

SWEET GOSPEL HARMONY.COM PART V

BURKITT - The Gospel History

## X.

### THE RIVALS OF THE CANONICAL GOSPELS.

BEFORE I bring this set of Lectures to a close you will naturally expect me to say something about Apocryphal Gospels, the unsuccessful rivals of the Canonical Four. It will be impossible, of course, to do more than touch upon this great subject, so full of difficulties and unsolved problems in almost all its branches. Some parts of the subject, indeed, are not only difficult but dull, except to the specialist investigator.

For there is little doubt what constitutes the main interest of the Apocryphal Gospels, at least for most minds. It is, in one word, a reflexion of the surpassing interest of the Canonical Gospels. From the Canonical Gospels the world has learnt the story of Jesus Christ, and even those to whom the tale means little or nothing cannot fail to note the immense influence that His Personality has exercised upon human society. We know His Portrait from the official Church Canon, and we cannot but ask whether something new and yet

## THE REJECTED GOSPELS

true may not lie hidden in the rejected accounts of His sayings and doings on earth. The Church's chosen documents may only tell us what the Church wants us to learn: is it not possible to get another and a different glimpse of Jesus from what the Church has rejected?

It is well to say at the outset that I do not think these expectations can be gratified from what has come down to us. Of all the communities and schools of thought to whom the personality of Jesus presented any interest, the Church itself was the one most concerned to portray His human Nature. There were sects and thinkers to whom He was raised altogether above humanity: from these we cannot expect to learn new facts of His history. There was, of course, the indifferent heathen world outside, and the unconverted world of Judaism, but these had neither the time nor the inclination to investigate the tale of the Nazarenes' Prophet, at least, not until independent sources of historical information had ceased to be available. Josephus, if the famous passage about our Lord be his, as I believe it to be, must have been indebted to some Christian acquaintance for his information. The heathen Celsus is practically dependent on our Gospels. Thus we have no source of information about our Lord except from believers.

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Nevertheless, the study of non-canonical Gospels presents many features of great interest. If they do not give us direct historical information about our Lord, they yet tell us much about the way in which some of His early followers thought of Him. They shew us the intellectual atmosphere through which men looked back at the wonderful Figure which stood at the beginning of the new dispensation.

Let us begin with a class of writings which lie altogether outside the domain of history in the strict sense, viz. those Gospels which profess to deal wholly or mainly with what happened after the Crucifixion. We shall find these books united by a common characteristic: they all profess to give out a secret revelation on the authority of the Risen Christ. According to S. Luke in the Acts, when our Lord appeared to the disciples after the Resurrection, He was 'speaking the things concerning the Kingdom of God,' but beyond a command not to depart for the present from Jerusalem, nothing is given of these conversations except a rebuke for overmuch curiosity about the time of the restoration of the Kingdom to Israel. Later writers had more to tell. Take, for example, the work which calls itself 'The Testament, or Words which our Lord, when He rose from the dead, spake to the Holy Apostles.

## THE TESTAMENTUM DOMINI

To us the historical setting of the *Testamentum Domini* is a transparent literary device, but we cannot allege this with regard to the public for which it was intended, and it is impossible to separate it from other earlier books which make use of the same device. The 'Testament' begins thus :

"It came to pass, after our Lord rose from the dead and appeared unto us, and was handled by Thomas and Matthew and John, and we were persuaded that our Master was truly risen from the dead, that falling on our faces we blessed the Father of the new world, even God, who saved us through Jesus Christ our Lord, and being held in very great fear we waited prostrate. . . . But Jesus our Lord, putting His hand on each one of us separately, lifted us up, saying, 'Why hath your heart thus fallen, and are ye stricken with great astonishment? . . . As children of light, ask of My Father which is in heaven the Spirit of counsel and might, and He will fill you with the Holy Spirit, and grant you to be with Me for ever.'" Then the disciples ask for the Holy Spirit, and Jesus breathes on them, and they receive the Holy Spirit. Peter and John then ask what are the signs of the End. There is a long answer: the usual calamities are foretold, signs in heaven and ragings of the sea and



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monstrous prodigies; then come exhortations to endure patiently unto the end, then the coming of Antichrist is foretold, and the Eastern wars that he will inaugurate, with which is incorporated a curious description of his personal appearance. Meanwhile the faithful are to watch and pray without ceasing. The disciples receive the revelation with reverent thankfulness, and ask how it is fitting that they should arrange the 'mysteries of the Church,' *i.e.* the order of Church services. This, of course, is the real purpose of the 'Testament.' So our Lord replies: "Because that ye also have asked Me concerning the rule ecclesiastical, I deliver and make known to you how ye ought to order and command him who standeth at the head of the Church, and to keep the perfect and just and most excellent rule, in which My Father who hath sent Me is well pleased. . . . But because in the midst of the assembly of the people there are, more and more, many carnal desires, and the labourers are feeble and few, only My perfect labourers shall know the multitude of My words, all also which I spake to you in private before I suffered, and which ye know; ye both have them and understand them. For 'My mysteries are given to those who are Mine' (Isaiah xxiv 6), with whom I shall rejoice and be glad with My Father. . . . But from the

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day that My faithful ones also have the desire to know, that they may do the things of the Father, even whatsoever is in this My Testament, I will be with them and will be praised among them, and I will make My habitation with them, by power informing them of the will of My Father. See that ye give not My holy things to the dogs, and cast not pearls before swine, as I have often commanded you. Give not My holy things to defiled and wicked men who do not bear My cross, and are not subject to Me, and My commandments be for derision among them. . . . I tell you therefore how the sanctuary ought to be; then I will make known the holy rule of the priests of the Church. Let the church, then, be thus: let it have three entrances, etc."

Here follows a Church law-book, giving directions for the due performance of all ecclesiastical functions. It is a sister document to the so-called Apostolical Constitutions and akin to what is known as the Canons of Hippolytus. No doubt it borrows something from the *Didache*, that early Christian manual which we considered in Lecture VIII. But I have made these rather extensive quotations from it only to exhibit the method of composition. The author's intentions are quite plain. He has something new, viz. his Church legislation, and he uses the evange-

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lical history to legitimatise and sanction this new material.

I have spoken of the *Testamentum Domini* at perhaps excessive length, because in this case the literary procedure is particularly clear. But it is only one of a series of works somewhat similarly planned. The *Testamentum* is chiefly concerned with Church regulations and the Liturgy. Another work, of a wholly different age and character, is concerned with the esoteric teaching of Gnosticism. This is the *Pistis Sophia*, an exposition of the mystical and cosmological doctrine of an Egyptian thinker or school of thinkers. In its present form it may date from the 3rd or 4th century, but no doubt it contains very ancient, partly pre-Christian, speculations. The main object of the *Pistis Sophia* is to expound the Gnostic theory of the world as received by the writer, and at the same time to inculcate the doctrine that this theory is the real esoteric Christianity. To do this he employs the same machinery as is employed by the compiler of the *Testamentum Domini*, that is to say, it is all given as a post-Resurrection Revelation by our Lord to the inner circle of disciples. As in the *Testamentum*, so in the *Pistis Sophia*, the justification for this to us unwarrantable playing with the Gospel History is that to the authors of these books the test of truth was dogmatic, not

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historical. The authors believed that the Church Order or the Gnostic Doctrine was the right Order or the right Doctrine, as the case might be; whether what they wrote was in accordance with the course of past events did not really matter.

It is important for us to realise this point of view when we attempt to make a study of early Christian Literature, because it was the view of so many Christian writers of historical or quasi-historical books. It is, in fact, the point of view of the whole mass of writers who wrote in other folk's names from, let us say, the compiler of the Book of Enoch to the writer of the Second Epistle of Peter. Indeed, as I have had occasion to point out to you more than once in the course of these Lectures, the main reason why the Canonical Gospels themselves contain so much that is actually historical is not the interest of the Catholic Church in accurate history as an excellent thing in itself, but the dogmatic necessity of maintaining the true humanity of Jesus Christ and the reality of His Passion against various forms of Docetic philosophizing. The struggle with premature systems of theology drove the Church back into what, compared with Gnostic thought, is authentic and historical tradition.

Some perhaps would refuse to count the *Testa-*

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*mentum Domini* and the *Pistis Sophia* among the Gospels, even among 'Apocryphal' Gospels. In the case of these works the historical framework is almost obviously a mere pretence, and the whole interest of the author lies in the doctrine put in our Lord's mouth. But I have called attention to them here because it seems to me that with these works in our minds we can better attack the criticism of the 'Gospel' and 'Apocalypse' of Peter.

Before 1892 little was known of the 'Gospel of Peter' beyond what Eusebius told us in his History.<sup>1</sup> There we read that this Gospel was accustomed to be read in the Church of Rhossus, near Antioch, but that it was suppressed by Serapion, bishop of Antioch, when he found, on examination, that it really taught the Docetic heresy. The 'Apocalypse of Peter' had left more trace in Christian literature. We knew that it dealt with the Last Judgement, and with the torments meted out to various classes of sinners. It is quoted once or twice as Scripture by Clement of Alexandria, and used by several Christian writers of the 3rd century. It formed, in fact, one of the ultimate sources from which mediæval authors derived their descriptions of Hell. In 1892 large fragments of these lost

<sup>1</sup> *HE* vi 12.

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works were published from a vellum book found in a Christian grave in the ancient cemetery of Akhmim in Egypt. The book, which also contained fragments of the ancient apocryphal work called the Book of Enoch, was entire, but the text which it contained of the Gospel and Apocalypse of Peter consisted of fragments merely. Evidently the MS from which they had been copied was itself mutilated, so that what has come down to us begins and ends in the middle of sentences.

Incomplete, however, as the fragments are, they are enough, and more than enough, to identify them and to give a very fair idea of the character of the documents when perfect. I suppose you are all more or less familiar with the contents of the 'Gospel of Peter.' You know that our fragment begins just after Pilate has washed his hands of the guilt of condemning our Lord, which is wholly borne, according to this document, by Herod and the Jews. These drag away our Lord to crown Him with the crown of thorns and to crucify Him. He all the while keeps silence, 'as having no pain,' but one of the malefactors reproaches the crucifiers, saying, 'We have suffered thus for the evils that we have done, but this man having become a saviour of men, how hath He wronged you?' Then comes the dark-

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ness at noon, and the Jews are alarmed, not at the portent, but lest the sun should have really set, and so the Law should have been broken. Then 'the Lord cried out, saying, "My Power, my Power, thou hast forsaken Me"; and having said it, He was taken up.' Here we may remark in passing not only that our Lord's cry on the Cross has been given a turn whereby it attests the non-catholic belief that His Divine nature departed from Him just before the death on the Cross, but also that this new turn has been given to the cry through a misunderstanding of the Aramaic words preserved in Mark and Matthew, *Eli* being understood to mean 'My Power,' and not 'My God.' Thus we see in the Gospel of Peter at this point an interpretation of Mark (or Matthew) rather than real independent historical reminiscence. The style of paraphrase is after all not unlike that which is put into the mouth of Pistis Sophia in her 'repentances.'

The Gospel of Peter goes on to narrate the deposition and burial of the Lord and the Guard at the Tomb, and then describes the Resurrection in detail, as seen by the Soldiers and the Elders who were keeping watch with them. It is very well told, and there is an impressive dignity in the Voice from Heaven which speaks to our Lord as He emerges from the Tomb, saying, 'Hast



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thou preached to them that sleep?' But however much or however little the writer may have used the Canonical Gospels, we do not feel that he is any nearer the historical facts.

The visit of the women to the Tomb on the Easter morning is narrated in our fragment very much as in Mark, and it goes on to tell what occurred afterwards, when Simon Peter (in whose mouth the whole story is put) went away fishing with Andrew and Levi the son of Alphæus. At this point our fragment comes to an end: evidently the Gospel of Peter went on to narrate an appearance of the Risen Lord in Galilee.

The fragment of the Apocalypse of Peter which is preserved in the same MS shews us the Lord in the midst of the disciples predicting the false prophets and the oppression that was to precede the final Judgement, exactly as in the *Testamentum Domini*, but instead of going on to draw up rules for Church government, the revelation that He gives is about the state of the righteous dead, who live in a land of brightness and never-fading flowers, and about the state of the wicked, who are tormented according to the nature of their sins. Here, of course, we pass beyond the region of the Canonical Gospels. But the question I wish to raise is whether, in passing from the 'Gospel of Peter' to the 'Apocalypse of

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Peter,' we have really passed from one work to another? Is it not possible that our two fragments are really parts of the same work?

In the MS from Akhmim there are no running titles, no indication of the name by which the fragments were known. But both fragments profess to be the work of Simon Peter,<sup>1</sup> who writes partly in his own name, partly in the name of the Twelve: the phrase 'we, the Twelve Disciples,' occurs both in the Gospel and in the Apocalypse. I cannot help thinking that both Gospel and Apocalypse form only one work, and that its main object was to commend the description of Paradise and Hell by setting it in a quasi-historical framework.<sup>2</sup>

It is very likely that the writer did not draw entirely on his imagination for his theories about the state of men after death. Dr. Montague James has suggested that their ultimate origin is

<sup>1</sup> 'Εγὼ δὲ Σίμων Πέτρος, *Ev. Pet.* § 14, *ad fin.*; ἐγὼ δὲ μετὰ τῶν ἐταίρων μου, § 7. The expression ἡμεῖς οἱ δώδεκα μαθηταὶ occurs *Ev. Pet.* § 14, and also *Apoc. Pet.* § 2. The transition in *Apoc. Pet.* § 4, is made thus ἰδόντες οὖν . . . ἐκθαμβοὶ γεγόναμεν . . . καὶ προσελθὼν τῷ Κυρίῳ εἰπόν . . . λέγει μοι κ.τ.λ.

<sup>2</sup> The main objection to regarding the Gospel and Apocalypse of Peter as parts of a single work is that some authorities reckon the length of this Apocalypse at 270 or 300 *stichi*. According to this, very little would now be lost. More probably, however, the Revelation may have been separated off at a later time after the whole work fell into disrepute as heretical, just as 'Paul and Thecla' was separated off from the 'Acts of Paul.'

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to be found in Egyptian beliefs and the cycle of ideas that underlie the *Ritual of the Dead*, and this is very likely to be the case. No doubt Pseudo-Peter altered what he took, just as he freely altered the Gospel narratives of the Passion. And perhaps the Egyptian priests would be as ready to charge him with heresy from their point of view, as Serapion was from the point of view of Christological doctrine. The fault of which I would accuse Pseudo-Peter is not his use of S. Peter's name or his Docetism. I venture to think his main fault is that which he shares with the compilers of the *Testamentum Domini* and of the *Pistis Sophia*. It is this, that he has used the Gospel to bring us to his doctrines, and that he has forgotten his Hero in the events which he describes and the doctrines which he makes Him teach. It is hardly a mere trick of style that the 'Gospel of Peter' always speaks of 'the Lord': the memory of Jesus was merged into that of the wholly supernatural Being, the mere touch of whose dead body caused the earth to shudder.<sup>1</sup>

The Apocryphal Gospels we have hitherto been considering have dealt with the Passion and the period after the Resurrection. A few words must now be said in passing on the group that deal with the early history of our Lord. These

<sup>1</sup> *Ev. Pet.* § 6.

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are all of very small historical and ethical value. Some, like the '*Protevangelium* of James,' narrate the birth and childhood of the Virgin Mary, as well as the birth of our Lord; others, like the '*Gospel of Thomas the Israelite*,' tell stories about the childhood of Jesus. These documents are of unknown age. No doubt the comparatively orthodox forms in which they have survived to our time are not the earliest forms in which they were circulated, but at any rate the silly story about the child Jesus refusing to learn the Alphabet from His teacher was used by the Marcosians whom Irenæus refutes.<sup>1</sup> No one can suppose that any of these Gospels of the Infancy rests on anything which has a right to be called Tradition. Their genesis is rather to be sought in the same circumstances that gave rise to the Christian and Pseudo-Christian Gnostic speculations. They represent what in the imagination of some thinkers must have occurred, if the Christ on whom they believed was really the Son of God sent down from Heaven. But the attempt to glorify the infancy of Jesus does not succeed. The '*Gospel of Thomas*' is a record of miracles performed by Jesus from five to twelve years old, ending with the visit to Jerusalem which is narrated in the Gospel of

<sup>1</sup> Iren. *Haer.* i 20; cf. *Ev. Thomae*, § 6.

## GOSPELS OF THE INFANCY

Luke. To us who have learnt to know our Lord through the Canonical Gospels the tales are only a painful exhibition of the bad taste of the writer. Perhaps the least offensive is the story of how Jesus made clay sparrows on the Sabbath, and when rebuked for breaking the Law He clapped His hands and the sparrows flew away. As I said just now, some at least of these stories are very ancient, and that the Catholic Church rejected them shews that the Church required more from those who wished to honour her Lord than the mere ascription of miracles to Him. The Jesus of these tales is not really Human, and although the orthodox Church writers of the second century repudiated most strongly the accusation of worshipping a mere man, they nevertheless held fast to the true humanity of Jesus Christ.

One point I wish especially to bring forward, a point which shews, I think, more clearly than any other that the tales about Christ which were circulated were ultimately inspired by theological and philosophical considerations, not by historical and biographical interest. It is this—the absolute silence concerning the whole period between the boyhood of our Lord and His Baptism. The Gospel of Thomas and the *Protevangelium* shew us that mere lack of historical material did not

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hinder the development of tales about the doings of our Lord on earth. The coming of the Son of God into the world of humanity appeared to the thinkers of the second century a difficult and mysterious process. Their thoughts dwelt on it, as to how and in what manner it could be, and the result of these thoughts shew themselves both in the speculations of Valentinus and his companions, and in the puerilities of 'Thomas the Israelite.' But it was agreed that the Son of God, in whatever manner and with whatever nature He had been born into the world, passed the long years between His boyhood and His Baptism without any outward manifestation or assumption of special Powers or Authority. It was a period of mere natural growth: consequently it excited no interest at all in the second century. Had the men of that time the same sort of biographical interest in Jesus Christ that we have, this period would not have been left in unbroken silence.

The most interesting of all the lost Gospels is doubtless that which is known as the 'Gospel according to the Hebrews,' and it is a little discouraging to have to record that recent modern discovery and criticism have added practically nothing to our knowledge of it. The greater

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part of the fragments that are preserved have come down to us through quotations made by S. Jerome, who found the Gospel used by the Nazarean Christians of Aleppo. These 'Nazareans' allowed S. Jerome to examine their book. The Greek and Latin rendering which S. Jerome made has unluckily perished, but he quotes the Gospel here and there, as Origen also had done before him.<sup>1</sup>

Those who quote the Gospel according to the Hebrews naturally quote it for something which differs from the Canonical Gospels. Where that Gospel agreed with the Canonical Gospels it was not worth quoting specially. Consequently what we have is a bundle of strange-looking fragments, representing the peculiarities of the Gospel. If it had been preserved as a whole we should doubtless find much which is already represented in Matthew, Mark, and Luke. In fact, the general impression produced by most of the fragments is that the document is a first cousin, if not a sister document, to the Canonical Gospel according to Matthew. For instance, Jerome quotes from the Gospel according to the Hebrews as follows :—<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The fragments have often been collected together: my references are to Preuschen's *Antilegomena*, a very useful collection of all the non-canonical Gospel fragments.

<sup>2</sup> *Contra Pelag.* iii 2 (*Preuschen*, 6).



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“‘If thy brother have sinned in word and have done thee amends, seven times in the day receive him.’ Simon His disciple said to Him, ‘Seven times in the day?’ The Lord answered and said to him, ‘Yea, I say to thee, unto seventy times seven. For even in the Prophets, after they were anointed with the Holy Spirit, there was found matter of sin.’”

The latter part of this saying is found as a marginal note to Matt xviii 21, 22, in a Greek minuscule MS,<sup>1</sup> in which the Hebrew Gospel is called τὸ Ἰουδαϊκόν. The last clause is, as Dr. Westcott says, obscure: it seems to mean that since even the inspired prophets were not sinless, it is unreasonable to expect our neighbours to be without fault. But I did not quote the passage for exegetical reasons. I quoted it, because it definitely states that the Saying of our Lord about forgiving ‘unto seventy times seven’ had a place in the Nazarean Gospel, and that in a form which bears all the marks of superior originality to the parallels in Matt xviii 21, 22, and Lk xvii 3, 4. With Matthew it speaks of seventy times seven and brings Simon Peter into the story; with Luke it definitely supposes that the offender has asked for pardon, and speaks of forgiving seven times in the day. So far as this passage is concerned we might even regard the Nazarean extract as giving us the text of the lost document common to Matthew and Luke, which I have

<sup>1</sup> Cod. ev. 566.

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called Q; but since the Nazarean Gospel has parallels elsewhere with Matthew, where Luke has none, it is better to regard the Nazarean form as simply giving another text of the Matthean type. For example, the same minuscule which has the note at Matt xviii 22, says, at Matt xvi 17, that τὸ Ἰουδαϊκόν has 'Son of John' instead of 'Bar-jona': this can only mean that the Gospel according to the Hebrews contained the Saying of our Lord to S. Peter about the Gates of Hell, which begins in the Canonical text, 'Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona'; and this is a saying which is definitely Matthean.

Similarly, S. Jerome tells us, in commenting upon Matt xxiii 35, that in the Nazarean Gospel it is written 'Zacharias, son of Jehoiada,' instead of 'Zacharias, son of Barachias.' The parallel in Lk xi 51 has 'Zacharias' only, without any patronymic. Here it is pretty certain that the Nazarean Gospel does not present the primitive text. No doubt by the 'son of Barachias' is meant that unfortunate Zacharias whose murder in the Temple is related by Josephus; and if this be so, the saying as reported in Matt xxiii 35 cannot be a verbally correct report of words of Jesus. But it is very unlikely that He should have referred to the murder of the son of Jehoiada mentioned in 2 Chron xxiv 20, 21. The general

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meaning of the phrase, if we read 'son of Jehoiada' with the Nazarean Gospel, is, "all the murders done in the name of religion from Genesis to Malachi"; the general meaning of the phrase, if we read 'son of Barachias' with the Canonical Matthew, is, "all the murders done in the name of religion from the beginning of human history to the present day." This last is the true meaning: the reading of the Nazarean Gospel implies a study of the Bible rather than that of the human heart.

There are two other passages of the Gospel according to the Hebrews which I must mention here, as I think they bring out very well the considerable, but not supreme, value of this lost monument of early Christianity. The first, preserved by Eusebius,<sup>1</sup> tells us that in this Gospel there was a different form of the Parable of the Talents, in which three servants were mentioned—the virtuous one who multiplied his Lord's talent, the slothful one who hid the talent, and a prodigal who wasted it; and that the one was welcomed, the second only blamed, while punishment was reserved for the prodigal. Thus the whole point of the Parable was changed, in order to drag in a piece of what may be called Sunday School morality. Had the prodigal servant stood

<sup>1</sup> Mai, *Nov. Patr. Bibl.* iv 1, p. 155 (*Preuschen*, 7).

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in the original form of the Parable, I cannot think so obviously edifying a judgement would have been suppressed both by Matthew and by Luke.

The second passage is very similar. In Origen's Commentary on Matt xix 16 ff, as preserved in the ancient Latin version, we read :

"It is written in a certain Gospel called 'According to the Hebrews,' if any one will receive it, not as an authority, but as an illustration of the subject before us :—The other of the rich men said to him, 'Master, what good thing shall I do to live?' He said to him, 'O man, do the Law and the Prophets.' He answered unto him, 'I have done them.' He said to him, 'Go, sell all that thou hast and distribute to the poor, and come, follow me.' But the rich man began to scratch his head, and it did not please him. And the Lord said to him, 'How sayest thou, I have done the Law and the Prophets? Because it is written in the Law, *Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself*, and lo, many of thy brethren, sons of Abraham, are clothed in filth, dying of hunger ; and thy house is full of many good things, and nothing at all goes out of it to them.' And He turned and said to Simon His disciple, who was sitting by Him, 'Simon, son of John, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than a rich man into the Kingdom of Heaven.'"

This well-known passage raises many questions, but I think there can be little doubt about the most important point. There can be little doubt that this form of the story is in the end derived from what we read in Mark, and that it is of inferior historical value. This second rich man was doubtless introduced by the same hand that introduced the prodigal into the Parable of the Talents, and for the same reason, viz. the supposed interests of ordinary ethical teaching.

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The condemnation of the Rich Young Man in the Gospels seemed too severe, unless it could be asserted that he had *not* fulfilled the Law, as he claimed to have done. But in the story as we have it in Mark (and in Luke) the man is not blamed for being niggardly or for not having told the truth. He is blamed for lack of real enthusiasm. In the historical setting, as he spoke with our Lord on the way to the Passion at Jerusalem, he is simply found to be unfit to volunteer. The Lord did not tell him to distribute his property to the poor because they were in need; He told him to get rid of his property, because at that crisis the ties of respectability would be an encumbrance to those who wished to follow Him. But in the story as told in the Gospel according to the Hebrews the historical situation is forgotten, and the writer is anxious to emphasise the claims of the poor rather than the call to follow Jesus to the death.

In one noteworthy point the Gospel according to the Hebrews and the Canonical Matthew agree in an alteration of the Marcan story which is certainly not primitive. 'Master, what good thing shall I do?' is certainly less primitive than 'Good Master, what shall I do?' followed as the latter is by the answer, 'Why callest thou Me Good?' The fragments of the Gospel according

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to the Hebrews are not extensive enough for us accurately to determine its literary relation to the Canonical Gospel according to Matthew, but that they form a special group of the Synoptic documents derived from and historically inferior to our Gospel according to Mark, this passage alone is enough to demonstrate.

The most curious point about this Hebrew Gospel, and one that is at present unexplained, is that it is said to be shorter than our Matthew. Wherever its readings are preserved it gives an extended and fuller text. We have seen there is a second Rich Man and a third Servant in the Parable. There is also the impressive story of the appearance of the Risen Christ to S. James the Just, which is not represented at all in the Canonical Gospels. If, therefore, the Hebrew Gospel and our Matthew were nearly akin, and yet the Hebrew Gospel had all this extra matter, there must have been great omissions somewhere in the course of the narrative. It cannot, I think, be quite certainly discovered whether there was anything in it corresponding to the Nativity Story of our Matthew,<sup>1</sup> but that would only account for some 100 lines of the ancient reckoning, and if the figures of Nicephorus's

<sup>1</sup> Jerome, *De Viris Illustr.* 3, may be referring to the Canonical text.



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Stichometry be correct, the Hebrew Gospel had only 2000 lines to 2500 in Matthew. It is difficult not to think that the figures must be wrong, and that the Gospel contained nearly all that we find in the Canonical Matthew, with other matter beside.

I do not propose to give here a detailed criticism of the fragments which commonly go by the name of the 'Oxyrhynchus Logia.' Very valuable and interesting they are—who would question it?—but I venture to think they add very little to our knowledge of the Gospel History. In the first place, it is almost impossible to work with mere fragments. The fragments of the Gospel and Apocalypse of Peter contain 16 rather closely written pages of text, but the fragments of the document published by Dr. Grenfell and Dr. Hunt in 1897 and 1904 only consist of two leaves, and one of these is torn across, so that half of every line is lost. It is obvious that any conclusions based upon such materials must be beset with much uncertainty. But besides this, I am not at all sure that the Sayings of Jesus in the Oxyrhynchus Papyri would commend themselves as historically authentic, if the whole document were preserved. I find it a little difficult to believe that a document



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which puts 'The Kingdom of Heaven is within you' side by side with the Greek maxim 'Know yourselves' can be regarded as a faithful report of the words of Jesus of Nazareth. Perhaps the Oxyrhynchus documents may have preserved genuine Sayings of Jesus which were otherwise unknown, but the collection must have been mixed with non-Semitic elements. I feel sure that its main value is apprehended, when it is regarded as a monument of the influence of Christianity upon Greek thought.

It is the special merit of the Synoptic Gospels, and, above all, of the Gospel according to S. Mark, that they are so little influenced by the spirit of the Greco-Roman civilisation. The Church itself became ever more and more European. Greek and Roman ideas of Philosophy and Law became dominant in the Theology and the Organisation of Christendom. We cannot doubt that it was good that it should be so. The mission of Christianity is to influence the world, not to impose itself upon the world as an alien domination. The Kingdom of God is like unto leaven; and the use of leaven is not primarily to make more leaven, but to make good bread. It was therefore necessary that, in proportion as Christianity became a living

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influence upon the ages, it should take up into itself the ideas and conceptions that make the ages what they are, and that the primitive forms in which Christianity was embodied should suffer change and disappear.

But this is not all. Christianity is something more than a belief in a Divine Spirit which influences the world through the medium of a Society of men in which it works. Throughout all the multifarious varieties of Christian speculation, belief in the transcendent importance of the Life and Work of Jesus Christ remains.

The Church is conscious that it cannot afford to lose touch with Christ, with the Jesus of Nazareth who once suffered on the Cross. It was this which, in the second century, drove the Church back upon historical tradition to escape the inferences of Gnostic theorizing about Christ and His work, so that the Church's belief became enshrined in accounts of the Life of Jesus as well as in Creed and Sacrament.

I have purposely abstained in these Lectures from discussing most of those parts or features of the Gospel History which usually form the subject-matter of modern controversies. Our belief or disbelief in most of the Articles in the Apostles' Creed does not ultimately rest on historical criticism of the Gospels, but upon the

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general view of the universe, of the order of things, which our training and environment, or our inner experience, has led us severally to take. The Birth of our Lord from a virgin and His Resurrection from the dead—to name the most obvious Articles of the Creed—are not matters which historical criticism can establish. The exclamation in Addison's Play, "It must be so ; Plato, thou reasonest well !" is not really true to life : fundamental beliefs are rarely acquired through a logical process. As I ventured to say in the Introductory Lecture, we do not get our leading ideas of religion or philosophy from historical criticism. But the Christian religion is not only a matter of imagination and philosophy. The Crucifixion under Pontius Pilate and the Death and Burial of our Lord are as much Articles of the Christian Creed as the Resurrection itself. And in these Articles, Christianity enters the arena of ordinary history. The Interpretation of the Life of Jesus Christ in Palestine is a matter of Faith ; but the Tale itself, the course of events, belongs to History and is a matter for the scientific historian to scrutinise.

Meanwhile, I am sure it is the plain duty of the Christian investigator to strive to get as clear ideas as he can of the outward events of the Ministry of Jesus, and of the positions which

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our Lord actually took up with regard to the thought and action of the age in which He lived among men. The more we understand these things, the more we individualise the Figure of our Lord as manifested in action in that long past scene, the better we shall be able to embody the spirit of His teaching in forms appropriate to our own surroundings.

## NOTE ON THE LATIN PROLOGUES TO S. PAUL'S EPISTLES.

AMONG the many contributions to Biblical and Patristic learning that have been made during the last three hundred years by members of the Benedictine Order few have been so startling as the sixteen pages communicated by Dom D. de Bruyne to the *Revue Bénédictine* for January 1907. The object of Dom de Bruyne's paper is to shew that the short 'arguments' or prologues, prefixed to S. Paul's Epistles in most MSS of the Latin Vulgate and frequently printed in Editions of the Bible, are the work of Marcion and were originally composed as headings for the Epistles in the Marcionite *Apostolicon*. This surprising theory has been accepted by Harnack (*Theologische Literaturzeitung* for March, 1907), and indeed after reading de Bruyne's paper it is difficult to understand why so many generations of scholars, from Victorinus and Ambrosiaster to those of our own day, should have been blind to the marks of Marcionite authorship. The set does not include an 'argument' to Hebrews,

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and those to Timothy and Titus, and to 2 Corinthians and 2 Thessalonians, are of a different construction from the others. The argument to Ephesians also is later, being merely an imitation of those to Philippians and Thessalonians. But the remainder all belong to one series, which also included an Epistle 'to the Laodiceans.' They were arranged in this order: Galatians, Corinthians, Romans, Thessalonians, [Laodiceans,] Colossians, Philippians, Philemon. At least it is certain that Galatians came before Corinthians and that Colossians came immediately after 'Laodiceans,'—and this is Marcion's order and nomenclature.

But it is the contents of these Prologues, their standpoint and theological ideas, that are definitely Marcionite. They are the work of one who was as much obsessed by the opposition of Paulinism to Judaizing Christianity as was Baur himself. All the Epistles are looked at from the point of view of the Epistle to the Galatians and the struggle between the Apostle and his opponents the Pseudo-Apostles. None but Marcionites occupied this point of view in the second and third centuries. And who but a Marcionite would have described the teaching of the 'false Apostles' as it is described in the Prologue to Romans, where it says that their converts 'had been brought into the Law

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and the Prophets' (*in legem et prophetas erant inducti*)? The Law might be merely Jewish in parts, but the very essence of second-century Catholic theology was that the Prophets spoke God's word about Christ and the Church. It was Marcion alone who rejected the Prophets.

As the Prologues are so short, I quote them in full that they may speak for themselves:—

'*Galatians* are Greeks. These accepted the word of truth first from the Apostle, but after his departure were tempted by false Apostles to turn to the law and circumcision. These the Apostle recalls to the faith of the truth, writing to them from Ephesus.'

'*Corinthians* are of Achaia. And these similarly heard the word of truth from the Apostle and were perverted variously by false Apostles, some by the wordy eloquence of philosophy, others brought in by the sect of the Jewish Law. These the Apostle recalls to the true Evangelical wisdom, writing to them from Ephesus by Timothy.'

'*Romans* are in the parts of Italy. These were reached beforehand by false Apostles, and under the name of our Lord Jesus Christ had been brought in to the Law and the Prophets. These the Apostle recalls to the true Evangelical faith, writing to them from Corinth.'

'*Thessalonians* are Macedonians [in Christ



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Jesus], who having accepted the word of truth persevered in the faith even in persecution from their fellow-citizens. Moreover, also, they received not the things said by false Apostles. These the Apostle praises, writing to them from Athens [by Timothy].'

'*Laodiceans* . . . ' (missing).<sup>1</sup>

'*Colossians*—these also like the *Laodiceans* are of Asia, and they had been reached beforehand by Pseudo-Apostles, nor did the Apostle himself come to them. But these also by an Epistle he corrects, for they had heard the word from Archippus, who also accepted a ministry unto them. Therefore the Apostle already in custody writes to them from Ephesus.'

'*Philippians* are Macedonians. These having accepted the word of truth persevered in the faith, nor did they receive false Apostles. These the Apostle praises, writing to them from Rome [out of prison by Epaphroditus].'

'To *Philemon* he sends a private letter for Onesimus his slave, and writes to him from Rome out of prison.'

The bracketed passages are omitted in the text as read in the Freising Palimpsest, the only

<sup>1</sup> The extant Argument to the Ep. to the Ephesians runs as follows: 'Ephesians are of Asia. These having accepted the word of truth persevered in the faith. These the Apostle praises, writing to them from the City of Rome out of prison by Tychicus the Deacon.'

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extant Old Latin MS of this part of the New Testament. The Prologues are said to be not by the first hand in this MS, but, even if this be so, they were added in the sixth or seventh century, and thus this text is one of the oldest and most independent we possess of them. It is worth remark that no prologue is given in the Freising MS to 2 Corinthians, a fact which accords with de Bruyne's view that the short Prologue to this epistle found in many MSS does not belong to the Marcionite series.

When once the key-word 'Marcion' has been uttered, the Prologues need no commentary. I cannot do better than conclude here in Harnack's words (*Theol. Ltztg.* 1907, col. 140). After pointing out that the Prologues must have been originally composed in Greek, not only because of certain expressions, but also because no one living in the West would have written *Romani sunt in partibus Italiae*, Harnack says: 'We know now, unless unexpected objections are raised, that just as the Catholic Martyrology goes back to an Arian Martyrology [*i.e.* that quoted on p. 254], so also the ancient Prologues are a monument of the Marcionite Church standing in the midst of the Catholic New Testament. Is not the canonised collection of the Pauline Epistles itself such a monument?'

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