



NEW TESTAMENT
DIFFICULTIES.



RIGHT REV. A. F. W. INGRAM,
LORD BISHOP OF LONDON.

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NEW TESTAMENT DIFFICULTIES

(FIRST SERIES),

BY THE RIGHT REV.

A. F. WINNINGTON INGRAM, D.D.,

LORD BISHOP OF LONDON.

(Being a Collection of Papers written for Working Men.)

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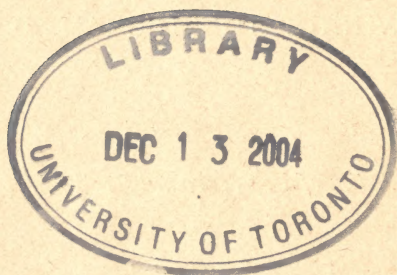
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NEW TESTAMENT DIFFICULTIES.

INTRODUCTORY CHAPTER.

REVELATION.

HY are not things plainer? If God wants me to believe, why does he not put a sign in the sky? If the Bible is God's letter to men, why should there be any difficulties in it? If Christianity is God's highest revelation, why is not Christian England a better place?"—so sighs the world, half complaining, half bewailing, sometimes mocking.

What is the answer? Is there an answer at all? Not a complete one; man can hardly be expected to give a complete answer as to *why* God does this or that, or why in this way and not in another; but still it is to believers in God a matter of intense interest to find out at any rate the facts of the case, and there is no irreverence in seeking also to comprehend, so far as may be, the reasons for the facts being as they are.

(1) And, first, *Why does not God put a sign in the sky to make us believe?*

Now there is no doubt about the facts; he certainly has not; however fierce the controversy by day, the sun runs without haste its appointed course; however dark the doubt at night, it is only the moon that smiles serenely down; and even in the great age of miracles, when the Son of God was on the earth, He never worked a sign merely to make men believe; He looked on it as a temptation to be resisted when pressed to throw Himself among the assembled crowds from a pinnacle of the temple; he was absolutely silent before the merely curious Herod, and even after His resurrection it was not to Pilate or the Pharisees He showed Himself, but only to "witnesses chosen before of God."

Can we see any reason for this? Surely we can; if belief was to depend upon a visible sign in the sky, a standing miracle would have to be worked in each generation to give that generation a fair chance with the others—a supposition which is contrary to all we see of God's ways of working. It is, further, extremely doubtful whether such a sign would accomplish its object. "If they hear not Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead," said our Lord; and the saying, which proved so true in that generation, would in all probability be equally true in ours: "If they hear not the Apostles and Evangelists, neither will they be persuaded, though they saw a sign in the sky." We can imagine without much effort the brilliant article in the next magazine, which would prove that it was a comet

and even if the explanation did not satisfy the intellect, such a mere "nine days' wonder" would have no effect upon the heart.

After all is said and done for the intellect, it still remains true that "it is with the *heart* man believeth unto righteousness," mere intellectual assent to certain truths produced against a man's will is not considered in heaven worth the having, "the devils also believe and tremble;" what God desires, what Christ looked for on earth, is a movement of the whole man, conscience, mind, will, and heart towards goodness.

"Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known Me, Philip?" that was His gentle reproach, not "Have I worked so many miracles, and yet hast thou not believed?" And the test is still the same. The *character of Christ*, that is the standing miracle, is at once the touchstone of our character, and the test of our faith. Intellectual elements in faith are often discussed; have we always remembered the *moral*, "If any man wills to do the will of God, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God"?

(2) *Why is not the Bible plainer?*

And here again there is no doubt about the facts. It is not perfectly plain, the light is a graduated light; we cannot take the morality of one age in its history and make it the standard of another; divorce is allowed by Moses "because of the hardness of your hearts;" it is evident that "the age has to be ready for the truth as well as the truth for the age;" little is told the Jews about a future life, little about the Trinity.

Even in our Lord's time His revelation is gradual: "I have many things to say to you, but ye cannot bear them now." The very record of what He did say is entrusted to the "rough and tumble" of history, and the very documents which contain it have to be verified as genuine like the documents containing any other history.

All this is quite evident, but is there any difficulty about it? Surely only to those who have made up their minds that God must give His revelation in *their* way. Such a graduated revelation is in exact accord with what we see in Nature—the day dawns very gradually; the light is adapted for the eye, as well as the eye for the light; excess of light only dazzles us; the human element in the Bible, the very fact that the truth is conveyed to us in stories about weak and erring mortals, only makes the whole message "speak in the tongue of the children of men;" we have our treasure, but it is in earthen vessels, and earthen vessels, it is not difficult to believe, are most suitable for those who are still on a sinful earth.

Moreover, as has lately been well pointed out in a book entitled "Pastor Pastorum," this method of conveying revelation gives a scope to the faculties which no other method we can think of would have done, and gives special force to our Lord's mysterious words: "He that hath, to him shall be given;" we receive truth for truth, as well as grace for grace; we dig for it as for hid treasure, and each vein of gold we strike leads on to another and a richer.

(3) *Why is not the Christian Revelation more effectual?* Why has Christianity not done more?

“Look at the morality of London, and call this a Christian country, if you can!” men say.

“But the real wonder is,” as a member of a working men’s audience said with truth the other day—“the real wonder is that Christianity has done so much;” and then the speaker went on to explain that, with human nature so inherently selfish as it naturally is, to have got so much unselfishness out of the world as Christianity already had done, was to him a proof of its Divine origin.

Surely sometimes we need to be pulled up like this, we need sometimes in our Utopian visions to be reminded of that awkward little detail—“human nature”—not for a moment to damp our hope or our resolute effort, but to prevent us talking such sad folly about Christianity having done no good.

We may perhaps be able at more length another time to look in the dispassionate light of history at some effects of Christianity on the world; suffice it to say that no one claims for Christianity that it changes a man until it be individually accepted. A man living in Christian England may still have, as the revelations of the Children’s Cruelty Society show us, “a wolfish heart;” streets in Christian England may still remind us of the vices of Pagan Rome; but the simple explanation is that they *are* Pagan; it is due to Christianity that the cruel are the exceptions; it is due to Christianity that the vice is hidden; it is not due to Christianity that it exists; the day has not dawned on that heart, the day-star has not risen in that street; the revelation has not come.

No! the true conclusion is not to stand by criticising, but to help; light is diffused in waves, but it is through the medium of an atmosphere; it is through Christians that Christianity spreads; has the light come to us? then our business is to pass it on.

CHAPTER I.



ARE THE GOSPELS GENUINE?

IT is as well to say at once that important as this question is, and admitting, as it does, of a most satisfactory answer, the truth of Christianity is not bound up with the answer to it. Even if the Gospels assigned by tradition to St. Matthew, St. Mark, St. Luke, St. John, were proved to be written by someone else, yet there are other documents, older than any of these, which would still maintain the wonderful story which they teach.

A FIFTH GOSPEL.

If anyone would take the trouble to read through the four Epistles of St. Paul, those, namely, to the Romans, Corinthians, and Galatians, which are admitted to be genuine by nearly every critic in the world, whether a sceptic or not, and were to write down the story of Jesus Christ as it lies embedded in those Epistles, he would find that they contained a fifth Gospel, exactly corresponding to the other four. Thus, to take only two instances, what more accurate description of the birth of Christ could we have than Gal. iv. 4, 5—"God sent forth His Son,

made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law," where we have allusion made to the Godhead of Christ, His birth and His circumcision ; or what better summary of the main facts recorded in the Gospels than 1 Cor. xv. 3, 4, "I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ *died* for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was *buried*, and that He *rose again* the third day according to the Scriptures," &c.

Now it is as well to point this out, because however obvious, it is ignored by those who seem to think that Christianity stands or falls by the discussion with regard to the Gospel of St. John ; as a matter of fact, before you could touch the evidence of Christianity, you would have to get rid not of one Gospel, but of all the Gospels, and not only of all the Gospels, but also of the Acts of the Apostles and the Epistles of St. Paul. The statements made in the Gospel of St. John with regard to the Godhead of Christ are made quite as strongly, though in a shorter form, in the other three Gospels, and are strongest of all in the Epistles of St. Paul. "Declared to be the *Son of God* with power" (Romans i. 4). "Though He was *rich*, yet for our sakes He became poor" (2 Cor. viii. 9).

But let it not be supposed that there is any need of falling back upon this line of defence, impregnable though it is. Anyone who has not had time to study the evidence for the Gospels can have no idea of its immense strength, and it is because there are hundreds who do take an interest in these questions, and yet have no time to read even such

books in English as Dr. Salmon's "Introduction of the New Testament," Dr. Lightfoot's "Essay on Supernatural Religion," or Dr. Westcott's "Canon of the New Testament," that we propose to state, as shortly as possible, what is called the external evidence to our Gospels. It is impossible to discuss points with regard to the exact date of this authority or that document, but what is written below is approximately agreed upon by all fair-minded students, and moreover it seems better actually to write down what each authority says than to make general statements which might not be believed.

180 A.D.

WHAT IRENÆUS SAYS.

Irenæus was Bishop of Lyons in Gaul, but had been brought up in Asia Minor, and thus his testimony implies the belief of both places; he says as follows:—

"I can recall the very place where Polycarp used to sit and teach, his manner of speech, his *frequent references to St. John*, and to others who had seen our Lord; how he used to repeat from memory their discourses which he had heard from them concerning our Lord, His miracles, and His mode of teaching, and how, being instructed himself by those who were eye-witnesses of the life of the Word, there was in all that he said a *strict agreement with the Scriptures*."

What these Scriptures were he explains in another place—

"The world has four quarters; therefore it is fitting there should also be *four Gospels, John, Luke, Matthew, Mark*."

Now, as Dr. Salmon says, "test by the evidence of this one witness the theory that St. John's

Gospel made its first appearance about the year 150 or 160. Is it credible that, if so, Irenæus could have accepted a forgery, of which, according to the hypothesis, his master Polycarp had never told him a word? For Polycarp, who used to repeat from memory the discourses which he had heard from John, could not have been silent about this work, which if genuine would have been St. John's most precious legacy to the Church; and the fact that it had not been mentioned by Polycarp would convince Irenæus that it was an audacious imposture. And again, it is impossible that Polycarp could have accepted as genuine a work of which he had never heard his master, John, speak. There are, in short, three links in the chain—St. John, Polycarp, Irenæus—and it is impossible to dissever any one of them from the other two." But the testimony of Irenæus is merely the lower end of a chain of evidence which will reach back to the first century. Before, however, we begin to ascend, it is as well to see whether in other parts of the Church the Gospels were as firmly established as they were in Gaul and Asia Minor at the end of the second century.

WHAT CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA SAYS.

Clement was born in the middle of the second century, and became head of the Catechetical School at Alexandria; he had also travelled a great deal. Out of the mass of his allusions to the four Gospels, it is only necessary to extract one statement, in which he distinguishes them from an apocryphal Gospel—

“We have not this saying in the *four Gospels* which have been *handed down to us*; it is found in the Gospels according to the Egyptians.”

But there is one very noticeable point which will appeal very strongly to scholars as a mark of the antiquity of the Gospel even by that time, namely, that when we compare the quotations of Clement and Irenæus, we become aware of the existence of various readings, which means this—that by the end of the second century the Gospels had been *copied and recopied so often* that errors from transcription and otherwise had time to creep in, and different families of texts to establish themselves.

Once again, we have to make one more expedition to test another part of the ground from which we are to make our ascent; and this time we have to go to Carthage in Africa and ask

WHAT TERTULLIAN SAYS.

His evidence has this peculiarity, that he used a Latin version of the Scriptures, and not only constantly alludes to the four Gospels, but, what is still more interesting, criticises the translations of them, especially the translation of the beginning of St. John's Gospel, “the *Word* was with God.”

But what is the peculiar value of this testimony to us? Nothing short of this, that considerable time is necessary for a translation to gain popular currency, and therefore the existence of a popular translation at the end of the second century throws the date of the original very far back indeed. At a time when it is doubted if our Gospels were born, we find their children full grown.

CHAPTER II.

ARE THE GOSPELS GENUINE?

IT is proved therefore that in the year 180 A.D. the Gospels were as firmly established as they are to-day; they were as freely quoted as they are now, and as confidently ascribed to St. Matthew, St. Mark, St. Luke, and St. John. Now, with regard to any other ancient book, this by itself would be considered enough; no one disputes the authenticity of the plays of Terence, and yet the only evidence of their authenticity consists in quotations from them in Cicero and Horace a hundred years afterwards. The works of Tacitus and Catullus stand on much the same footing.

As therefore there *is no opposing external evidence whatever* to bring against the evidence given last time, we might, if we liked, cheerfully feel that our case was proved. But still, as the story contained in the Gospels is more important, and at first sight more startling than anything told as history by Terence, Tacitus, or Catullus, it is perhaps as well that our faith should be reinforced by the evidence of earlier writers. We proceed therefore to ascend step by step.

170 A.D.

WHAT THE MURATORIAN FRAGMENT SAYS.

This document is called Muratorian because it was first published in 1740 by the Italian scholar Muratori, from a manuscript in the Ambrosian Library at Milan. This manuscript contained a collection of extracts from various authors, and among others a copy of a mutilated manuscript of great age. This is the famous "Fragment," and is part of a list of books accepted as genuine at the time it was written. That time is fixed by scholars from internal evidence at 170 A.D.

It begins abruptly—

"... At which he was present, and so he set them down. The *third* book of the Gospel is designated according to Luke. This Luke was a physician who after the ascension of Christ wrote in his own name, having become a follower of St. Paul. Yet neither did he see the Lord in the flesh, and he too set down incidents as he was able to ascertain them. So he began his narrative from the birth of John.

"The *fourth* Gospel is the work of John, one of the (personal) disciples (of Christ)," &c., &c.

Here follows a long account of how John came to compose the Gospel which bears his name ; and then the writer goes on to speak of the Acts and the Epistles, but enough has been said to show the character of the evidence. Very few will doubt that if we had the whole of what is now a fragment, we should find the first book of the Gospel ascribed to St. Matthew, and the second to St. Mark. The broken sentence with which the fragment begins is evidently the last thing said about St. Mark.

150 A.D.

WHAT JUSTIN MARTYR SAYS.

Justin was a student of philosophy, who was converted to Christianity late in life. He wrote what is called an "Apology" or "Defence of Christianity," and addressed it to the reigning Emperor; he tells us (Apol. i. 46) that it was written in the year A.D. 150.

He informs us that Christians met in his day for worship on "the Lord's day," which is also called "the day of the sun," and that at these services "Memoirs of the Apostles" were read along with the writings of the prophets; these memoirs were called "Gospels," and were composed by Apostles, and by those who followed them.

As he is writing to heathen, he does not mention the names of the evangelists, which would not have interested his readers, but there is not much doubt where quotations such as these come from—

"Give to him that asketh, and from him that would borrow turn not away; for if ye lend to them of whom ye hope to receive, what new thing do ye? Even the publicans do this. Lay not up for yourselves treasure upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where robbers break through, but lay up for yourselves treasure in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt," &c., &c.

And so on, page after page. There is scarcely a prominent fact recorded in the four Gospels which is not recorded in Justin Martyr's quotations, and he records no facts which are not recorded in them. To take one instance alone: in his description of the Saviour's childhood, he tells us

“That Christ was descended from Abraham, through David—that the angel Gabriel was sent to announce his birth to the Virgin Mary—that this was a fulfilment of the prophecy of Isaiah (vii. 14)—that Joseph was forbidden in a vision to put away his espoused wife—that our Saviour’s birth was at Bethlehem, as foretold by Micah—that His parents went thither from Nazareth, where they dwelt in consequence of the enrolment of Cyrenius,” &c., &c.

The manger bed, the visit of the wise men, the name “Jesus,” the flight into Egypt, the massacre at Bethlehem, the work as a carpenter, all find their place in his narrative; and on the other hand we find there none of the fictions about the childhood of our Lord of which the apocryphal Gospels are full.

All we can say is this: either—and this is the most obvious conclusion—Justin Martyr had the four Gospels before him, and wove them into a harmonious narrative, or he is quoting from a fifth Gospel which tells an identical story with the other four; opponents of Christianity are welcome to whichever alternative they prefer.

HIS USE OF ST. JOHN.

Some however who are convinced by the above considerations that Justin Martyr used the first three Gospels still maintain that he did not use St. John; but whence did he get his oft-repeated “Logos” doctrine, except from the beginning of the fourth Gospel? or where, except in St. John, are we to find the origin of the following statement with regard to the baptism of new converts?

“They are brought by us where there is water, and are

regenerated in the same manner that we ourselves were regenerated. For they then receive the washing of water in the name of God the Father and Lord of the Universe, and of our Saviour Jesus Christ and of the Holy Spirit. For Christ also said, '*Except ye be born again, ye shall not enter the kingdom of heaven.*' Now that it is impossible for those who have once been born to enter *into their mother's womb*, is manifest to all."

Most of us will agree with Dr. Salmon's comment on this quotation: "I am sure it is equally manifest to all that there is here a striking coincidence with the discourse with Nicodemus recorded in John iii. 3-5."

In addition to this, there are numbers of verbal coincidences between Justin Martyr's teaching and St. John's, and substantial identity in his teaching about the Eucharist; and *all* of these have to be explained away if we are to resist the force of this cumulative evidence, which points to only one conclusion, viz. that so far from not knowing it, Justin formed his whole theology on the Gospel of St. John.

We have only space this time to add one more testimony; it is that of

JUSTIN MARTYR'S PUPIL, TATIAN.

In connection with this has occurred one of the most exciting literary discoveries of recent years. It was asserted by a writer of the twelfth century, who rejoices in the name of Dionysius Bar Salibi, that

"Tatian, the disciple of Justin, the philosopher and martyr, selected and patched together from the four Gospels, and

constructed what he called a 'Harmony of the Four Gospels.' On this work Ephraem wrote an exposition, and its commencement was 'In the beginning was the Word.'

Now observe the exciting nature of the problem: if Justin's pupil wrote a "Harmony of the Four," there must have been four Gospels, quite distinct from any other writings, in his and his tutor's days; moreover, if it began with "In the beginning was the Word," St. John's Gospel, of which that is the first verse, must have been one of them.

"If that commentary of Ephraem (a father of the fourth century) could only be found, it would settle the question, for in the commentary we should doubtless find the 'Harmony' embedded,"—so Bishop Lightfoot doubtless sighed, as he waged war in 1877 with the author of "Supernatural Religion." But all the time, hidden on his shelves in the disguise of an Armenian translation, as he tells us in 1889, was this very commentary—a fact which he speedily discovered when a Latin translation reached England from Venice in 1880.

The commentary is opened, is translated, and lo! it *is* written by Ephraem, it *is* on a "Harmony of the Four," it *does* begin with "In the beginning was the Word," and it settles for ever the question that the four Gospels, including the Gospel of St. John, were as much known and revered as they are to-day, in *the middle of the second century*; and to make assurance doubly sure, the work of Ephraem itself in an Arabic translation has been unearthed from the Vatican Library, and published in 1888.

CHAPTER III.



ARE THE GOSPELS GENUINE?



WE have now carried the evidence up to the middle of the second century, and we saw that Justin Martyr and his pupil Tatian used the same Gospels in the year 150 A.D. that we use in the year 1893.

We have now to ascend still higher up the stream of time, and leaving out the evidence to be derived from the Gospel put forth by Marcion about 140 A.D., which is clearly a mutilated Gospel of St. Luke, and which is especially valuable as coming from a heretic, we must proceed to consider

A.D. 125.

WHAT PAPIAS SAYS.

Now the surprises of history are many; it would considerably have astonished Pontius Pilate to have been told that his name would be a household name in the mouth of every child in "barbarous Britain," and that he would be one of the most famous men

in history, not at all because he was a grand Roman governor, but because he had judicially murdered a "Jewish enthusiast." So it would certainly have astonished Papias, the modest Bishop of Hierapolis at the beginning of the second century, to be told that he would be one of the most famous men in literature in the nineteenth; and he would have been all the more astonished if he had known that his fame depended on half a dozen sentences of his, which he could have written in a few minutes, preserved by the historian Eusebius. How does this come about?

According to Irenæus "Papias was a hearer of John, and a companion of Polycarp."

For some time this statement was a puzzle, because some one else says that he was martyred in 165 A.D., but Bishop Lightfoot, who tracks down his facts with the relentless pertinacity and the unswerving accuracy of a bloodhound, has shown that it was a man named "Papyrus" who was martyred then, and that there is no reason to doubt the statement of Irenæus, who, as being Polycarp's own pupil, was likely to know what he was talking about.

This Papias then wrote a book called "An Exposition of Oracles of the Lord," and his manner of composing it he describes as follows:—

"On any occasion when a person came in my way who had been a follower of the elders, I would enquire about the discourses of the elders—what was said by Andrew or by Peter or by Philip, or by Thomas or by James or by John or by Matthew, or any of the Lord's disciples; and what Aristion and the elder John, the disciples of the Lord, say. For I did not think that I could get so much profit from

the contents of books as from the utterances of a living and abiding voice."

An attempt has been made to apply his disparaging remark about "the books" to the Gospels, and even if it could be so applied it would at least prove their existence; but it has been shown conclusively that the reference is to the productions of false interpreters of them, whom he describes elsewhere as "those who have so very much to say," and whom he rightly despises in comparison with the words of the disciples themselves.

That he was not ignorant of the Gospels may be gathered from

HIS REFERENCE TO ST. MARK'S GOSPEL.

"Mark, having become the interpreter of Peter, wrote down accurately everything that he remembered, without however recording in order what was either said or done by Christ. For neither did he hear the Lord nor did he follow Him, but afterwards, as I have said, attended Peter, who adapted his instructions to the needs of his hearers and had no design of giving a connected account of the Lord's oracles. So then Mark made no mistake, while he thus wrote down some things as he remembered them, for he made it his one care not to omit anything that he heard or to set down any false statements therein."

What an accurate description of our present Gospel of St. Mark this is will be obvious to those who know the Gospel. The statements of Papias are all borne out by its internal signs of being the substance of St. Peter's preaching, its fragmentary character, and its want of any attempt at chronological order.

From St. Mark we pass to

HIS REFERENCE TO ST. MATTHEW'S GOSPEL.

“So then Matthew composed the oracles in the Hebrew language, and each one *interpreted* them as he could.”

We have italicised the word “interpreted” because it is the key to the difficulty of the Gospel of St. Matthew now being in Greek. If Papias had said that “each one *interprets* them as he *can*,” viz. at the time Papias himself was writing, we should be at a loss to know why Papias did not know of our Greek translation, but as a matter of fact his very words imply that the necessity for this casual interpretation had passed away; *they imply the existence of a recognized Greek translation when Papias wrote.*

A further attempt to undermine the evidence of this reference to our Gospel of St. Matthew has been made by translating the word meaning “oracles” as “discourses,” and then arguing that such a description does not fit the Gospel as we know it; but there is no reason whatever why it should be so translated. It is the same word, translated “Oracles of God” (Rom. iii. 2, and again Heb. v. 12), which includes the whole Old Testament Scriptures, history and all, and there is no reasonable doubt that in calling his book “The Exposition of the Oracles of God” Papias meant it to be an interpretation of the now well-known Scriptures of the New Testament.

But we must now face the more difficult question relating to the evidence of Papias.

WHY DOES HE NOT MENTION THE GOSPELS OF
ST. LUKE AND ST. JOHN ?

This question has often been asked in tones of triumph. We are told that Papias—to use the current phrase—“knew nothing” of the Gospels of St. Luke and St. John.

But wait a moment: how are we to be so sure he “knew nothing”? The sentences above which we have quoted have been preserved by Eusebius the historian. But what kind of sentences does Eusebius tell us that he is going to set himself to discover in old writers and to record? *Sentences which bear on disputed points.*

This principle he not only tells us in his preface is going to be his guiding one in selection, but he acts upon it time after time in dealing with books we know from other sources all about; thus he collects numerous references to disputed books like the Epistle to the Hebrews and the Book of Revelation, but not one to the undisputed Epistles of St. Paul. What follows then?

Clearly this: that there is no more monstrous literary fraud than the argument from “the silence of Eusebius,” and that you might just as well argue that the author of a book of “Oxford Reminiscences” *knows nothing* of the University of Cambridge because he does not mention it, as that Papias knows nothing of the Gospels of St. Luke and St. John because he does not quote them.


In fact, the argument is all the other way; the dangerous “argument from silence” returns, like a boomerang, upon those who first used it.

If only books are quoted in Eusebius about which there was some question or dispute, as there seems to have been about the translation of St. Matthew's Gospel or the chronological accuracy of St. Mark's, what conclusion do we draw about those which are not mentioned? Clearly that *there was no dispute or question about them*. The very reference in Papias' account of St. Mark to its defect in chronological order shows that he had in his mind some other Gospel whose order he preferred. Dr. Lightfoot thinks this was St. John's. Dr. Salmon thinks it was St. Luke. "Who shall decide when doctors disagree?" But this much is certain—Papias, "a hearer of John, and a companion of Polycarp," would be as likely to think it necessary to say "John published his Gospel, while living at Ephesus in Asia," as for a writer in a modern Review to announce as a startling piece of news: "Napoleon the First was a great general who made war against England;" and if he had done so, it would have been such a commonplace that Eusebius would have been sure not to have quoted it.

CHAPTER IV.



ARE THE GOSPELS GENUINE?

E have now carried the evidence for the Gospels up to 125 A.D., and it is obvious that, even supposing we could go no further, we have really settled the point in question. If history proves anything, it proves "the existence of a Christian Society from the Apostolic age, strong in discipline, clear in faith, and jealous of innovation;" this is the verdict of Bishop Westcott. Would such a society, fresh from the teaching of the Apostles themselves, allow forgeries to be palmed off on them in the brief period of fifty years? When, later on, a presbyter sought to recommend the story of Thecla by ascribing to it the name of St. Paul, he was degraded from his office; would the early Church have been less severe on those who tried to palm off on them forgeries in the name of two Apostles such as St. Matthew and St. John? On the other hand, we must not expect too many direct references in the first age to the written Gospels, for the following reasons:—

EARLIEST REFERENCES FRAGMENTARY, AND
WHY.

The first generation of Christians, which contained few learned men, and which was in constant expectation of their Master's return, did not give birth to many books. Christianity was still a "life," and not a history. Just as from the point of view of doctrine they were content to live "in the fellowship of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost" without defining the doctrine of the Trinity, so the last thing which occurred to them was the necessity of affording to future ages written evidence as to the existence of Gospels. The Gospels to them were their own evidence, and merely reflected in a longer or a shorter form the oral tradition and teaching in which they had all been brought up and into which they had been all baptized. With such early days are we dealing now that it is sometimes uncertain whether the quotations about to be given are from the written records, or from the unwritten teaching which they embody and reflect. With that caution, let us open our earliest records and see

90—110

WHAT THE APOSTOLIC FATHERS SAY.

CLEMENT OF ROME

is generally reckoned as the earliest writer after the authors of the New Testament writings. When his history is disentangled from the romances which

have clustered round his name, all we know of him is that he was *an immediate disciple of the Apostles, and overseer of the Church of Rome*. He says in his Epistle to the Romans :—

“Remember the words of our Lord Jesus, for He said, ‘Woe to that man; it were better for him that he had not been born than that he should offend one of my elect. It were better for him that a millstone should be tied about his neck, and that he should be drowned in the sea, than that he should offend one of my little ones’” (section 46). For this compare Matt. xxvi. 24; Mark xiv. 21.

Again, he says :—

“Especially remembering the words of our Lord Jesus which He spake, teaching gentleness and longsuffering. For thus He said, ‘Be ye merciful, that ye may obtain mercy; forgive, that it may be forgiven to you. As ye do, so shall it be done to you; as ye give, so shall it be given to you; as ye judge, so shall ye be judged; as ye show kindness, so shall kindness be shown to you; with what measure ye mete, with the same shall it be measured unto you’” (chap. xiii). For this compare Matt. v. 7; vi. 14; vii. 2-12.

IGNATIUS,

who was martyred at Rome in the reign of Trajan about 110, on his way from Antioch to Rome, wrote letters to the Churches of Asia, among others to Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna, in which he says :—

“Be ye as wise as a serpent, and harmless as the dove” (chap. ii). Compare Matt. x. 16.

Again, in his letters to the Romans he speaks of

“The bread of God, which is the flesh of Jesus Christ” (chap. vii). Compare John vi. 51.

He speaks of "the prince of this world," "living water," and "the plant of My Father," all of which expressions those who know St. John's and St. Matthew's Gospels will recognize.

POLYCARP

himself, Bishop of Smyrna, at the end of the first and beginning of the second century, and a pupil of St. John, in the one short Epistle of his which has been preserved, says:—

"Remember what the Lord said in His teaching, 'Judge not, that ye may not be judged,' &c.

"'Blessed are the poor, and those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven.'" Compare Matt. vii. 1; vi. 14; Luke vi. 37, &c.

Again, he says:—

"Begging the Omniscient God not to lead us into temptation, as the Lord said, '*The Spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak*'" (chap. vii). Compare Matt. xxvi. 41; Mark xiv. 38.

These direct quotations very inadequately represent the witness of this Epistle, which breathes the Gospel and New Testament Epistles in every line.

Where, for instance, except from St. John, could Polycarp have caught the expression

"Whosoever does not confess that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is Antichrist"?

Once again, there is the famous

LETTER OF BARNABAS.

This was not written by Barnabas the Apostle, who probably died in 62 A.D., before the destruction of Jerusalem, whereas this letter alludes to that event. It was written, however, by someone who

knew the Apostles, and is quoted with great respect by all early writers, being placed by the great critics in the year A.D. 97. Now this Epistle (chap. iv) contains the following remarkable quotation:—

“Let us take heed lest, *as it is written*, we be found. . . . Many called, but few chosen.”—Matt. xxii. 14.

This “as it is written” has been a great stumbling-block to those who want to make out *nothing* was written at that time, and so long as the quotation was only known from a Latin translation it was possible to assert that if we only had the Greek there would be found no such statement. Unfortunately for this theory, the Greek text did come to light, as part of the newly-discovered Sinaitic Manuscript, and there stood

“as it is written,”

as large as life.

It is now asserted that the quotation is from the book of Esdras, where the words are, however, “many are created and few shall be saved;” or from *some lost apocryphal book*, or, more ingenious still, was used by Barnabas through a lapse of memory (Scholten). Less ingenious, and perhaps, we may add, more open-minded critics will turn from these futile guesses to the obvious conclusion that the words are quoted from the place where they *are* written, which is St. Matthew’s Gospel.

After all, however, the really important thing for us to know, is not whether these quotations are from written Gospels or from oral traditions, so long as both are telling the same story, but whether our Gospels truly represent the original Christian

story. "Is the Christian story true?" that is the main point, and therefore it is to be observed that "no quotation contains any element which is not substantially preserved in our Gospels."

Whatever others might or might not have done, Clement, Ignatius, Polycarp, and the writer of the Epistle of Barnabas would have felt at home at our services, when they had once mastered the tongue of "barbarous Britain," for as they listened to the lessons, the same story could be repeated to them which they had heard from the lips of St. John and even read in his writings, and the writings of St. Matthew and others, and as they joined in the great Eucharist they would have rejoiced to find echoing on down the ages the old refrain,

"Holy! Holy! Holy! Lord God of Hosts! Heaven and earth are full of Thy glory. Glory be to Thee, O Lord most High."

CHAPTER V.

WHO WROTE THE GOSPEL OF ST. JOHN?

MUCH has been written about what is called the external evidence, but let us look at the book itself. The first thing which is clear is that it must have been written by

A JEW.

The writer knows the Old Testament thoroughly; he notes with great care the attendance at Jewish feasts; he is quite at home with Jewish customs, such as those with regard to purification, and allowing bodies to remain on the cross over the Sabbath. The state of feeling between the Jews and the Samaritans, the ideas current at that time among the Jews of a connection between blindness and sin, all come out in the narrative in the most natural way possible; and it may safely be said that no Gnostic or Gentile of the second century would ever have invented the statement, "Salvation is of the Jews."

But we may go further: it must have been written by

A JEW OF PALESTINE.

The writer knows intimately the geography of

Palestine ; he can tell you about the obscure Cana in Galilee ; he knows the exact distance between Bethany and Jerusalem ; and the precise situation of the deep well near Sychar, now almost certainly identified with the modern mud village of " Askar."

Jerusalem, reduced as it was to a mere ruin by the siege in A.D. 70, stands perfectly clear with all its nooks and corners to the writer's mind. Bethesda, with its five porches ; the Pool Siloam, " which by interpretation is ' Sent ' ;" Solomon's porch ; " the place called the pavement ;" the place of a skull, nigh to the city ; the temple with its animals for sacrifice, its sheep, oxen, doves, and money-changers—who but a Jew of Palestine would know all this ?

Again, local jealousies, known from other sources to be existing, all appear with unconscious artlessness in the narrative, " Can any good thing come out of Nazareth ?" " Out of Galilee ariseth no prophet ;" " This people who knoweth not the law are cursed ;" and his assertion—terribly rash if he was a forger of the second century—" that forty and six years was this temple in building," coincides with the chronology of Josephus.

These same considerations lead on to the third point ; he was

A JEW OF THE FIRST CENTURY.

The forged Decretals were exposed by the fact that they treated of controversies and topics, not current at the time they were supposed to be written, but it is just otherwise with this Gospel,

The expectation of the Messiah as a King, the attempt to make Christ "King," the fear of the rulers that "the Romans would take away our place and nation," the fear of Pilate, lest he should be accused to the emperor, are all instantaneously photographed in a way in which it would have been impossible to have reproduced them in the second century. The destruction of Jerusalem put an end to all this. What Gnostic of the second century would have cared for the discussions on the breach of the Sabbath, or whether Christ should come from Bethlehem or Galilee?

But further; the writer claims four times (John i. 14, xix. 35, xxi. 24, 1 John i. 1) to be

AN EYE-WITNESS.

Quite apart from his claim, the narratives themselves would have led us to a similar conclusion. There are touches in almost every narrative which show this: the effect of the turning of the water into wine was that "His disciples believed on Him," of the cleansing of the temple that "His disciples remembered, 'the zeal of thine house hath eaten me up';" a forger would have been more likely to have portrayed the effect on the guests or strangers present.

Again, who but an eye-witness could have given such minute particulars as we find in this Gospel? Such a discourse took place "in the treasury," another "at the tenth hour," this miracle was performed at the seventh hour, this remark was made by Philip, that by Andrew, Thomas, or Judas (not Iscariot). It was Malchus whose ear was cut off.

But of all the narratives, the account of the early morning of the first Easter Day bears the most unmistakable marks of being written by an eye-witness; the running of Peter and the unnamed disciple to the sepulchre; the greater speed of the younger, and the characteristic boldness of Peter shown in his going in at once; the subtle and inimitable touch in the words, "the other disciple went in and saw and believed;" the truthful refraining from any account of an appearance to them, and the ascription of the first appearance to Mary Magdalene, bear to any unprejudiced mind the conviction of literal truth, and are wonderfully confirmed by the shape and size of the tomb lately unearthed outside Jerusalem, which explains "the stooping down and looking in."

But if the writer was an eye-witness who could it have been but

THE APOSTLE JOHN?

He knows what only the "inner circle" could know, he tells us what they thought, he is identified in the epilogue as "the disciple whom Jesus loved" (John xxi. 24). He must therefore have been one of the select three—Peter, James, and John—who were admitted, according to the other Gospels, to terms of greater intimacy; he could not have been James, for he was put to death long before the Gospel was written (Acts xii. 2), and the disciple whom Jesus loved is repeatedly in the Gospel distinguished from St. Peter; it can only therefore have been St. John. That it was written by him has been the unbroken tradition of the Christian

Church from the time it was written to the present century.

But someone may feel inclined to ask,

WHY THEN SHOULD THE AUTHORSHIP BE
QUESTIONED?

Chiefly because of the startling nature of the contents of the Gospel. If the Gospel was written by St. John the beloved disciple—and there is no real evidence of any other John ever having existed (for John the elder referred to by Papias is probably the Apostle himself)—then Christ claimed undoubtedly to be the Son of God. He makes this claim in the other Gospels as well ; but in St. John's Gospel He says distinctly, " I and my Father are one (thing) ;" " He that hath seen Me, hath seen the Father ;" " Before Abraham was, I am." .

Another reason is, that the discourses He utters are longer and more detailed, and more " dogmatic" on the subject of the Sacraments than anything in the other Gospels.

But when we come to think of it these facts really tell the other way. We are informed by Irenæus (Eusebius, v. 20), in the year 180, when the Gospel was accepted everywhere as St. John's, that He (Irenæus) can remember the very place where Polycarp used to sit and tell him the Christian story, as he (Polycarp) had heard it from the lips of St. John, and Irenæus adds, that what he said was " altogether in accordance with the Scriptures." Both Polycarp and Irenæus were famous and leading Bishops in the Church.

Among these Scriptures, Irenæus, everyone admits, reckoned St. John's Gospel. Is it conceivable that Polycarp in his lifetime would have allowed a Gospel to be circulated in the Church, purporting to be St. John's, and yet different to St. John's teaching, when the most treasured days of his life were those spent at St. John's feet? Why, the whole of Asia would have rung with his denunciation of the fraud! Is it possible, again, that Irenæus, who had heard St. John's version of the Christian story through Polycarp, could have stated that it was "altogether in accordance with Scriptures," if one of the Scriptures contradicted the story so flagrantly? The startling character of the Gospel is one of the strongest guarantees of its genuineness. A new Gospel, founded on the other three, and practically similar to them, might conceivably have crept into existence, though even in that case, when the Scriptures were being read out loud every Sunday in the Church, it could scarcely have crept into recognition; but there is only one explanation of such a Gospel as the fourth being accepted so quietly by Polycarp and Irenæus, and it is this—*they knew St. John had written it.*

CHAPTER VI.



PARTICULAR SAYINGS.

HAVING now in the first five chapters dealt with difficulties raised with regard to the authorship of the Gospel, it is time for us to turn now to their contents, and to consider the meaning of passages in them, which are not plain at first sight, or which are daily held up to ridicule by those who make it their business to pick holes in the Bible.

“TAKE NO THOUGHT FOR THE MORROW”

(Matt. vi. 34).

This exhortation of our Lord's is held up to scorn as discrediting His teaching, and showing what an unpractical religion Christianity is. “What would you think of a man,” is the current scoff, “who went out on a stormy day without an umbrella or coat, and expected to be kept from getting wet, or of a man who carried on his business in a haphazard kind of way without thinking of the morrow at all?”

A very little knowledge of Greek, or even a glance at the revised version, would save one from

these mistakes, if one wished to be saved. "Be not therefore anxious for the morrow, for the morrow will be anxious for itself" is the translation of the revised version, and puts a very different complexion at once upon the advice given: "over-anxiety," or what we call "worry," is admitted by all to be a bad thing, even from the point of view of this life, which as a matter of fact it constantly shortens; how inconsistent it is with a firm belief in the Providence of God is also obvious even to those who have not the blessing of that belief.

There are plenty of passages in the New Testament, urging as a Christian duty the care of wife and children, such as "If any man care not for them of his own household, he has denied the faith" (1 Tim. v. 8); and the strenuous use of all our "talents," such as intellect, forethought, strength, and survey, is urged by our Lord Himself in the Parable of the Talents: "Be good bankers till I come" (Luke xix. 13) is a short saying which may fairly be placed as supplementary teaching beside "Take no thought for the morrow." The industrious provident man who at the same time is kept from "worry" by his belief in God's Providence is the ideal set before us, and is an ideal which to a large extent is within the reach of all.

We may say in passing that distrust of the revised version is a great mistake; even those who would not like to hear it read in church will find it very useful as an explanatory commentary, and "seekers after truth" who really want to find truth will discover that many of their difficulties vanish in the light of a more accurate translation into

modern English. All do not see this; a gentleman who quoted an assertion from the Bible that "Cain killed Abel with the jawbone of an ass," on being handed a revised version to verify his quotation, refused it as a tainted thing, and on being informed that the passage hardly stood in that form even in the authorised translation, said it was so in the "Roman Catholic Bible." There was, unfortunately, no copy of the "Douay" version available for reference at the moment.

A far more serious difficulty is to be found in

"RESIST NOT HIM THAT IS EVIL"

(Matt. v. 38, 42),

with its definite illustrations of "turning the other cheek," and "giving thy cloak to whoever takes away thy coat."

There are two things to be said about this; first, what Mr. Gore has said in his essay on "The Social Doctrine of the Sermon on the Mount." "Our Lord aims at a social end by laying a severe claim on the individual character." "Surely," people say, "society would be undone if I gave simply to him that asked me, or rewarded the thief by bestowing on him more than he had taken." The answer is: "Our Lord is here laying His requirement primarily on the individual life considered apart. Elsewhere He provides for the social good, as such, as where He bids the offended brother carry his plaint first to the offender; then, if his conscience is not awakened, to a small group of Christians; at last, to the whole Christian body;

and to proceed to an extremity in exacting and expressing moral judgment upon the wrong-doer (St. Matt. xviii. 15, 18). But this social judgment can only safely be put into practice by individuals who are themselves rising above the motives of personal pride or self-seeking. Therefore, in any sphere where the individual profit or pride is concerned, or so far as in any transaction those considerations alone are concerned, we are to simply suppress our selfish selves, and 'lay ourselves in the dust to them that go over.' When we are, in this sense, really meek personally, we can safely execute the Divine wrath socially, that is, we can be worthy, effective members of the kingdom of God. Thus, throughout the Sermon on the Mount, our Lord is aiming at a social end, mainly through the elimination of selfishness, in its various forms of lust, pride, greed, ambition, censoriousness, out of the individual character."

In other words the passage must be balanced by others if we want to reach the full teaching of our Lord; the humblest and meekest Christian has in certain cases, from a sense of duty, both to refuse alms and to prosecute offenders.

And the other thing to be said is this—we prosaic Englishmen often forget that we are dealing with Eastern phraseology: the truth or principle inculcated is an eternal truth or principle, but it comes to us in an Eastern dress; this startling and graphic way of putting things would not be misunderstood in the East in the way it easily might be in the West.

Practically, however, our chief danger is lest in

our extreme care not to observe these precepts in the letter we fail to observe them at all; the touchiness of Christians, their readiness to take offence, their spite and petty revenge, are a constant source of scandal; and even when we are in the right it has been truly said "Life is too short to turn round and kick every dog that snaps at our heels."

And so again with the old difficulty about

"HATING ONE'S FATHER AND MOTHER"

(Luke xiv. 26).

No one seriously thinks that Jesus Christ—the Pattern Son—could mean us to hate our fathers and mothers; such an idea is not only ridiculous in itself, but is shown historically to be a wrong one; whatever Christianity has failed to do, it has at least transformed every home where it is heartily practised. An East London father said only the other day of his son who has been brought up as a regular communicant: "It has made him the best of all at home," and his experience is only the experience of the fathers and mothers of heathen Rome; historically, Christianity has made boys and girls better sons and better daughters.

What, then, does the passage mean?

It is a graphic and forcible way of saying that when a man's clear duty to Christ cuts across his duty to his father or mother, the latter must give way; after all is said and done, "children and the fruit of the womb are an heritage and gift that cometh of the Lord," and it is the parents' own fault if they lay on their children anything incon-

sistent with their duty to their common Lord; if the father interferes with his child's prayers, if the mother tries to make her daughter aid and abet her in an evil or dishonest life, they are doing the devil's work, and not God's; they forfeit their trust; they are not carrying out the fundamental conditions on which their authority as parents rest, and have only themselves to blame if their children turn with horror from their evil suggestions to the primal authority, which their authority on earth was meant to represent, but now misrepresents.

It has, however, been further asserted that our Lord Himself was rude to His mother, when he said,

“WOMAN, WHAT HAVE I TO DO WITH THEE?”

(John ii. 4).

The occasion was the marriage feast at Cana of Galilee, when the wine had run short, and His mother suggested to Him that He should use His miraculous powers to remedy the deficiency.

It is true that the saying was meant to show her that she must not allow her motherly authority to interfere with the times or occasions on which He should use His Divine Power; for deciding whether “His hour was come,” either to do or to die, He absolutely waited upon the direct Will of His Father in Heaven, and the remonstrance is totally inconsistent with the position which the Roman Church assigns to Mary; but on the other hand the remonstrance is couched in the gentlest terms: the word translated “woman” is a respectful salutation in Greek, and might be represented by “mother”

or "lady," and the literal translation of the rest is "What (is there) to me and to thee?" "There is no such common ground between us," He seems to say, "as will warrant me in working a miracle in deference to the human wish even of a mother."

It was well at once at the beginning of His ministry to break this to her lest it should lead in the future to misunderstanding; that it was done with the greatest courtesy and respect we may be sure from the loving relations which existed between the two, up to the very hour of death, when His last earthly care was for His mother.

CHAPTER VII.



PARTICULAR SAYINGS.

IN a weekly paper published by the Secularists there appeared not long ago an article entitled, "The Mistakes of Jesus;" we will take them one by one as dwelt upon by the writer. After alluding to the "atrocious statement" about hating one's father and mother, which was explained last time, the writer next selects the statement

"ALL THAT EVER CAME BEFORE ME ARE THIEVES
AND ROBBERS" (John x. 8).

This is said to be one of those sayings which, "if really ever uttered by man, looks much like arrogance carried to the point of insanity."

But was it only a man who uttered them? that is just where the point comes in. If it was only a man who said "I am the Light of the World," "I and My Father are one," then it is impossible to reconcile such statements with the sincerity and humility of a good man; but the fact that Jesus was so humble and sincere, and yet made them, added to the fact that His claim was justified both

by His "mighty deeds" and His subsequent resurrection from the dead, makes it impossible to hold the view that He was merely man. The claim was the claim to be God, the deeds were the deeds of God.

"Not God, not good" is an old dilemma which every Christian admits, and it is therefore idle to attack these statements, which, if Christianity is true, is just what Christians would expect. The whole essence of Christianity, so far as its creed goes, is believing Christ to be the Son of God; show the incredibility of that if you can, but it is mere waste of breath to hold up to scorn one by one statements which everyone admits would be arrogant and ridiculous in the mouth of a mere man.

Looked at from this point of view and taken in connection with the context, in which Christ is setting Himself before His disciples as the Door, the saying becomes perfectly intelligible. For three or four centuries before Christ came there had been a succession of teachers who had increasingly corrupted the Word of God. Ezekiel, in the 34th chapter, had warned his people against the advent of such teachers: "Woe be to the shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves. Ye eat the fat, and ye clothe you with the wool, ye kill them that are fed, but ye feed not the flock," &c. There was, however, a spiritual Israel all the time who refused to believe that in the Scribes and Pharisees of the day the true "Coming One" was to be found; they were "the sheep who did not hear them," they looked for "the consolation

of Israel ;” and when the aged Simeon took up the Child Jesus in his arms and said, “ Lord ! now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have (at last) seen Thy salvation,” he was the mouthpiece of a hidden minority who had held to the conviction that “ those who came before Him were thieves and robbers.”

The same historical facts justify the severity of the warning.

“ WOE UNTO YOU, SCRIBES AND PHARISEES,
HYPOCRITES ! ” (Matt. xxiii. 13).

There is a time when plain speaking is necessary. With a callous public conscience, with a hierarchy eaten up with pride and self-complacency, with an official teaching which said that duties to parents could be set aside by verbal quibbles, with religion reduced to the washing of brazen vessels and tables, with the House of Prayer crowded up with traffic for the enrichment of the “ sons of Annas,” what wonder that the great social and religious Reformer needed strong language to try and tear away the veil from the eyes of the false teachers.

He was tender enough to the weary and heavy laden, He was gentle enough to the children—everyone admits that—it is from Him that the modern world has learned to be kind to the sick and suffering and charitable to the poor ; “ bearing one another’s burdens ” has become a “ law ” of religion because it is the law of *Christ* ; are we right to quarrel with Him for His righteous indignation ? It is a spurious sentimentality which teaches that we ought never to be angry ; we ought often to be

much more angry than we are ; it is only personal anger for personal slights which is deprecated ; the world has been reformed by the righteous indignation of righteous souls, and it is a thing to be remembered by those who teach, whether they teach Secularism or Christianity, that the sight which excited the boiling indignation of the most righteous and loving soul that ever lived was the sight of teachers who either deliberately or in wilful ignorance misled the people.

“Every idle word that men shall speak,” we are told, “they shall give account of in the day of judgment ;” how much more every prepared lecture or written article ; we may take one side or the other, but most indubitably we shall have to give a rigorous account of which side we have taken and why we have taken it. And that consideration explains the next passage, which is in the same article held up to scorn as uncharitable.

“ THAT SEEING THEY MAY SEE AND NOT PER-
CEIVE ” (Mark iv. 11).

The passage is a long one ; a reason is being assigned for teaching by parables, “those without,” “that seeing they may see and not perceive, and hearing they may hear and not understand ; lest haply they should turn again and it should be forgiven them.”

“Here is an unkind statement,” the Secularists say ; “we are those without, and we are not to have any plain teaching, but only parables, for the express purpose that we may not see, even though

we try, and to avoid the least chance of our perhaps turning to better things.”

Plausible as this interpretation is, it entirely breaks down when brought face to face with the following facts. First of all the passage is a quotation from the prophet Isaiah, and will be found word for word in Isaiah vi. 9, 10; the prophet is told to announce what will happen to Israel in consequence of ignoring the light for years; the result will be that they will not be able to see it. Exactly the same thing happens in nature; the animals mentioned by Professor Drummond as found in a cave of Kentucky had perfect organization for seeing, but the power of sight was gone in consequence of the years during which they had not used this power in the dark cave; they had eyes but saw not!

So it is throughout the physical world, and such thoroughgoing evolutionists as all Secularists are cannot fail to admit this; powers are developed by being used; they dwindle and die if neglected; it is by constant use the hare develops his speed, the tiger his craft.

What then is this announcement made by Isaiah and repeated in the Gospels? Simply an announcement that the same law holds good in the spiritual world; we all have the power of apprehending spiritual truths, but it has to be used; persistent refusal to use it results in an inability to use it. This meaning is even clearer in St. Matthew's report of the saying, which is fuller than St. Mark's; he says this blindness happened, “*because* seeing they see not.”

What then is the object of speaking in parables, which the context shows was the occasion which gave rise to the quotation? Precisely the same object with which we temper light to the partially blind; to flash light in their eyes is at once cruel and useless; to eyes which refused to see the plain and searching light displayed in the Sermon on the Mount parables were the most merciful way of conveying light; they still gave a chance to those who would use it, they concealed the full light from those who had not the smallest intention of seeing or using any light at all.

Translated into modern days, it comes to this: we have our belief or unbelief far more in our own hands than we sometimes think; "to him that hath shall be given" is a law of the Divine working; if we fall into a state of penal blindness it is not because there has not been plenty of light poured out upon us, but because we have failed to use it, and so far from the object being to prevent men turning there is no desire so dear to the heart of God as that each one of his children may begin to use what little power yet remains, and "turn again and be healed."

CHAPTER VIII.



PARTICULAR SAYINGS.

BEFORE dealing with the rest of the difficulties urged under the head of the "Mistakes of Jesus," we have much pleasure in acknowledging an encouraging corroboration, from a well-known scholar, of our interpretation of the passage "That seeing, they may see and not perceive." He points out that the passage, according to a well supported reading, continues, "*If peradventure God would give them repentance, then I will heal them;*" showing clearly that no one is so anxious as God to have the penal blindness removed.

We take then, rapidly, the rest of the so-called "Mistakes of Jesus:" the parables of the "Unjust Judge" and the "King's Feast" are said to be of questionable morality, but surely only to those who misunderstand them.

THE PARABLE OF THE UNJUST JUDGE

(Luke xviii. 1-8).

is merely an illustration from current life, taken to enforce a special truth, and no one denies that

there were such people as unjust judges in those days ; in all probability widows in Eastern cities were little cared for until the world learned Christ's law of love. The case of a selfish judge, who was induced at last to do justice to a widow in consequence of her unceasing prayer, is taken to enforce the lesson that "men ought always to pray and not to faint." The argument is what is called an *à fortiori* one ; "If a selfish judge can be induced by importunity to hear prayer, *how much more* will a loving Father hear prayer ; wherefore pray on in faith and hope." Where the immorality comes in, it is a little hard to see.

Similarly with regard to

THE PARABLE OF THE KING'S FEAST
(Matt. xxii. 1-14).

The only possible part of it which can be even misinterpreted into being immoral is turning out the man who had no wedding garment, but when we understand the parable that is the very part which puts morality at its highest value. The first invited guests, the Jews, would not come, so the Gentiles from "the partings of the highways" were brought in, "both bad and good," and the wedding was furnished with guests. If, however, the parable had ended there, it might have been open to the objection that it did not matter whether the guests were bad or good. Here comes in the story of the scrutiny of the guests ; it was the custom of Eastern kings to furnish their guests with suitable garments which they could have free for the asking. The case of a guest who broke through the first rule of

Eastern courtesy is taken to illustrate a man who thought it did not matter whether he was "good or bad" in the Kingdom of God; he soon finds out his mistake; a searching eye is on him; if he has not appropriated the grace so freely offered him, and so "put on the Lord Jesus Christ,"—that is, the holy character which alone can fit for a holy place, he cannot remain in that holy place, he is cast out; "with the clean thou must be clean; with the holy thou must learn holiness." The lesson may be a stern one; *immoral* is the last thing it is.

Again, there is a touch of Jewish prejudice, it is said, in our Lord's answer to the request of the Syrophœnician woman that he could not heal her daughter—

"I WAS NOT SENT BUT UNTO THE LOST SHEEP
OF THE HOUSE OF ISRAEL"

(Matt. xv. 24).

But, if so, why did He grant her request? The very story shows that, just as with the disciples at Emmaus, "He made as though He would have gone further," in order to draw on their faith to invite Him into their home, so here "He makes as though He will not heal," to draw out the loving faith which has been a monument and example to all people for all time.

And in what He says He states the exact truth; He had a primary mission to the Jews, and at this time in His ministry He was fulfilling that mission. It was God Who had chosen out the Jews, and it was not for God's Son to disregard His Father's

original purpose ; the Jews had been given a special mission to the world ; they had not fulfilled it, but it was fitting and right to give them a last chance. Hence our Lord, even while He denounces the hypocrisy of the Scribes and Pharisees, always speaks with respect of their office : " They sit in Moses' seat," He says. Even while He is preparing to supersede the Jewish Church by a world-wide Catholic Church, He still respects their old mission — " Salvation is of the Jews."

But that this natural and fitting respect for a commission given by His Father can be construed into Jewish prejudice is shown to be absurd by nearly every word He speaks ; it is a *Samaritan* who is held up as the ideal of a kind neighbour ; it is a *Roman* centurion's servant who is healed equally with the daughter of the ruler of the synagogue ; it was the advent of some *Greeks* who wished to see Him which made Him cry, " The hour is come that the Son of Man should be glorified." Then again, the grand promise, " I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto Me," can scarcely be accused of being tinged with Jewish prejudice, to say nothing of the ringing command which echoes down to this generation, and will echo on down the ages to generations which are yet unborn, " Go ye into *all the world* and preach the Gospel to *every creature*." To this day it is one of the miracles of history, that, living at a time when national feeling was strong, and local feeling ran high, Jesus Christ was so little tinged by either that He is looked upon as the one Catholic Man appealing equally to the conscience and imagination

of Celt and Teuton, "Barbarian, Scythian, bond or free."


The extreme weakness, not to say feebleness, of such an objection may serve to show once and for all how little even a hostile critic can find to lay hold of, when he sits down to enumerate the "Mistakes of Jesus."

CHAPTER IX.



PARTICULAR SAYINGS.

“HE THAT BELIEVETH NOT SHALL BE DAMNED”
(Mark xvi. 16).

HERE is no necessity for discussing the genuineness of the last few verses of St. Mark. That would be a very poor way of evading the difficulties which we find contained in them. Whatever may be the history of these verses, it would be dishonest for us to deny that the substance of what they contain has been part of the belief of the Christian Church from the start. We have already, by implication, explained in previous papers the sense in which we understand this statement, that “*He that disbelieveth shall be condemned*” (R. V.). It is not more sweeping than many other acknowledged sayings of our Lord, such as “He that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.” Both statements are quite in accordance with our Lord’s method of stating broadly and strikingly general principles, leaving the qualifying clauses to be inferred from the rest of His teaching.

In other places He has explained what this means. He has said that circumstances and opportunities of knowledge will be taken into account

in determining "the many stripes" and "the few stripes;" and He has also stated the engine of judgment: "The Word that he hath heard, the same shall judge him at the last day." There will be no injustice, or even appearance of injustice, at the last day. "Every man will give an account of himself to God;" and, among other things, an account of the revelation he has, or might have, received. He will have to state his reasons for not accepting it; whether they will be valid or not will be seen at that day. Our Lord's statement seems to imply that the man who does not accept it condemns himself.

"IN MY NAME SHALL THEY CAST OUT DEVILS"
(Mark xvi. 17).

This again is entirely in accordance with the passages which represent our Lord as "casting out devils." The "Demonology" of the New Testament is a difficult and obscure subject; but there is one thing at least on which we may feel certain, and it is, that our Lord did not, as it is often urged now, accommodate Himself merely to contemporary belief. When He says, "I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven," He must be speaking of a real person, and it cannot be a merely metaphorical way of saying that the evil tendencies in man were being conquered by good.

When all is said and done, there is no more difficulty in believing in bad spirits than there is in good spirits. What reason have we to suppose that the spiritual world is unpeopled? Why should we think that there is only "God," Who is "Spirit,"

and the spirit of man? A consistent materialist rejects God and the soul, and is therefore justified in throwing over also the spiritual world; but to a believer in the supernatural in any shape there is no difficulty to the reason in believing in evil spirits; it is rather the imagination—the picturing power of the mind—which finds it difficult.

CAN DEVILS POSSESS MAN?

Once, then, grant the possible existence of evil spirits, and the possibility of their tempting men and women must also be granted. Evil men tempt others; why not evil spirits? and if they tempt, they can “possess.” If there is one more striking discovery of the nineteenth century than another it is the way in which one man can “possess” the mind and will of another, so as to make him a helpless instrument in his hands; this must also be possible for evil spirits. Phenomena pointing to this are not lacking now; but being associated, as a rule, with sensual indulgence, would naturally be far more common in an age of “such unbridled and brutal sensuality as that which preceded Christianity¹.”

CAN THEY BE CAST OUT?

We are not discussing here our Lord’s power over demons; we shall believe it or not in proportion to the amount of credence we give to the plain unsensational accounts in the Gospel; but *if* He had a special power over demons, there is nothing unreasonable in His handing down this power for a

¹ Bishop Barry in Dictionary of the Bible. Article, “Demoniacs.”

time to the early Church. No one can read the passage (1 Cor. xii. 9, 10), occurring incidentally in one of St. Paul's undisputed Epistles, without seeing that "gifts of healing," "working of miracles," were looked upon as of ordinary occurrence at the time he wrote. His object, as Dr. Sanday points out in his Oxford House papers on "Free Thinking," is not to emphasize, but to tone down manifestations which were apt to pass the bounds of sobriety; hence these quiet allusions to such manifestations are all the more striking evidence to their occurrence.

If, then, one miraculous power was handed on, why not others? St. Paul was evidently conscious of exercising some preternatural power when he (1 Cor. v. 3-5) hands over a certain individual "to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus." If the minister of the Gospel of Love has power to punish, it is much more likely that he would have power to relieve, and the "working of miracles" would doubtless include the "casting out of devils."

After what has been said, it is scarcely necessary to explain

"THEY SHALL TAKE UP SERPENTS"

(Mark xvi. 18).

The only instance of this in the New Testament is recorded in Acts xxviii. 3-5, when St. Paul shook off the viper which had fastened on his hand, to the astonishment of the islanders on Melita; but such a power would be a slight one compared to "laying hands on the sick, and they shall recover," which we have already seen to be attested by one of the undisputed Epistles of St. Paul. This promised

power is doubtless the same as the "gift of healing" mentioned in the passage from the Corinthians quoted above.

WHY HAVE THESE MIRACLES CEASED?

The difficulty is, When these powers faded away from the Church, and why they ceased at all? When they ceased, no one can answer definitely, but they evidently did not survive the Apostolic age. Why they did is an easier question. Just as we place round a young plant a firm barrier to shield it in its early years, but remove it when the plant is strong enough to stand by itself; so these miraculous powers were necessary to a young Church, having to push its way in a hostile atmosphere, but unnecessary when it was strong enough to stand by itself.

The tremendous strength and size of the tree now must not blind us to its fragile and tender beginnings, and there is something very much in accord with what we see of the workings of God, that the promise fulfilled literally in the early days, for the confirmation of the faith and the protection of the weak, should fall into line in later days with the ordinary working of His providence. The promise of power "to cast out devils" is none the less fulfilled now because they are the devils of avarice and pride; serpents are none the less deadly because they are forms of evil among which the true Christian moves unpolluted and unharmed; nor to a believer in God can the latest discoveries in medical science be ascribed to any other power except the power which enabled the Apostles "to lay hands on the sick, and they recovered."

APPENDIX I.



CONSCIENCE.

HS conscience an organ capable of apprehending truth, or have we only the intellectual reason? The deepest of the old philosophers drew a distinction between the moral reason and the intellectual reason. Were they wrong?

Now, in upholding that they were right—that there is a faculty or power within us, which is not mere intellect, but which holds a trustworthy mirror up to moral truth—we are supported by three considerations:—

(1) *We want something beyond the mere intellect:* this latter is very valuable so far as it goes, but it goes such a very little way. We cheerfully follow the materialist at first, when he promises us a short cut, through reason, to the explanation of the universe, but when we find that, instead of landing us in some *one* thing, as the explanation, he lands us in two things, matter and force; we retreat disgusted, for even the intellect is never contented with a dualism.

“Where does life come from?” we ask, but we get no answer to that question either; reason does

not know, for science cannot tell; it only knows that life comes from life, but has no clue to the origin of life at the first start.

Hence the first thing which makes us look about for another telescope with which to pierce the darkness is, that good as the telescope of reason is up to the level of its powers, it goes such a very little way.

(2) And as we grope about we do come upon another faculty which has this strange power, that it knows the difference between right and wrong, just as the eye knows the difference between white and black. It is true that it is possible almost to obliterate this power, just as it is possible to put out the eyesight of the eye, and it may even, like the eye, become colour-blind, but in different stages of perfection it *exists*, and it exists in everyone; the most degraded savages are found to have vestiges of it.

How this faculty came into us is a question of comparatively little importance; some think that it is the product of evolution through the working of the two laws of heredity and association; the reason—that is to say—why we consider stealing wrong is because our distant ancestor had his head broken for it. Those who urge this explanation of the faculty (for which by the way there is little evidence) sometimes seem to think that they have annihilated its authority, but that is not so. Darwin's intellect was a great power, whether it was slowly evolved from an ape's brain or not, and it certainly was evolved from a baby's; so this faculty known by the name of conscience is equally real and equally

powerful, whatever is the history of its origin.
Conscience then exists.

(3) But it does more than exist ; it *thunders* ; it utters what Kant calls “ a categorical imperative ; ” it says “ this is the way, walk ye in it, when we turn to the right hand or when we turn to the left.”

Why does it do so ?

It cannot be the result of tendencies, for it often speaks dead in the teeth of what a man wishes ; it cannot be the same as the analytic reason, for some of the most mentally acute have been the most morally obtuse ; there is really no explanation of its authority, except that it speaks with delegated authority ; it points to a Being Who knows the difference between right and wrong, and Who, as Dr. Chalmers points out, must be *righteous*, or otherwise He would not have implanted “ a reclaiming witness against Himself ” within the heart of everyone.

(4) But what has conscience to do with Christianity ? *Christianity is a great appeal to Conscience.* Even the Old Testament, although the history of a gradual revelation to imperfectly enlightened consciences, was always ahead of the moral standard of its time, and thus educated the world in the only way anyone can be educated—“ line upon line, line upon line, here a little and there a little.”

But when we come to the New Testament we find a character that *perfectly* corresponds to “ the voice within ; ” educate a conscience to the highest point but it never can conceive a more perfect character than Christ ; the conscience has found its ideal : the key and the lock fit.

It is true that the conscience would never have conceived this ideal by itself, for its highest ideal before Christ came was the "self-sufficient" man, the man who was complete in himself, but directly Christ displayed as an element in the perfect ideal "self-sacrifice for others," the conscience acknowledged that this last was the more perfect ideal of the two; hence the revelation educated, even while it satisfied the demand of the conscience.

What is the conclusion from all this?

First: that though reason must be used to the full in all the departments where it can be used, as in testing documents and in weighing evidence, yet the conscience must also be fully developed and used; if it is true that "every man has to be his own Columbus and find his own continent of truth," then it is also true that the *whole man* must go in search of it with his conscience as well as his reason; half the man will never find it.

To take one instance alone: in judging the evidence of the Apostles the reason by itself might decide that they were impostors; to the conscience this would appear a *moral* impossibility: it might appear possible to the reason alone that St. John's Gospel was evolved out of the Apostle's inner consciousness; to the enlightened conscience it is obvious that the character painted is so perfect that no Jewish fisherman of that day could have possibly created it, and that it therefore must be painted from life.

Secondly: it follows that it is just as *criminal* to dwarf or neglect our conscience as our reason. The great danger of the present day, it has been truly

said by the late Mr. Aubrey Moore, is the "atrophy of conscience." We are most of us alive to the necessity and duty of cultivating our reason, but the duty is even more important of cultivating our conscience; "if the light that is in us become darkness, how great is that darkness!" And we have this great encouragement to cheer us in our days of doubt, light is *promised* at last to the cultivated conscience; "if any man wills to do God's will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God." There are things which are hidden from the merely "wise and prudent," but are "revealed unto babes."

APPENDIX II.



“THE SINS OF THE FATHERS.”

IN discussing difficulties there is little use in confining ourselves to difficulties which it is comparatively easy to answer. The honest method is to face any difficulty which may be brought up, either publicly or privately, and see what is to be said in answer to it, even though the answer may be very incomplete.

Now no difficulty is brought up more frequently than the difficulty of reconciling the law that “the sins of the fathers are visited on the children,” with the love and justice of God. It is represented that the guilty, and the guilty only, should suffer, and that each individual should be taken wholly and entirely by himself.

Before attempting to answer this, it has first to be pointed out that the fact of the innocent suffering for the guilty, is seen to be a fact quite apart from any special theory as to the origin of the universe or any special revelation concerning it. If the second commandment speaks of it as a fact, it is only speaking of what we see to be true in the

wards of any hospital, and in the home of any drunkard.

And, secondly, so far as revelation has anything to say to it, it *modifies* rather than increases the sternness of the law. The famous chapter in Ezekiel lays down that the proverb concerning the children's teeth being set on edge because the fathers have eaten sour grapes must be modified by the equally certain truth that such consequences are only temporal, not eternal; "the soul that sinneth," it, and it only, shall die.

And the New Testament carries on the modification, for it clearly lays down that God will not lay on any man a burden greater than he is able to bear—a promise which would apply to inherited tendencies as much as to any other burden—and, further, that every man shall be judged according to his opportunities; "he that knew his Lord's will, and did things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with many stripes; he that knew not his Lord's will, and did things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes."

But, after all, these two are only preliminary considerations, they are not explanations of the difficulty; and it is as well to say at once that there is no *full* explanation of the difficulty at all. Bishop Butler has pointed out that questions "Why God has acted in one way and not in another" are really outside the range of human faculties, and ever since his day what are called *à priori* arguments have been largely discredited.

But can anything be said as a *partial* explanation of the difficulty how such a law can be allowed to

work in a universe, created and governed by a God of love? and, as with other questions of the sort, some light may be thrown upon the subject by asking ourselves what would have happened if it was otherwise? what would have happened if what we did had no effect upon others?

(1) *Human brotherhood* would have been impossible. Human brotherhood, or to use a rather difficult but common phrase—the *solidarity* of man—is the great truth of this age. Socialists, in spite of the impracticable schemes which many of them propound, have done good service in showing us that we were getting into a state of *individualism run mad*. We were all asking to be treated as if we were the only people in the world to be considered at all.

Now we will admit the truth of what they say, but it has a consequence, and the consequence is this, that brotherhood in good must also involve brotherhood in ill; if we are to stand, we must also fall together. The solidarity of man acts two ways: if we are to share in common the good things of life, we must also share the “ills which flesh is heir to;” if the good deeds and virtuous lives of the fathers are not only to redound to the honour, but to facilitate the virtue of children that are yet unborn, then the sins of the fathers must be visited on the children too.

(2) If we are going to take our stand on bare individualism, we must give up talking of *being saved by Christ*. Christ’s death and resurrection can only effect us as being the death and resurrection of the Head of our race; we are saved by

Him because we are part of Him ; being part of the body of Christ, we share in the victory of the Head.

But if we are only a collection of isolated individuals, if we are only an aggregate of single atoms, we must save ourselves, we can have no claim to a salvation won by Another ; if we are to claim a separate platform in the case of sin, we must stand on the same platform in the case of salvation. If, on the other hand, we hold it as our only hope that being joined to Christ we are saved from the guilt of sin by His death, and from the power of sin by His life, then we are no longer in a position to complain that the sins of the fathers are visited on the children.

(3) And may not this last consideration really give us the clue to the whole question, so far as we can get one at all? May it not be that this is only another instance of the extraordinary love and condescension of God? "He meets us," it has been well said, "exactly where we are ;" He deals with the problem exactly where the difficulty comes in : we are afflicted with vicarious suffering, then we shall have a vicarious salvation.

We should never probably have realized the sinfulness of sin if we had not seen its deadly effect before our eyes, even to the third and fourth generation ; just as we should always be burning our hands off, if fire did not hurt ; or dying of disease, if disease did not pain. But this being so, this interpenetration of our human lives being necessary (1) as an object-lesson in the effect of sin, (2) as alone able to make brotherhood possible, and

(3) as alone able to give scope for our best possibilities of self-sacrifice, God comes down into the problem just where it is going wrong. He does not cut it like the Gordian knot, as we in our impatience demand, but He makes "the worst turn the best to the brave;" He turns our worst trouble into our highest blessing; through the channels through which the bad blood flowed the good blood from the new Head shall run, chasing out the bad; "the things that should have been for our health had been unto us an occasion of falling," then this very knitted brotherhood which has involved the innocent in misfortune shall be the means by which the guilty shall be rescued by the Innocent.

Thanks be to God for His unspeakable gift.

THE END.

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