name.* In this respect his modesty is strikingly apparent. The same modesty is, no doubt, observable in the other evangelists, who are similarly distinguished for their self-obliviousness ; only here, although perhaps not so much thought of—for every reader has been taught to recognise the writer through the veil of his concealment—it is more carefully, and, as it were, more studiously sustained. For example, while the twelve are freely enough spoken of as such, the list of their names is never given, so that in this way he completely escapes the necessity of naming himself in connexion with them. Then when occasions occur in which he has to speak of himself, he does it in the well-known general and indefinite expressions, “ One of the two,” “ That other disciple,” “ The disciple whom Jesus loved.” In the same way he never, like the other evangelists, distinguishes his former master as the Baptist ; he simply calls him John, as if, in his idea, there was not another of the

same name that deserved to be known or distinguished from him.

Nor can this be ascribed to indifference respecting the identification of particular persons, for he is most specific in this respect: Simon Peter is distinguished by him from Simon Zelotes; Thomas always receives from him his surname Didymus; and he never has occasion to mention any of the two Judases, but he is most careful to specify which of them he means. Hence it is quite impossible to refer his self-concealment to any thing but that modest reserve by which, in fact, all the Scriptural writers are more or less distinguished, and for which they are so much and so justly celebrated. He was a genuine disciple of that Master who was meek and lowly in heart, and in whom that old prediction was, in its truest sense, most faithfully fulfilled—"He shall not strive, nor cry, nor cause His voice to be heard in the streets."

2. *There are various remarkable peculiarities in the language of this Gospel.* The narrative-expression, "And it came to pass," so common in the other Gospels, never once occurs in it; but others are employed, some of them quite new, and many of them in a sense which is both peculiar and profound. Of new expressions—expressions which occur nowhere else—we may specify the "Only-begotten," as applied to Christ, and the "Comforter," as applied to the Holy Spirit. The expression, "Lifted up," as applied to the crucifixion of Christ—"The Son of man must be lifted up"—"And I, if I be lifted up"—is also peculiar to this Gospel; no other Bible writer uses it. Of other expressions which, if not quite peculiar to

this Gospel, are certainly employed in it with singular frequency or with peculiar significance, we may specify "The Word," "the Life," "the Light," "the Lamb," "the glory," "grace and truth," "coming to God," and "going to God," "drawn by the Father," and "given by the Father."

How the Evangelist should have been led to employ these and many other expressive words and phrases is a matter of interesting inquiry, but this is not the place to enter on it. It is not likely that he coined them for himself. It is more than likely that they were current in the theological diction of his day, and that they came originally from the Scriptures of the Old Testament. Be this as it may, it is enough to have thus mentioned them. The simple reference may obtain for them a greater interest, a more marked attention.

3. *There is in this Gospel a constant intermingling of reflective commentary with the narrative.* In this respect it differs considerably from the other Gospels. Matthew, Mark, and Luke are mere historians; they put on record the various acts, and incidents, and discourses which make up their narratives, without adding any reflections of their own; whereas John, in a way which does not infringe, however, upon the purely objective nature of his narration, is ever looking into it and thinking over it; and we have the historical record and the expository reflection so much interwoven with one another, that it is sometimes difficult to separate them by any line of demarcation.

The double "Verily," which must be quite familiar

as so often occurring in it, is here in point. It does not appear from the other Gospels that our Lord was in the way of repeating the Verily of His affirmations as John repeats it. The second of John's Verilies is accordingly believed by some to be his own,—the response of his faith to the faithfulness of his Lord, like the instantaneous echo by the rocks of a peal of thunder.

We may further instance the following passages as illustrative of the way in which, as the commentator, he continually inserts remarks of his own in the record. When, as the historian, he reports the words of Jesus, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up;" as the commentator, he adds, "But He spake of the temple of His body: when therefore He was risen from the dead, His disciples remembered that He had said this unto them; and they believed the Scripture, and the word which Jesus had said." Again, when, as the historian, he records the words of Jesus to Nicodemus, "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life;" as the commentator, he immediately follows them with that magnificent exposition, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life:—for God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved." Then again, when, as the historian, he records the words of Jesus in the temple on the last day of the feast of tabernacles, "If

any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink ;” as the commentator he at once adds, in most satisfactory exposition, “But this spake He of the Spirit, which they that believe on Him should receive ; for the Holy Ghost was not yet given ; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.” In the same way, when he reports the singular speech of Caiaphas, “Ye know nothing at all, nor consider that it is expedient for us that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not ;” he again appends the commentary, “And this spake he not of himself ; but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation ; and not for that nation only, but that also He should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad.”

It must not be supposed that this system of commentary is carried on to such an extent as in any way to overlay or damage the properly historical character of the Gospel. The truth is, that in some respects it is the most historical of the Gospels. Its record of incidents and events is singularly exact, and the minuteness of its details is marvellously complete. It is so particular in its dates, that the calculations of chronologists respecting the period of our Lord’s ministry are all made up from it. From none of the other Gospels could it be ascertained that that ministry extended over three full years, or about three years and a half. It is, in short, as historically real as any of the Gospels. The artless simplicity, the unconscious delicacy, of its particularisations is every way as striking ; and we must not allow the accuracy of its narrative—it is plainly that of a most attentive eye-

witness—to be challenged, or in any way called in question. At the same time, it is quite proper that we should notice the outcome of its author's peculiar subjectivity in the ever-recurring commentary of exposition and reflection which so much distinguishes it from the other Gospels, and which has not infrequently led cursory readers and shallow thinkers to represent it as incapable of reconciliation with them. Let this, together with its other characteristics, be properly regarded in the examination of it, and the apparent discrepancy between its representations and those of the other Gospels, of which so much has been attempted to be made, will be found to disappear.

(4.) *There is unquestionably a special object to be served by this Gospel, which accounts for the peculiar form and substance of its representations.*

Every author has a purpose in view when he sets himself to write, whether on one topic or another; and the discovery of that purpose must shed a flood of light on his production, must serve as a key to open up his meaning in every part of it, in every page and sentence of it. Accordingly it is a matter of considerable importance to discover the particular object of John in the publication of this Gospel, and we may be prepared to learn that it has been most thoroughly investigated.

[1.] *By some it is supposed to have been polemical.* They allege that the Evangelist meant to combat various heresies respecting the person of Christ which had been broached and adopted, even then, by not a few in the fellowship of the Church.

Nor can it be doubted that in not a few expressions and references he does, incidentally at least, take notice of erroneous opinions which appear to have already obtained considerable currency. It is natural to every author to evince regard to the ideas and other characteristics of his age. Christianity also comes of necessity into antagonism with error; and hence there is not an error which has ever been advanced, but it might seem as if the writers of Scripture had been specially directed to write in anticipation against it.

At the same time, there is not sufficient evidence to prove that the Evangelist had any particular controversial design in view; much less that he had any thing of the kind as his main object. Certainly, if such had been his object, we may learn from him, as one has said—and the observation is just, independent of the basis on which it is made to rest—“The purest, noblest form of polemics, from the Christian stand-point, is that which contends against its opposite rather by means of the power of the truth unveiling itself in its beauty than by positive assault; because positive assault generally calls forth and embitters what is sinful in man, while the mere disclosure of the truth makes common cause with what is noble in the hearts of adversaries themselves, and so enlists them among its friends and defenders.”*

[2.] *By other expositors it is held that the main object of the Evangelist is supplemental.* They represent him as meaning to do no more than fill up or supply the omissions of the other Gospels, which are

* Olshausen on the Gospels, iii. 178.

warrantably enough believed to have been already in general circulation.

And certain it is that he passes over in silence very much of what is recorded in the other Gospels. He records none of the leading events which are detailed by the other evangelists till he comes, with them, to the history of the Passion. The genealogy of Christ, with all the remarkable circumstances attendant on His birth, and on that of His harbinger, is passed over without the slightest notice. The angelic visits to Zacharias, and Mary, and Joseph, the immaculate conception, the birth and circumcision of the Holy Child, the announcement of the nativity to the shepherds of Bethlehem, with the appearance and the song of the heavenly host, the epiphany of the star in the east, and the journey of the wise men in quest of the new-born King, the massacre of the innocents, the escape of the holy family to Egypt, and other equally interesting and important incidents of the early life of Christ which are recorded in the other Gospels, are not so much as even once referred to in any part of this. The same silence is also evinced in respect of the baptism of Christ, the temptation in the wilderness, the transfiguration on Tabor, the most of the miracles, all of the parables, the institution of the Supper, the agony in Gethsemane, the original designation together with the final commission of the apostles, and—what is still more remarkable, considering that John begins, as no other evangelist does, with an account of the pre-existence of Christ—the triumphal ascension into heaven, with which Mark and Luke conclude their respective

Gospels, and to which Matthew, although not expressly relating it, very distinctly refers.

On the other hand, the additional information communicated by John is most extensive. It is only in this Gospel that we read of Nicodemus and the woman of Samaria, with the interesting discourses and incidents connected with the introduction of these persons into its history. It is only in this Gospel that we are told of the turning of the water into wine on occasion of the marriage in Cana of Galilee, of the healing of the nobleman's son in Capernaum, of the cure performed on the impotent man who had lain at the pool of Bethesda for thirty and eight years, of the bestowal of sight on the man who had been blind from his birth, and of the raising of Lazarus, the brother of Martha and Mary, from the dead. In short, it is only in this Gospel that we have an account of the first meeting of Andrew, Simon Peter, Philip, Nathanael, and John himself with our Lord; of the officers who, when sent to apprehend Him, returned without Him, saying, "Never man spake like this Man;" of the woman taken in adultery, whom they brought to Him to know what should be done to her, that they might have to accuse Him; of the washing of the disciples' feet on the evening of the last passover; of His farewell discourse on the same evening, with the remarkable prayer which He then offered for them and for all who should believe on Him to the end of time; of His dying commendation of His virgin-mother to the care of John; of His repeated meetings on the first day of the week with the disciples after He was risen from the dead; of

the absence of Thomas from the first of these meetings, with his pertinacious unbelief, and its complete removal at the next of them; of the meeting with the disciples at the lake of Tiberias, and the miraculous draught of fishes then taken under His direction; of the subsequent repast, with the thrice repeated interrogation to Peter, "Lovest thou Me?" of the prediction of the manner in which that apostle should glorify God in dying, and also of the obscure intimation respecting the prolongation of John's life, which his brethren unwarrantably construed into an assurance of absolute exemption from death, of outstanding longevity till the coming of the Lord.

After all, there seems good reason to dispute the correctness of the view as to the merely supplemental character of the Gospel. If it were but a supplement, an appendix, it would exhibit the form of a fragmentary writing or a miscellany, whereas it is as uniform in its character, and presents as complete and harmonious a whole of its kind, as any of the other Gospels. Nor does the design of supplementing the other Gospels appear to have formed even a definite secondary object with the Evangelist. Had such an intention formed any part of his plan, we can hardly think that there would have been, as there is, an entire absence of express allusion to the other evangelists; nor can we think that he would have permitted himself to write, as he has written on several points, particularly in his account of the resurrection, in such a manner as to occasion considerable perplexity in reconciling his account with theirs. These things, in connexion with the fact that he occasionally, although

not often, relates the same things which are related in the others, seem to disprove the idea that he had it in view to fill up or supplement their deficiencies. Doubtless he all along proceeds on the assumption that his readers were fully acquainted with other existing and equally authentic accounts of the life of Christ. Many of his references presuppose both their existence and their authority; but if the idea of filling them up was at all in his mind, it must have occupied a very subordinate place as a specific object with him, so subordinate as never once to interrupt the continuous thread of his narrative, or in the slightest degree to interfere with his main design.

[3.] Accordingly, *we have yet to ascertain the object of the Evangelist in this Gospel*; and we think he has furnished abundant data from which it may be very satisfactorily ascertained.

In one passage he says expressly, "These things are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing, ye might have life through His name."

Then his prologue, or preface, which embraces the first eighteen verses of the first chapter, will be found on examination to contain the plan, the epitome, the quintessence, so to speak, of the whole Gospel: the Gospel is, in fact, from first to last, the continuous development or unfolding of those eighteen verses.

From these two sources of information, we conclude that, whatever subsidiary purposes may be served by this Gospel, *the main object of it is to bring out the profound spiritual verities relating to the Divine person and mission of Jesus Christ as the Son of*

God and the Messiah-Saviour of the world, in their connexion with the reception which He obtained from men, and the consequences of that reception. Viewed in this light, we find no difficulty in making it out to be an entire and harmonious whole ; we see at once how there should be much less of historical detail, and much more of lofty revelation in it, as compared with the other Gospels. We also perceive the utmost propriety in its very omissions, and its manifold and interesting additions. In short, we perfectly understand how the Evangelist should soar away in it, as if borne upon "eagles' wings" into "heavenly places;" and, even when he speaks of Christ as in the world, should exhibit Him as "not of this world," should remind us that He is "the Son of man which *is* in heaven," at the very time that He is "the Son of man that came down from heaven;" should bring us to that part of the river of God, where the waters are not to "the ankles," or "the knees," or "the loins," but where they are risen far above ankles, knees, and loins ; where they are "waters to swim in, a river that cannot be passed over."*

First, *take the prologue, and cast but a single glance over the Gospel in connexion with it.* It exhibits our Lord ; not as in Matthew, the Son of David ; not as in Mark, the Servant of God ; not as in Luke,

* The well-known words of Augustine in this connection may here be quoted :—"In the four Gospels, or rather in the four books of the one Gospel, the apostle St John, not undeservedly, with reference to his spiritual understanding, compared to an eagle, has lifted higher and far more sublimely than the other three his proclamation, and in lifting it up he has wished our hearts also to be lifted. For the other three evangelists walked, so to speak, on earth with our Lord as man ;

the Son of man; but as the Son of God; and, as such, the Word, the Life, the Light, the Only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth; the Only-begotten which is in the bosom of the Father; in short, as God; with the way in which, when in the world—as the Word made flesh—He was rejected by many, but received by others, who became in consequence the sons of God. Now run over the Gospel, and you will find that it is occupied throughout in most orderly succession with these very topics.

It is full of the revelations of *the Word*. The discourses in it so profound, so full, so spiritual, so heavenly, quite sustain His distinction as the Revealer of the Father, the Only-begotten who is in the bosom of the Father, and who hath declared Him.

Then the first seven chapters very explicitly set forth *the Life, with the fulness of grace which is in Him*. Take one passage from the first chapter, a key-passage, “Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world:”—all the *life* that is in Him, that flows from Him in the fulness of His grace, comes to us through the channel of His atonement. Take a passage from the second chapter, another key-passage, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up. But He spake of the temple of His body:”—or of His resurrection-*life*, in the possession of which He

of His divinity they said but few things: but John, as if it oppressed him to walk on earth, has opened his words as it were with a burst of thunder, has lifted himself not only above earth and every sphere of sky and heaven, but even above every host of angels, and every order of invisible powers, and reaches to Him by whom all things were made, as he says, ‘In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.’”

has ability as well as authority to give life and grace unto the world. Take a passage from the third chapter, also a key-passage, "Verily, verily I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God:"—the first effect of the outflow of life and grace from Him takes place in the production of the new birth,—the new *life* in Him begins with that. Take a passage from the fourth chapter, also another key-passage, "Jesus answered and said unto her, Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again; but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life:"—that is to say, the *life*, the grace, which is received from Christ is more than quickening—it is indwelling and abiding; the new birth is followed by the new life, and *that* is never followed by the second death; the life which it initiates is eternal life. Take a passage from the fifth chapter, still the key-passage, "The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live; for as the Father hath life in Himself, so hath He given to the Son to have life in Himself:"—the voice of Christ, the word of Christ, is the mean of grace, of *life*, the instrumentality employed in the impartation or communication of it. Take a passage from the sixth chapter, again the key-passage, "I am the living bread which came down from heaven; if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever; and the bread that I will give is My flesh, which I will give for the life of the world:"—Christ Himself, in His person and atonement, is the

food, the nutriment of the spiritual or divine life of faith; the *life* of grace obtains its whole sustenance from Him—in Him. Take a passage also from the seventh chapter, yet again the key-passage, "In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink. He that believeth on Me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. But this spake He of the Spirit, which they that believe on Him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given: because that Jesus was not yet glorified."

Then pass over to the eighth and ninth chapters, and see how He is there set forth as *the Light with all the fulness of truth in Him*. Take the key-passage from the eighth—it is after the conviction and self-condemnation of the scribes and Pharisees, who brought unto Him the woman taken in adultery—"I am the *light* of the world; he that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." Take also the key-passage from the ninth—it is in connexion with the miraculous restoration of sight to the man who had been blind from his birth—"I must work the works of Him that sent Me while it is day; the night cometh when no man can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the *light* of the world."

Then again, in the following chapters, we have still grace and truth in Him, life and light in Him, with the revelation or unfolding of the heart and the home of the Father, in such key-passages as, "No man is able to pluck them out of My Father's hand:" "In My Father's house are many mansions:" "Whatsoever

ye shall ask the Father in My name, He will give it you :” “And I say not unto you, that I will pray the Father for you, for the Father Himself loveth you :” “I ascend unto My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God.”

But we must leave to private study the more particular examination of the remaining history, as well as of the reception of the grace and truth, the life and light and love of God in Christ, as detailed with more or less explicitness throughout the Gospel.

Secondly, *take that passage in which the Evangelist expresses his object to be, that we might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that, believing, we might have life through His name ; and, with it as a guide, run once more over the Gospel, and see how in every chapter that object is steadily kept in view and most satisfactorily fulfilled.* Take the testimony of John the Baptist in the first chapter,—“I am not the Christ ; but He that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending and remaining upon Him, the same is He which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost. And I saw and bare record that this is *the Son of God.*” Take the Samaritan testimonies in the fourth chapter—“Come, see a Man which told me all things that ever I did : Is not this *the Christ?*” “Now we believe, not because of thy saying ; for we have heard Him ourselves, and know that this is indeed *the Christ*, the Saviour of the world.” Take His own testimony in the tenth chapter : “Then came the Jews round about Him, and said unto Him, How long dost Thou make us to doubt ? If Thou be *the Christ*, tell us plainly.

Jesus answered them, I told you, and ye believed not; the works that I do in My Father's name, they bear witness of Me." And take the testimony of Martha in the eleventh chapter: "Yea, Lord, I believe that Thou art *the Christ, the Son of God*, which should come into the world." Then notice also, as you go along, how the expressions, "the Father" and "the Son," occur more frequently in this Gospel than in all the other three together. And notice further the assertion and claim of oneness or equality with God, of proper and perfect Deity, in such expressions and passages as, "The Word was God:" "He said that God was His Father, making Himself equal with God:" "Before Abraham was, I am:" "I and My Father are one:" "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father:" "All things that the Father hath are Mine:" "And now, O Father, glorify Thou Me with Thine own self, with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was:" "And all Mine are Thine, and Thine are Mine:" "And Thomas answered and said unto Him, My Lord and my God."

We should have wished to say something, in conclusion, by way of showing *how we should make a practical use of the view of Christ presented in this Gospel*; but it would lead us into too extensive a field of observation; and we must forbear. Let us only quote two passages, the one expressive of the blessed result of faith in Him,—may we profit by the lesson of it,—“But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name;” and the other expressive of the

awful consequences of unbelief in Him,—may we profit by the lesson of it also,—“ But he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the Only-begotten Son of God.” Plainly we cannot be too much impressed with the high importance of the object for which this Gospel has been provided. “ *These things are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that, believing, ye might have life through His name.*” Amen.

THE HARMONY OF THE GOSPELS.

HITHERTO we have been mainly occupied with the diversity of the Gospels. We have seen that each of the evangelists relates the history of our Lord from a different stand-point, exhibits it in a different aspect; and that this ought to be kept in view and properly considered in our examination of the various Gospels.

On the present occasion, *the harmony of the Gospels* is the subject which we wish to bring under consideration. Sceptics have often sought to construct an argument out of their diversity against their authenticity; and not a few of them have even gone so far as to allege that their different representations are incompatible with historical reality. On this account it is the more necessary to attend to their essential unity. Scepticism loses all foothold here. The ground is completely cut away from under it.

Very numerous attempts have been made from the earliest ages to construct a Harmony of the Gospels,

by combining their several narratives into one continuous whole—one Gospel instead of four. From the nature of the case, it was quite natural that it should be so. We cannot help identifying the leading events of the life and ministry of our Lord, as related by the evangelists, or rather they identify themselves; and it would have been strange had this process of identification been limited to what is merely obvious, had it not been carried out and even sought to be completed.

Nor can it be said that the enormous amount of labour expended in the effort has been lost. By bringing the Gospels together—placing their parallel accounts in juxtaposition, and comparing them with one another—many passages in all of them, which had been otherwise perhaps inexplicable, or at least obscure, have been most happily elucidated; and difficulties and discrepancies, which might have been stumbling to the faith of not a few, have been entirely removed or satisfactorily explained. In this respect the end of a Gospel harmony has been completely gained, and the result is every way worthy of all the eighteen hundred years' study which has been given to it.

At the same time, it must be owned that, in so far as Gospel harmonisers have sought to reduce the four Gospels, with all their characteristic varieties, into one, in which all these varieties are absorbed, if not obliterated, they have never been as yet successful; and it is not possible that they ever can be so. For, first, each of the evangelists has his own order of

narration, and that order so widely different that it is quite impossible to determine with any thing like exactitude the chronological sequence of the events which they respectively relate. Then again, each of them has his own style of narration, and that also so evidently different, that an amalgam of the four must necessarily be destructive of the distinct individuality, and, to this extent, of the particular value of their separate productions. And then, once more, their difference of representation is so palpably distinct that, however they may be brought into juxtaposition, and compared and studied together, to fuse or blend them into a new artificial compound Gospel ought never to be attempted or even thought of. It would just be an attempt to form a fifth Gospel of our own, by way of improving on the product of Divine inspiration.

Accordingly, we have no idea of harmonising the Gospels in the sense in which it is usual to speak of harmonising them. If we show that they are bound together by a true historical harmony, *that* is all that can ever be required, or that should ever be required, on the theory of four independent Gospels. A literal, circumstantial, formal harmony is in fact impossible; it could only have been possible in one way—that of each of the Gospels being but a copy or repetition of a common original; in which case, however, they would have manifestly lost their fourfold value; they would have possessed the value of no more than a single testimony. Besides, if the Spirit of God had thought it necessary or desirable that we should be

put in possession of such a Gospel, surely He would have Himself provided it.

Our present task is therefore limited to the exhibition of their essential harmony, of their historical harmony. We shall endeavour to accomplish this by setting forth their harmony in what they do not relate in common, and also in what they do relate in common.

I. THEIR HARMONY IN WHAT THEY DO NOT RELATE IN COMMON.

The greatest apparent divergence from a common testimony occurs in the Gospel according to John. It has been common among sceptics to represent its narrative as entirely different from the others—at least so different as to be quite incapable of reconciliation with them. According to them, the Christ of John is quite an ideal personage, the mental conception of a dreamer, which had no counterpart in actual history, or at all events the counterpart of which they allege is not to be found in the Christ of the other evangelists. They admit that these evangelists may be harmonised, and that it is easy enough or possible enough to identify the Christ of all of them; but they maintain that this is impossible with the Christ of John.

We shall therefore confine ourselves at the present stage to the reconciliation of the narrative of John with that of Matthew, Mark, and Luke.

1. Then here we have to notice, in the first place, *how they agree in respect of the locality in which*

they represent the ministry of Christ to have been exercised. It is here, perhaps, that cursory readers will most easily discover discrepancy, or at least fail to perceive agreement. According to John, the ministry of Christ appears to have been mainly exercised in Judea. According to the others, it appears to have been mainly exercised in Galilee. Apart from the events of the Passion Week, which are related by all the evangelists, it is almost entirely a Judean ministry which is related in the one Gospel, and a Galilean ministry which is related in the others. But very little is required to show that the difference in this respect may be easily enough adjusted. Were the two ministries represented as contemporaneous, *that* would necessarily involve an irreconcilable contradiction; but that our Lord should have exercised His ministry both in Judea and in Galilee, and that one of the evangelists should have related His ministry in the one country, and the other evangelists in the other country, carries no contradiction in it. Besides, if it turns out that both the one and the other distinctly advert to the ministry which they do not relate, and allow sufficient time for it,—then, so far from disagreement, there is harmony between them, and harmony which is the more striking and satisfactory, that coming, as it does, out of apparent difference, it is obviously undesigned.

This is precisely how matters stand in the four evangelists. The following passages from Matthew, Mark, and Luke, may suffice to show that, while they confine themselves to the narrative of the Galilean

ministry, they did not mean to ignore the Judean ministry; that they were perfectly aware of it, and of the extensive influence which it exercised:—"And there followed Him great multitudes of people from Galilee, and from Decapolis, and from Jerusalem, and from Judea, and from beyond Jordan." (Matt. iv. 25. See also Mark iii. 8; Luke viii. 17.) "Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel." (Matt. viii. 10; Luke vii. 9.) "And He arose from thence, and cometh into the coasts of Judea by the farther side of Jordan; and the people resort unto Him again; and as He was wont He taught them again." (Mark x. 1; Matt. xix. 1.) "And He went through the cities and villages, teaching and journeying towards Jerusalem." (Luke xiii. 22.) "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not." (Matt. xxiii. 37; Luke xiii. 34.) "And when He was come near, He beheld the city, and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes." (Luke xix. 41, 42.) The following passages from John may also suffice to show that, while he mainly confines himself to the narrative of the Judean ministry, he was quite cognisant of the Galilean ministry, and did not mean in any way to ignore it: "This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth His glory; and His disciples believed on Him." After this He went down to

Capernaum, He, and His mother, and His brethren, and His disciples; and they continued there not many days." (chap. ii. 11, 12.) "When therefore the Lord knew how the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John, (though Jesus himself baptized not, but His disciples,) He left Judea, and departed again into Galilee." (chap. iv. 1-3.) "After these things Jesus walked in Galilee; for He would not walk in Jewry, because the Jews sought to kill Him." (chap. vii. 1.) "But some said, Shall Christ come out of Galilee?" "Art thou also of Galilee? Search and look: for out of Galilee ariseth no prophet." (chap. vii. 41, 52.) "Therefore they sought again to take Him: but He escaped out of their hand, and went away again beyond Jordan, into the place where John at first baptized: and there He abode. And many resorted unto Him, and said, John did no miracle: but all things that John spake of this Man were true. And many believed on Him there." (chap. x. 39-42.) "Then from that day forth they took counsel together for to put Him to death. Jesus therefore walked no more openly among the Jews; but went thence unto a country near to the wilderness, into a city called Ephraim, and there continued with His disciples." (chap. xi. 53, 54.) It may be added that under the guidance of these and other passages, the two ministries, as related by the different evangelists, can be, though not completely, yet satisfactorily dovetailed into one another, so that in this respect the apparent discrepancy between them, which may at first be somewhat stumbling, passes away almost entirely—becomes positive harmony.

2. Then here we have to notice in the second place, *how they agree in respect of the topics which they report to have formed the burden of the ministry of Christ.* Here again a most manifest difference between the Gospel according to John and the other Gospels presents itself. Both in form and in contents the Gospel according to John is cast in a mould of its own, a mould so evidently peculiar that sceptics, as we have already said, will not allow that it can ever be received as in unison with the other Gospels, or as portraying the same life, the same person, with them. But here also the difference may be easily adjusted. It will be admitted that the ministry of Christ would naturally divide itself into two parts—that which was fulfilled in public, and that which was carried on more privately; the former comprising His *popular* discourses or open utterances respecting the nature and the object of His mission, His parables and prophecies, and other addresses to the people,—“All these things spake Jesus unto *the multitude* in parables;” and the latter setting forth the profound spiritual mysteries relating to His Divine person and mission, which, from their peculiar character, He would not so readily in His *then* circumstances bring out in public, but reserve for more confidential intercourse with His disciples, except when He was, as it were, constrained by the active opposition of His adversaries among the Jews, to assert them openly,—“It is given unto *you* to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given; therefore speak I to them in parables.”

Now this again is precisely how the matter stands

in the four evangelists. In the earlier Gospels we have what would certainly form the staple of elementary Christian instruction to the first converts to the faith, the record of the more public ministry of Christ ; and then again, in the last Gospel, what would most certainly be demanded with the growth of Christian life and knowledge in the Church, the record of His more private ministry, along with that which was carried on at a distance from His own country, such as in Samaria and Judea, and in which it might be legitimately enough expected He would be more open in His communications respecting Himself and His mission. The difference between the evangelists, when thus regarded, will be seen to be quite natural, and, instead of shaking, ought to confirm our faith in the authenticity of all the Gospels. Bengel makes a pertinent remark on this subject which may here be quoted. "If a drawing is made of a city, first from the east side, then from the west, though in both cases the tallest and most striking towers and edifices are presented, yet in all other respects the two sketches not only can, but must differ widely. And yet both are faithful copies of the original." Obviously the only thing that is required in such a case is, that, with the necessary variety of representation, there should be such resemblances and affinities as make evident that there is really identity in the object of their representation. This requirement is fully answered in the Gospels. To advert to the parables of Christ,—of which it has often been observed, there is not even a single specimen in the Gospel according to John,—we have frequent metaphors in

this Gospel, which so far correspond to the parables as to show that the similitudes of them were common, as might be expected and demanded in historical reality, to both the public and more private ministries; only used in the latter, as of course, with a profounder emphasis and significance. For example, the similitude in the parable of the sower occurs in these words as given in John: "Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest? behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields, for they are white already to harvest. And he that reapeth receiveth wages and gathereth fruit unto life eternal; that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together. And herein is that saying true, One soweth, and another reapeth. I sent you to reap that whereon ye bestowed no labour; other men laboured, and ye are entered into their labours." (chap. iv. 35-38.) Again the similitude in the parable of the shepherd and his sheep occurs in these words, as also given in John; "I am the good Shepherd: the good Shepherd giveth His life for the sheep." (chap. x. 11.) And once more, the similitude in the parable of the vineyard occurs in these other words, as also given again in John; "I am the true Vine, and My Father is the husbandman. Every branch in Me that beareth not fruit He taketh away; and every branch that beareth fruit He purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit." "As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in Me. I am the Vine, ye are the branches. He that abideth in Me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for with-

out Me ye can do nothing. If a man abide not in Me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered, and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned." (chap. xv. 1-6.) On the other hand, there are not a few passages in the earlier Gospels which are every way as explicit and profound in their reference to the Divine aspects of the person and mission of Christ as any to be found in John; some of them so Joannean in their form and character, that such as are not very familiar with the Bible might readily enough expect to find them in his Gospel rather than in any of the others. "Wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business?" (Luke ii. 49.) "I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father; for so it seemed good in Thy sight. All things are delivered unto Me of My Father, and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him. Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." (Matt. xi. 25-28.) "Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but My Father which is in heaven." (Matt. xvi. 16, 17.) "Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of My Father which is in heaven. For where two or three are

gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them." (Matt. xviii. 19, 20.) "But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom." (Matt. xxvi. 29.) "And behold, I send the promise of My Father upon you; but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high." (Luke xxiv. 49.) "And, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." (Matt. xxviii. 20.)

So much for the harmony on this head. We might, indeed, have carried it out much further; as, for example, to the facts in the history of Christ, as well as to the discourses in His ministry. We have no account in John of the miraculous conception, or of the nativity in Bethlehem, or of the early residence in the obscurity of Nazareth; and yet these various facts are fully corroborated in numerous incidental references of expressive significance. "And the Word was made flesh," (John i. 14.)—There is evidently an underlying allusion to the miraculous production of His humanity here. "We have found Him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph," (John i. 45.) "The son of Joseph."—This was what He was reputed to be, and the Evangelist, though he uniformly distinguishes Him as the Son of God, quite freely relates the circumstance. "And the third day there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee; and the mother of Jesus was there," (John ii. 1.) "The mother of Jesus."—There is no hesitation on the part of the Evangelist to speak of her as such; on several occasions he so

names her. "And when they wanted wine, the mother of Jesus saith unto Him, They have no wine." "His mother saith unto the servants, Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it." (John ii. 3, 5.) "Now there stood by the cross His mother, and His mother's sister." "When Jesus therefore saw His mother, and the disciple standing by, whom He loved, He saith unto His mother, Behold thy son." (John xix. 25, 26.) The following questions, as recorded by the Evangelist, also indicate his knowledge both of the nativity in Bethlehem and of the residence in Nazareth, and plainly confirm the other evangelists in their accounts of these events. "Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?" (John i. 46.) "Shall Christ come out of Galilee? Hath not the Scripture said that Christ cometh of the seed of David, and out of the town of Bethlehem, where David was?" (John vii. 41, 42.) Again, we have no account in John of the baptism of Christ, but we have a distinct corroboration of it in his account of the testimony of the Baptist. "I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon Him. And I knew Him not; but He that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on Him, the same is He which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost. And I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God." (John i. 32-34.) In the same way, although we have no list of the apostles in John, as in all the other Gospels, we have Andrew and Peter, James and John, Philip and Nathanael, introduced to our Lord in the very order in which their names are coupled

together in the evangelical lists, and the number of them is mentioned once and again as twelve: "Have not I chosen you twelve?" (John vi. 70.) "And Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came." (John xx. 24.) We have also no account in John of the casting out of devils, but we have a most explicit reference, in his own peculiar style and way, to Christ's conquest of Satan, which was so strikingly illustrated and embodied in the demoniacal dispossessions. "Now is the judgment of this world; now shall the prince of this world be cast out." (John xii. 31.) "The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in Me." (John xiv. 30.) "Because the prince of this world is judged." (John xv. 11.) There is also no mention made in John of the agony in the garden, but the words of Jesus, when he rebuked Peter for drawing the sword in His defence, allude very plainly to the prayer which He had so earnestly offered up under the agony; "Put up thy sword into the sheath; the cup which My Father hath given Me, shall I not drink it?" (John xviii. 11.) Then, besides all these and other references in John which distinctly evince his knowledge of many facts related by the other evangelists, but omitted by himself, there are facts related by him which go to explain various references of the evangelists left unexplained by them from their omission of the facts in question. Thus they record the testimony of the false witnesses against Jesus at His trial: "This fellow said, I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to build it in three days." (Matt. xxvi. 61. Mark xiv. 58.) John alone records what Jesus really

said upon the subject, and so explains, quite incidentally, how such an accusation could be brought against Him: "Then answered the Jews and said unto Him, What sign showest Thou unto us, seeing Thou doest these things? Jesus answered and said unto them, Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up. Then said the Jews, Forty and six years was this temple in building, and wilt Thou rear it up in three days? But He spake of the temple of His body." (John ii. 18-21.) Thus also all the evangelists relate the triumphal entry of our Lord into Jerusalem, but John alone relates the occasion of it, which, probably for the prudential reason stated in our examination of his Gospel, they intentionally omitted: "The people therefore that was with Him when He called Lazarus out of his grave bare record. For this cause the people also met him, for that they heard that He had done this miracle. The Pharisees therefore said among themselves, Perceive ye how ye prevail nothing? Behold the world is gone after Him." (John xii. 17-19.)

But we cannot carry out this comparison and reconciliation of the evangelists any further under this head. It is enough to say that, when a person's life is written by different parties, one of whom exhibits him mainly in his public, and the other in his private character, while of course there is such a basis of resemblance in the two biographies as serves to identify the subject of them, it is impossible to consider them harmonious unless the different stand-points of their authors are taken into account, and proper allowance is made for the specific characteristics of

their distinctive views. Just so is it with the Gospels. Many supposed and alleged discrepancies vanish whenever we contemplate them from the proper point of view. Where discrepancies were said to exist, we observe the nicest harmonies, the most admirable undesigned coincidences. We also at once perceive how one evangelist records one class of facts, and another evangelist another class of facts, according as the facts fall in with their respective objects; and how, in recording even the same facts, the one and the other should notice different circumstances connected with the facts, without infringing upon the perfection of any one of the Gospels, as viewed from its own particular stand-point; and how, in short, without regarding the Gospels as merely supplementary or corroborative of one another, we may make them serve this purpose by the exhibition of their unintended and unfettered harmonies; while at the same time we come to apprehend and to appreciate the purpose of the Spirit of God in an omission here, and an addition there, in now presenting one fact in a certain relation, and again presenting it in another relation, and in so giving us a different view in one Gospel from that which is given us in another Gospel.

II. THE HARMONY OF THE EVANGELISTS IN WHAT THEY DO RELATE IN COMMON.

Under this head there opens up a most extensive field of observation and investigation, on which we shall hardly enter. Two observations will serve our purpose.

1. First, We may shortly notice *their harmony in the views of Christ which they present in common.* That a particular view of Christ predominates in the separate representation of each of the four Gospels we have sufficiently proved already. In Matthew we see Him in His covenant royalty as the Son of David ; in Mark in His laborious ministry as the Servant of God ; in Luke in His common humanity as the Son of man ; and in John in His true Divinity as the Son of God. But the view of each is not to be found in itself only ; we find traces of it in all the others. With that which in each is distinctively its own, the whole four have resemblances and affinities which are common to them all. And hence, as it is said of the cherubim, by which they are so often represented, “ Two wings of every one were joined one to another ; ” and again, “ They four had one likeness,” the view peculiar to one Gospel seems in many places to join and even to identify itself with the view in another Gospel. You find the Son of David in Mark, Luke, and John, as well as in Matthew ; you also find the Servant of God in Matthew, Luke, and John, as well as in Mark ; you find the Son of man in Matthew, Mark, and John, as well as in Luke ; you also find the Son of God in Matthew, Mark, and Luke, as well as in John ; in short, it just comes to this, that, while each has his own distinctive view standing out in prominent relief, they all distinctly recognise one another’s view, and more or less embrace it, and incorporate it with their own, so that with all their obvious diversity, they are thus in perfect harmony ; they exhibit but one Christ, who is at once, *in symbol*, lion, ox, man, and

eagle, and *in fact* the Son of David, the Servant of God, the Son of man, and the Son of God.

2. Secondly, We may as shortly notice *their harmony in the incidents and facts respecting Christ which they record in common*. These incidents and facts are so few that they may all be stated in little more than a single sentence. There is, first, the feeding of the five thousand men, besides women and children, on the five loaves and the two fishes. The miracle is related in all the Gospels—in Matthew xiv., in Mark vi., in Luke ix., and in John vi. It is the only incident in the life of Christ, prior to the events of the Passion-week, which they all relate ; and we may therefore very warrantably conclude that it is full of significance, and that its instruction is to be viewed in connexion with all the characters and relations which He sustains as the Son of David, the Servant of God, the Son of man, and the Son of God. Then we next find them all relating the important events of the Passion-week. The riding into Jerusalem, the treachery of Judas, the resistance of Peter in the garden, and his thrice-repeated denial of his Master in presence of the servants and the soldiers, the trial before the Sanhedrim, the arraignment before Pilate, the liberation of Barabbas, the condemnation, the crucifixion, the raiment-partition, the death, the burial, the resurrection,—all these events are alike related, with, of course, many circumstantial and characteristic varieties, in all the Gospels. Again, it is to be observed that these events, with their instruction, must be viewed in connexion with all the characters and relations which He sustains as the Son of David, the Servant of God, the

Son of man, and the Son of God. The Son of David rides in triumph into Jerusalem, suffers, dies, rises from the dead. The Servant of God rides in triumph into Jerusalem, suffers, dies, rises from the dead. The Son of Man rides in triumph into Jerusalem, suffers, dies, rises from the dead. The Son of God rides in triumph into Jerusalem, suffers, dies, rises from the dead.* We do not enter on the examination of the various accounts of these events; *that* would involve us in an investigation which is by far too extensive and too important to be disposed of in connexion with our present object. We content ourselves with the simple statement that the events in question, together with the miracle of the loaves, comprise the whole of what literally forms the common testimony of the Gospels. In all other respects they may be said to be harmonious, though not coincident, or four, though one; here they are not only harmonious but coincident, or one, though four. Let us commend their various narratives to attentive prayerful perusal; they will largely repay all the study which may be bestowed upon them.

We now conclude this examination of the characteristics of the Gospels. The Gospels are worthy of all the study that can be bestowed on them. 'If it was true of our blessed Lord that "never man spake like this Man," the remark may be extended unto them. Never were books written like these books. Never Gospels like these Gospels, so simple in style, yet so profound; so unadorned in their heavenly beauty; so consistent and harmonious, even to repetition, in their

* *Vide* Jukes on the Gospels, p. 176.

grand outlines, and so rich in their multiplied diversities; they contain an evidence of truth and reality which defies all the vain efforts of unbelieving minds; they are a treasury of wisdom and grace that is able to supply the deepest wants and remedy the most grievous miseries of a fallen world. Like the heavenly cherubim, each has its own peculiar character, and reveals a separate aspect in the love of Christ; but they all unite as with a voice of thunder in uttering the same invitation to sinners; Come, see a man who is at once the Son of David, the Servant of God, the Son of man, and the Son of God;—is not this the Christ? And every humble heart will respond to the invitation, and in responding to it will have to say, like the Samaritans of old, ‘Now we believe, for we have seen Him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world.’*

We should here offer some observations on *the practical use to be made of the harmony in diversity which we have now seen to characterise the fourfold view of Christ in the different Gospels*. But we must not expatiate at large in the wide field of valuable reflection which it presents to us.

We prefer to advert to but two things, in the hope that, limiting ourselves to them, they may be the more faithfully considered and applied.

The one is, That there is an infinite fulness of gracious supply in Christ to meet all the wants of His disciples. Does not the fourfold repetition of the miracles of the loaves teach us that? No commentary which overlooks, or in any way ignores, this lesson can

* Birks’ *Horæ Evangelicæ*, p. 550.

do justice to the repetition. We are in a desert—thousands of men, besides women and children. Whence shall we buy bread that all may eat? We do not need to buy at all. “Jesus said, My Father giveth you the true bread from heaven. For the Bread of God is He which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world.” “Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which satisfieth not? Harken diligently unto Me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness.”

The other is, That this infinite fulness of gracious supply is only to be partaken of in the faith of Christ as the once crucified but now glorified Redeemer. And hence also the fourfold repetition of the history of His death and resurrection. Some are arrested by the history of the incarnation. It holds them fast. They say that they cannot get past the Bethlehem-manger to the Jerusalem-cross. But the Gospel of Jesus Christ is only, as it were, begun in the incarnation of the Bethlehem-manger. We never get to the heart of the Gospel till we find our way to Calvary. The Bread of life is, in symbol, not the *unbroken* wafer of Rome’s idolatry, but the *broken* bread of the true Scriptural Communion. It is, in reality, the atonement-sacrifice of the Lamb of God. There is a sense in which the all of religion may, no doubt, be said to centre in the Person of our Lord. “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.” We do not wonder at the approval of that confession:—“Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona; for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but My Father which is in

heaven." At the same time, it must not be forgotten that, when Peter went on to express himself in opposition to the cross, the benediction was at once exchanged for a malediction, the like of which is next to unparalleled in the Word of God—"Get thee behind me, Satan." The conclusion is plain enough. If the cross of Christ is in any way obscured, if the atonement of Christ is in any way denied, men may say what they please about the Person of Christ, they may appear to be full of love to Him—very Peters in the fervour of their zeal, and affection, and courage for Him; but He will not have them for His disciples. Let them put away His cross, and He will only identify them with Satan. "Tell no man that I am Christ till I have suffered, died, risen from the dead; because, till I am Christ the sufferer, Christ the sacrifice, it is really of no consequence to the world whether or not I am Christ at all." It is on this account that we have the crucifixion and the resurrection of Christ in all the Gospels. There is no Gospel without a *crucified* Saviour. There is no Gospel without a *risen* Saviour. There could be none. "I am the Living One that was dead, and behold I am alive for evermore," is the very essence, the sum and substance, of the Gospel. The saying, "No cross, no crown," is now quite commonplace—so commonplace that few think any thing about it, except as a phrase of happy alliteration. But there is a great reality covered by it, as we see in the fourfold history of the Cross; and it is not less true in the history of His disciples than it is in His own. Let *them* consider it, ponder it. Only let it be taken in its entire-

ness ; so that when the cross comes, they may not fail to look forward to the crown which is coming too, like "Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith, who, for the joy that was set before Him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is now set down at the right hand of the throne of God." "It is a faithful saying ; for if we be dead with Him, we shall also live with Him ; if we suffer, we shall also reign with Him."

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“Though Mr Thomson’s lectures are neither critical nor controversial, it would be a mistake to suppose that they are not scientific. If true science consists in a knowledge of one’s subject, derived from a thorough study of it in all its bearings and relations, prosecuted with genuine enthusiasm, and guided by sound judgment, these lectures are far from being unscientific. The man who knows well the nature of the soil which he cultivates, and who so manages it as to render it productive and profitable, is regarded as a truly scientific farmer, though he may not choose to spend his time in analysing the chemical ingredients which go to form a fruitful soil. Placing the sacred gospels before him as they are, and assuming their divine inspiration as in the meantime a settled question, Mr Thomson sets himself to the investigation of their respective characteristics, so as to bring out their natural diversities in perfect consistency with their divine harmony. This task he has accomplished with singular success; exhibiting in the course of his examination much critical taste, and a signal aptitude for what may be termed distinctiveness of observation.

We lay down this small volume, not only with a feeling of admiration for the talents of its author, but with what he himself will, we doubt not, receive as a far better commendation, with a higher appreciation of the God-like wisdom, beauty, and grandeur of those gospels, which form the foundation of our hopes, and the character of our redemption.”—*British and Foreign Evangelical Review*.



