

Galilee (Luke xiii. 34); whilst Matthew's Gospel gives it in nearly identical words as uttered at Jerusalem before He suffered (Matt. xxiii. 37).¹ The cure of the blind man at Jericho is stated by Luke as having occurred when our Lord entered Jericho (Luke xviii. 35), and by Matthew and Mark when He was leaving it (Matt. xx. 29; Mark x. 46).² The cure of the leper is represented by Matthew as having taken place before He entered into Capernaum (Matt. viii. 1, 5), whilst by Mark and Luke it is represented as having been performed after He had left that city (Mark i. 39, 40; Luke iv. 44, v. 12). It is evident that the evangelists did not confine themselves to any precise chronological order; their object was to give incidents in the life of Christ, but without any reference to the precise time of their occurrence.³

Such, then, are the conditions of the problem. There is an agreement not merely in the incidents recorded, as if a selection had been made of the numerous actions and discourses of Jesus, but frequently also in the very language employed; whilst, on the other hand, there are remarkable points of difference. The solution of the problem must meet all the facts of the case—the points of agreement as well as the points of difference; the key must be suited to the lock—the discovery of that key is the great question of present New Testament criticism.

V. SOURCES OF THE SYNOPTIC GOSPELS.

We now come to the most perplexing and difficult division of our subject—the sources of the Synoptic Gospels.

¹ There is no improbability in supposing that the denunciation was twice uttered by our Lord.

² This apparent discrepancy in the Synoptic Gospels is afterwards fully discussed.

³ See Westcott's *Introduction to the Study of the Gospels*, chapter vii. The differences in arrangement of the Synoptic evangelists. "Each evangelist," he observes, "has a characteristic arrangement, coincident up to a certain point with that of the others, and yet so far different that harmonists are commonly driven to violent expedients—assumptions of the repetition or confusion of similar events—to bring all into agreement. . . . It is from the first unlikely that writings which do not aim at completeness should observe with scrupulous exactness the order of time" (pp. 323, 324).

Indeed, it is the most difficult problem in the criticism of the New Testament. The recent literature upon it, both in Germany and in our country, in special works, monographs, and periodicals, is not only extensive,¹ but confusing. Each author advances a theory of his own; and one is perplexed with their number and variety, and with the plausibility of antagonistic theories. The task of weighing the different arguments is great; and the problem is so complicated and involved that one almost despairs of a solution which would meet all the points of the case. Still some approach to a solution has been made. There are points which are now regarded by most writers on the subject as settled: although there are others still under discussion, and perhaps a full explanation is not yet attainable. Four hypotheses have been advanced to account for the points of agreement in the Synoptic Gospels: the hypothesis of mutual dependence; the hypothesis of oral tradition; the hypothesis of an original document or documents; and a variety of this last hypothesis, the so-called two document-hypothesis. Each of them is complicated by different forms of presentation; thus the theory of mutual dependence admits of no less than six variations, each of which has been supported; the hypothesis of oral tradition is complicated by the different languages in which the tradition may have been transmitted, whether Greek or Aramaic; the hypothesis of an original document or documents admits of an almost endless number of variations; and the two document-hypothesis is complicated by the different views of the nature and extent of these documents. These hypotheses are not mutually exclusive; the adoption of one does not necessarily assume the rejection of the other three. There may be an element of truth in each; indeed, the true settlement of the question may be the result of a

¹ Of recent books may be mentioned Abbott and Rushbrooke's *Common Tradition of the Synoptic Gospels*, 1884; Carpenter, *The First Three Gospels*, 1890; Badham, *The Formation of the Gospels*, 1892; Jolly, *The Synoptic Problem for English Readers*, 1893; Barnes, *Canonical and Uncanonical Gospels*, 1893; Wright, *Composition of the Four Gospels*, 1890. Besides the able articles by Dr. Sanday and Professor Marshall in the *Expositor* for 1891, and Dr. Sanday's article on the Gospels in the new edition of Smith's *Dictionary of the Bible*, 1893.

combination of all four. The Gospels may be mutually dependent: much of their contents may have their origin in oral tradition: some common document or documents may have been used: and there may have been one fundamental original Gospel and a collection of the sayings of our Lord which may have been the primary sources of the Synoptics. The examination of the subject requires the greatest caution, and complete freedom from preconceived opinions.

A.—THE THEORY OF MUTUAL DEPENDENCE.

The most natural solution of the problem is to suppose that the evangelists copied from each other. The similarities between them may be accounted for on the supposition that one Gospel was a compilation from the other two, and that one of the two borrowed from the other; for example, it may be supposed that Mark is an abbreviation of Matthew and Luke, and that Luke is indebted to Matthew. Thus Augustine, assuming the priority of Matthew, asserts that Mark was dependent on him. "Mark," he observes, "follows Matthew as if he were his attendant and abbreviator."¹ In his narrative he has nothing in concert with John, he has very little peculiar to himself, he has still less in concert with Luke alone; but in concert with Matthew he has a very large number of passages. He relates much in words almost identical with those used by Matthew, or by him in connection with the other Gospels."² This theory has in recent times been brought into prominence by Griesbach,³ and was formerly accepted as the true solution by many eminent critics. It was adopted and ably supported by Bleek.⁴ It has now, however, been generally abandoned, as insufficient by itself alone to account for all the difficulties of the problem.

¹ Marcus eum (Matthæum) subsecutus, tanquam pedissequus et breviator ejus videtur.

² Augustine, *Consensus evangelistarum*, i. 2.

³ *Historisch-Kritischer Versuch über die Entstehung der schriftlichen Evangelien*. The hypothesis has received the name of Griesbach's theory.

⁴ Bleek's *Introduction to the N.T.* vol. i. p. 259 ff. translation.

The three Gospels admit of six possible arrangements, each of which has been supported by different critics. 1. There is the order in the canon, Matthew, Mark, Luke. Matthew wrote first, Mark made use of his Gospel, and Luke was indebted to both.¹ This order was adopted, although on different grounds, by Bengel, Credner, Grotius, Hug, Hilgenfeld, and Hengstenberg. 2. Matthew, Luke, Mark. Mark's Gospel has been supposed to be a compilation drawn from the Gospels of Matthew and Luke, whilst Luke is supposed to have drawn from Matthew. This was the theory advanced by Griesbach, and adopted by De Wette² and Bleek. 3. Mark, Matthew, Luke. Mark has been regarded as the original Gospel, whilst Matthew is supposed to have made use of Mark, and Luke both of Mark and Matthew. The theory adopted by Ritschl, Reuss,³ Meyer, Smith of Jordanhill; and with various modifications by Ewald, Holtzmann, Weiss, and Weizsäcker. 4. Mark, Luke, Matthew. Mark has been supposed to be the original Gospel, Luke copied from him, and Matthew from both Gospels. The theory adopted by Hitzig and Volkmar.⁴ 5. Luke, Matthew, Mark. Luke has been held to be the original Gospel followed by Matthew, whilst Mark is supposed to have copied from both. This arrangement has been adopted by Evanson⁵ and Stroud.⁶ 6. Luke, Mark, Matthew. Luke has been supposed to be the original Gospel followed by Mark, whilst Matthew copied from both. The theory adopted by Vögel and Schneckenburger.

The directly opposite theory has been maintained by other critics: that the three Gospels are all independent of each other: that the Gospel of Mark, although most of its contents are contained in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke, was never seen by these writers, but that the agreement is

¹ The order of the Gospels generally found in manuscripts and versions, and which would seem to presuppose the order in which they were written, gives plausibility to this theory.

² De Wette's *Einleitung in das N.T.* § 82.

³ Reuss, *History of the N.T.*, translated by Houghton.

⁴ Volkmar's *Markus*.

⁵ Evanson's *Dissonance of the Four generally received Gospels*.

⁶ Stroud, *Greek Harmony of the Gospels*, Introduction, p. lix.

to be accounted for from other causes, as the preaching of the apostles, forms of catechetical instruction, or oral tradition. This opinion is supported, though for different reasons, by Alford, Ebrard,¹ Schaff, Abbott,² and Row.³ Thus Alford observes: "There is no reason from their internal structures to believe, but every reason to disbelieve, that any one of the three evangelists had access to either of the other two Gospels in its present form."⁴ And Schaff remarks: "There is no direct evidence that any of the three Synoptists saw and used the work of the others; nor is the agreement of such a character that it may not be as easily and better explained from antecedent sources."⁵

But it is difficult to see how the resemblances in the Gospels, extending not only to incidents and discourses, but even to verbal expressions, can be accounted for on the supposition of mutual independence. If three writers had such a close resemblance in their writings as the evangelists have, we would naturally conclude that they depended upon each other. At least it is evident that there must be some common groundwork. If the evangelists did not see each others' writings, there must have been either an oral Gospel which had become stereotyped, or some common document or documents used by all of them.

The Gospel of Mark cannot be considered as a compilation from Matthew and Luke. That it is a compilation has been often asserted by those who hold the theory of mutual dependence. It was first brought forward by Augustine, and is the hypothesis advanced by Griesbach. Almost all the contents of Mark's Gospel, with a few exceptions, are to be found either in the Gospel of Matthew or in that of Luke. This theory has been ably supported by Bleek. He adduces several passages where it would appear that Mark combined the statement of Mark and Luke. Thus in the narrative of

¹ Ebrard, *The Gospel History*, § 120, translation, p. 554 ff.

² Abbott and Rushbrooke's *Common Tradition of the Synoptic Gospels*, p. vi.

³ Row, *The Jesus of the Evangelists*, p. 242.

⁴ Alford's *Greek Testament*, vol. i. Prolegomena, p. 12, last edition.

⁵ Schaff's *History of the Church*, vol. i. p. 598. Dr. Schaff afterwards changed his opinion; see farther on.

the miracles of Christ, Matthew states that they were performed "when even was come" (Matt. viii. 16); and Luke: "when the sun was setting" (Luke iv. 40); Mark combines the two: "at even when the sun did set" (Mark i. 32). So also in the cleansing of the leper, Matthew says: "Straightway his leprosy was cleansed" (Matt. viii. 3); Luke: "Straightway the leprosy departed from him" (Luke v. 13); Mark combines the two: "Straightway the leprosy departed from him, and he was made clean" (Mark i. 42). In the account of the Lord's entrance into Jerusalem, Matthew writes: "And when they drew nigh unto Jerusalem, and came unto Bethphage, unto the Mount of Olives" (Matt. xxi. 1); Luke: "When He drew nigh unto Bethphage and Bethany, at the mount that is called the Mount of Olives" (Luke xix. 29); Mark combines the two: "And when they drew nigh unto Jerusalem, unto Bethphage and Bethany, at the Mount of Olives" (Mark xi. 1). From those and similar examples Bleek draws the inference: "This is best explained by supposing that Mark had both Matthew and Luke before him, and used them both."¹

On the other hand, Mark has not the characteristics of a compiler or epitomiser. Although his Gospel is much shorter than the other two, and may at first glance be considered as an abbreviation, yet when it is attentively studied it is found that this cannot be the case. What Mark does narrate is recorded at greater length than by the other evangelists, and he adds a variety of particulars and little touches which are wanting in the other Gospels; so that in many of the incidents recorded by him, instead of epitomising, he enlarges. There is a peculiar freshness and originality in his descriptions. However we may account for it, Mark has more of the characteristics of an eye-witness than the other two. He descends to particulars, and describes the events as if he had actually seen them. Thus, to take a few examples: in describing the case of the demoniac boy, whom our Lord cured after His descent from the Mount of Transfiguration, Mark tells us of the scribes disputing with the disciples, of

¹ Bleek's *Introduction to the N.T.* vol. i. pp. 260-262. For a similar opinion, see Davidson, *Introduction to the N.T.* 4th ed. vol. i. pp. 481 ff.

the amazement of the people when they saw the Lord, of the conversation between the father of the boy and Christ, and of the paroxysm that seized the lad (Mark ix. 14–29). It is Mark who tells us that the amiability of the rich ruler, who came to our Lord asking what he must do to inherit eternal life, excited the love of Christ: “Jesus, beholding him, loved him” (Mark x. 21). It is Mark who tells us that when our Lord cured the deaf and dumb man, He took him aside from the multitude, put His fingers into his ears, and spit and touched his tongue; and looked up to heaven, and sighed, saying, Ephphatha (Mark vii. 33, 34). It is Mark who tells us that when the Pharisees manifested their unbelief and hostility, demanding a sign from heaven, Jesus sighed deeply in spirit, filled with indignation on account of the hardness of men’s hearts (Mark viii. 12). Mark relates the incident of the young man rising from his bed and in his night clothes following Jesus, and those who apprehended him (Mark xiv. 51); and he informs us that Simon the Cyrenian, who carried the cross of Christ, was the father of Alexander and Rufus (Mark xv. 21). We have here the account of an eye-witness, recording minute particulars, imparting vivid touches to the narrative.¹ The omissions of Mark also prove that he could not have had the other Gospels before him. There are events recorded in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke which an abbreviator would not have omitted; for example, the account of the supernatural birth of Christ.

But whilst we maintain the originality of Mark, it is a much more difficult question to determine the relation of his Gospel to those of Matthew and Luke. That the relation is intimate, is undoubted; but does it extend so far as to imply that these two evangelists used the Gospel of Mark as one of their authorities? The negative has been strongly maintained by many eminent critics,² and the agreement between the Gospels has been referred entirely to oral tradition.

¹ Many other instances might be given; compare the healing of the paralytic, Mark ii. 3–12, with Matt. iv. 2–8; also the accounts of the murder of John the Baptist, and of Peter’s denial. See Salmon’s *Introduction to the N.T.* pp. 185–187.

² Alford, Westcott, Schaff, Plumptre.

But the resemblances are too minute, exact, striking, and numerous to be attributed to this source alone. Not only are the incidents the same, but there are long sentences where the words are almost identical. In ordinary literature, if two writings were found to agree in incident and in form of expression with a third, and if that third writing bore all the marks of originality, we would naturally infer that the authors of these two writings borrowed from the third. There is, of course, another alternative, that all three borrowed from a common document; but that document, on account of the nature and extent of the similarities, could not have rested on oral tradition, which in its nature is diversified, but must have been written. This is the third hypothesis of solution, that of a written document, which we shall afterwards consider. Besides, the order of the narrative followed in the three Gospels is a presumption in favour of the use of Mark's Gospel by Matthew and Luke. There is often a difference in the chronological order in which the events are recorded by the evangelists; but the order laid down in Mark's Gospel is that which has been generally followed. "There are," observes Professor Sanday, "a few cases where all three Gospels diverge from each other; but, as a rule, if Matthew deserts Mark, Luke agrees with him; and if Luke deserts Mark, Matthew agrees with him. There is no case in which the order of a section common to all three is supported by Matthew and Luke against Mark."¹

There are, however, various difficulties connected with the assumption that Matthew and Luke saw and made use of the Gospel of Mark. It is difficult to account for Matthew omitting certain portions of Mark's Gospel which are found in Luke, and, conversely, for Luke omitting certain portions of Mark's Gospel which are found in Matthew. A difficulty also arises from the omission, both in Matthew and Luke, of those few passages which are peculiar to Mark.² Yet although

¹ The *Expositor* for 1891, vol. iii. fourth series, p. 189.

² It has been considered as derogatory to the evangelists to suppose that they used each other's writings; that Luke, for example, should be dependent on Mark. But if he used other documents, as is admitted, why might he not also have used a canonical Gospel?

the facts of the case do not permit us to arrive at a positive conclusion, the presumption is that both Matthew and Luke saw and used the Gospel of Mark. They did not slavishly and mechanically copy from it; the language, though similar, is not precisely the same; but they made a free use of it as one of their authorities. In this manner the coincidences of all three Gospels, in incident and expression, so far as we see, can be explained.

But there are not only coincidences between all three Gospels, but also between Matthew and Luke in events and discourses not recorded by Mark. In order to account for these, can we postulate a mutual dependence between those two Gospels? This has been done by several eminent theologians. Ritschl, whilst he asserts the priority of the canonical Mark, further maintains the dependence of Luke upon Matthew.¹ This view has also been maintained, though on different grounds, by Holtzmann, Weiszäcker,² Wendt, and Paul Ewald.³ It is essential to this theory to suppose that the use which Luke made of Matthew's Gospel was not slavish, but very free and untrammelled. Now, if this opinion is correct, we certainly have a remarkable approach to the solution of the problem. The points of agreement in the Gospels are thus, in a measure, all accounted for. The coincidences between the three Synoptists arise from the use of Mark as a fundamental Gospel; and the coincidences between Matthew and Luke from the use of the Gospel of Matthew by Luke.

But there are great, and probably insuperable, objections to the adoption of this hypothesis. Whilst it may account for the points of correspondence, it does not account for the points of difference in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke. The diversities in the narrative prove that the one Gospel must have been independent of the other. Take, for example, the variations in the genealogies of Christ as given by Matthew and Luke. "If no other proof," observes Dean Alford, "were in existence of the total independence of the present Gospels

¹ Godet's *Commentary on Luke's Gospel*, vol. i. p. 41, translation.

² *Apostolisches Zeitalter*, p. 414.

³ *Evangelienfrage*, p. 169.

of Matthew and Luke, their genealogies would furnish what I conceive to be an undeniable one. Is it possible that either of these evangelists could have set down his genealogy with that of the other beforehand? Would no remark have been made on their many, and on such a supposition unaccountable, variations?" The same is the case with the variations in the narratives of the birth, the passion, and resurrection of Christ. If these Gospels were mutually dependent, there would certainly have been a greater agreement. So also in Matthew, in the "Sermon on the Mount," there is a collection of the sayings of Jesus; whilst in Luke the same sayings are scattered throughout his Gospel. If Luke used Matthew's Gospel, we can hardly think that he would have cut up that wonderful discourse into different portions. These facts convince us that the Gospel of Matthew was not one of those documents which Luke employed in the composition of his Gospel.¹

B.—THE THEORY OF AN ORAL GOSPEL.

According to this theory, the oral teaching of the apostles and the oral traditions of the actions and discourses of our Lord are the main sources of the Synoptic Gospels. This theory has been denominated the hypothesis of Gieseler, because that eminent theologian was the first who brought it into prominence. He supposes that without any preconceived plan an oral Gospel gradually resulted from the preaching of the apostles in Jerusalem; and that from this oral Gospel the three Synoptic Gospels were composed about the middle of the first century.² This view, with different variations, has been adopted by Neudecker, Guericke, Thiersch, Lange, and Ebrard in Germany; by Archbishop Thomson,³ Alford,

¹ So Meyer, Reuss, Thiersch, and Weiss. The results of our examination of the hypothesis of mutual dependence are: 1. Mark is an original Gospel. 2. In all probability, though not certainly, Matthew and Luke make use of the Gospel of Mark as one of their sources. 3. Matthew and Luke wrote independently of each other.

² Gieseler's *Hist.-krit. Versuch über die Entstehung und die frühesten Schicksale der schriftlichen Evangelien*.

³ In his introduction to the Gospels in the *Speaker's Commentary*, and in the article on the Gospels in Smith's *Dictionary of the Bible*.

Westcott, Plumptre, Lumby, and Farrar¹ in England; by Godet² in Switzerland; and by Norton³ and Schaff in America. Thus Bishop Westcott observes: "The primary Gospel was proved in life, before it was fixed in writing. Out of the countless multitude of Christ's acts, those were gathered in the ministry of twenty years, which were seen to have the fullest representative significance for the exhibition of His divine life. The oral collection thus formed became in every sense coincident with the 'Gospel'; and our Gospels are the permanent compendium of its contents."⁴ So also Schaff remarks: "The chief and common sources from which the Synoptists derived their Gospels was undoubtedly the living apostolic traditions or teaching. This teaching was nothing more or less than a faithful report of the words and deeds of Christ Himself by honest and intelligent eye-witnesses."⁵

The great office of an apostle was to narrate the history of the life and death of Christ. Thus, on the election of a successor to Judas Iscariot, the apostles resolved that, "of the men who have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and went out among us, beginning from the baptism of John unto the day when He was received up from us, of these must one become a witness with us of His

¹ Farrar's *Messages of the Books*, p. 26.

² Godet's *Commentary on Luke's Gospel*, vol. i. pp. 33 ff.

³ Norton, *The Genuineness of the Gospels*, pp. 284-289.

⁴ Westcott, *Introduction to the Gospels*, p. 158, 1st edition.

⁵ Schaff's *History of the Church*, vol. i. p. 602. Dr. Schaff appears lately to have modified his opinions. In a private letter to the author, written shortly before his death, he says: "I am pretty certain that there must have been various fragmentary Gospels before the canonical Gospels, as is evident from the preface to Luke; I am also convinced that the tradition of Papias concerning an original Hebrew Matthew is well founded, and it would be a great help to critics if this Hebrew Matthew could be discovered, which is by no means impossible in view of recent experience in this age of discovery. I am also settled in my mind as to the originality and priority of Mark, who has so many pictorial traits, which can only be explained by a personal eye-witness-ship. He was the interpreter of Peter, and in his rapid movements reflects the sanguine impulsive temperament of his master. I have no settled opinion as to how far Matthew and Luke have used the Hebrew 'Logia,' but Matthew and Luke are certainly independent of each other."

resurrection" (Acts i. 21, 22). The apostles, in their discourses to the people, and especially in the instructions given to their converts, would dwell upon the actions and teaching of their Master,—the miracles He performed, the parables with which He taught the multitude, His divine utterances and discourses. By degrees this teaching would become to a considerable extent stereotyped: the same incidents would be dwelt upon, the same discourses repeated, especially the most striking parables and the most weighty sayings, and thus gradually an oral Gospel would be formed.

But with this similarity there would coexist a considerable diversity. There would be different centres of tradition in Galilee and in Jerusalem, and these local traditions would necessarily vary. The oral Gospel in Galilee would be different from the oral Gospel in Jerusalem; and thus different collections of traditions might be made. When the Gospel extended beyond the boundaries of Judæa into Samaria, Phœnicia, and the neighbouring provinces, the preachers would carry with them a variety of traditions; one uniform Gospel would not be promulgated. This theory of oral tradition, admitting both of a general uniformity and of variations, is supposed to account both for the consistencies and the diversities in the Synoptists. "In the oral narratives of the apostles," observes Norton, "we find the common archetype of the first three Gospels,—an archetype, from its very nature, partly fixed and partly fluctuating, and such, therefore, as is required to account at once for their coincidence and their diversity."¹

The Rev. A. Wright of Queens' College, Cambridge, in a valuable contribution to the literature of the Synoptic Gospels, lays great stress on this theory of an oral Gospel. He supposes that among the early Christians, catechetical schools were established in which the converts to Christianity were instructed in the life of Christ. We are informed that those baptized on the day of Pentecost continued steadfastly in the apostles' teaching (Acts ii. 42). This teaching (*διδασχῆ*) would consist chiefly in imparting oral instruction in the life

¹ Norton, *The Genuineness of the Gospels*, p. 289.

and discourses of Christ; in short, in matters resembling in substance and form the contents of our canonical Gospels. So also Luke, in dedicating his Gospel to Theophilus, says that he wrote that he might know the certainty of the things wherein he was instructed, literally, *catechised* (κατηχήθης).¹ These schools were established in all places where the Christian religion was planted, in Asia Minor as well as in Palestine. Over these schools qualified teachers would be appointed, men who were instructed by the apostles or primitive disciples of Christ in the events of His life; some of them, as Mark, belonging to the Petrine school, and others, as Luke, belonging to the Pauline school. These instructions were at first given in an oral form, and it was not until the removal of the apostles from Jerusalem that the necessity for a written Gospel was felt. According to Mr. Wright, there were six sources from which the Gospels sprung—1. The Petrine teaching, contained chiefly in St. Mark's Gospel, and found also in Matthew and Luke, being an oral Gospel. 2. "The utterances of our Lord," mentioned by Papias as the Logia of Matthew, also orally communicated, embedded in Matthew's Gospel, and found also in Luke. 3. The peculiarities of Luke's Gospel, being an oral Gospel, the work of an unknown pupil of Paul, and collected by Luke. 4. Fragments of an oral Gospel outside of these, as the two introductory chapters in Matthew, and a few sections in Luke's Gospel. 5. Written documents collected by Luke, as the first two chapters and the genealogy. 6. Editorial notes written by the writers of these Gospels.²

This theory of oral tradition has much to commend it. The ultimate sources of the Gospels, before anything was committed to writing, must have been the oral teaching of the apostles and primitive disciples. There must have been an oral before there was a written Gospel. The oral element is an important factor in the formation of our Gospels which must not be overlooked. It must enter largely into any

¹ Mr. Wright puts special weight on Gal. vi. 6, where the verb κατηχέω is employed.

² Wright's *Composition of the Four Gospels*, London, 1893; also article in the *Thinker* for February 1895.

theory which professes to be a solution of the Synoptic problem.¹

But this theory by itself is inadequate to account for all the coincidences and diversities of the narrative. There are at least three objections to it. 1. It cannot account for the similarity or agreement which pervades the Gospels. If the Gospels arose from oral tradition, we should not have expected so great an identity of particulars in a life so full as that of Christ. Nor is this agreement confined to events, but extends to expressions and words. Tradition does not express itself in the same terms; even in the description of the same event by eye-witnesses, there is always a variety in the expressions employed. It has indeed been said that there might be set phrases and current expressions; but not to speak of the mechanical formation of the Gospels which such a view involves, and which is opposed to freedom of composition, the agreement which pervades the Gospel is of such a minute nature as cannot be accounted for by tradition. "It extends," as Professor Sanday observes, "to phrases which are mere connecting links between the sections, and which are just of a kind that on a purely oral tradition would be the first to vary."² 2. It is difficult to suppose that in a general oral Gospel which dwelt on the actions and discourses of Jesus, the account of the ministry in Jerusalem, as given in the Johannine narrative, would be entirely absent. The ministry of our Lord in Judæa would have occupied in an oral tradition, if not so large a space as the ministry in Galilee, owing to the shorter period of time which it embraced, yet a proportionate space. 3. The specimens of the teaching of the apostles which we have in the Acts do not bear out the supposition that their teaching consisted almost entirely in the narratives of Christ's life or in the repetition of His parables and discourses. In the discourses of Peter, Stephen, and Paul, as recorded in the Acts, we find that these preachers dwelt almost entirely on the advent of Christ, on His sufferings and death, and

¹ "At bottom all the Gospels rest on oral tradition or anecdotal reminiscences." Holtzmann, *Einleitung*, p. 340.

² Smith's *Dictionary of the Bible*, 2nd ed. p. 1220.

especially on the crowning miracle of His resurrection, as the authorisation of His mission, without mentioning the particulars of His life. And the same remark is true of the Epistles of the several writers: there are in them few traditionary sayings of our Lord. The record of the life of Christ gathered from the speeches and Epistles of the apostles is surprisingly meagre.

An important modification of this theory was made by Dean Alford, which lessens, if it does not remove, many of the objections brought against it. He supposed that besides the mere oral Gospel, which had in a measure become stereotyped, there were also written statements embracing both the incidents in the life of Christ and His teaching, and that these were independently used by the evangelists, and, it may be, incorporated in their Gospels. "I maintain," he observes, "the probability of a very early collection of portions of such oral teaching into documents, some of which two or three of the evangelists may have used."¹ This combination of traditional narratives with written documents would account for the identity of the expressions frequently used by the evangelists.

C.—THE THEORY OF AN ORIGINAL DOCUMENT OR DOCUMENTS.

According to this theory, there lies at the foundation of the Gospels an original document or documents, which all the three evangelists made use of in the composition of their writings; the source of the Synoptic Gospels is not so much oral tradition as written documents. We learn from the prologue to Luke's Gospel that many such writings, purporting to convey a narrative of the life of Christ, or giving a collection of His discourses, did exist in the early days of Christianity (Luke i. 1–3). Luke does not pass any approval or disapproval of such documents, he merely testifies to their existence. This theory of an original document or documents is the prevalent theory in the present day, and has given rise to a great number of suppositions.

Eichhorn, at the close of last century (1794), was the

¹ Alford's *Greek Testament*, vol. i. Prolegomena, p. 11.

first to give prominence to this theory.¹ He gave great offence by the boldness of his criticism, coming into direct collision with the then traditional view of the Gospels as independent narratives. At the time the work was regarded as a direct attack on the genuineness and credibility of the Gospels.² He supposed that there was an original Aramaic Gospel, which lay at the foundation of the Synoptic Gospels. This document was soon translated into Greek. In process of time additions were made to it and inserted in the narrative. There were three translations and three sets of traditions, and these constituted the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke. In addition to this original Aramaic Gospel there was another document containing a collection of precepts, parables, and discourses delivered by Christ, which was used by Matthew and Luke, and accounts for the similarities in their Gospels.³

Bishop Marsh adopted this theory of Eichhorn, and endeavoured to improve it. He gives the following statement of his theory: "Matthew, Mark, and Luke used copies of the common Hebrew document, the materials of which Matthew, who wrote in Hebrew, retained in the language in which he found them; but Mark and Luke, besides their copies of the Hebrew document, used a Greek translation of it, which had been made before any additions had been inserted. Lastly, as the Gospels of Mark and Luke contain Greek translations of Hebrew materials which were incorporated into Matthew's Hebrew Gospel, the person, who translated Matthew's Hebrew Gospel into Greek, frequently derived assistance from the Gospel of Mark, where Mark had matter in common with Matthew; and in those places, but in those places only, where Mark had no matter in common with Matthew, he had frequently recourse to Luke's Gospel."⁴

¹ Eichhorn's *Einleitung in das N.T.* vol. i. §§ 78-88. Le Clerc (1716) appears to have been the first critic who suggested it; afterwards it was maintained by Michaelis and Lessing, but it was left to Eichhorn to develop this hypothesis, and to draw it out into a regular theory.

² There was certainly some reason for this opinion, as Eichhorn considers that our first three Gospels did not come into use before the end of the second century.

³ Eichhorn's *Einleitung*, § 84.

⁴ Marsh's *Michaelis*, vol. v. p. 361.

This hypothesis does not commend itself; it is intricate and complicated. Besides, it is very mechanical, and makes the evangelists mere compilers. Although at the time embraced by several eminent critics,¹ it is now as a whole generally rejected, though many of its particulars are still adopted; indeed there is often a striking resemblance between it and some of the more recent hypotheses.

Much more plausible is the theory of Schleiermacher.² Instead of one original Hebrew document lying at the foundation of the several Gospels, he supposes that there were several documents. There must have been, at an early period, many evangelical fragments dispersed throughout the Churches,—traditions floating about,—of which writings had been made. These the evangelists worked into their Gospels, along with materials which each had himself collected; and in this manner Schleiermacher accounts for the coincidences and differences. “Why,” he asks, “should the harmony of the three evangelists admit of no other explanation than that they either borrowed from each other, or drew from one common source. Subsequently, at all events, there appear several common sources. Why should we not content ourselves with a plurality of them from the beginning, as some eminent critics have done? For, in itself, surely this often-repeated alternation of common and peculiar portions of history points to nothing else than the previous existence of several sources, some of which the evangelists had in common, some not.”³

Heinrich Ewald supposes that there were nine distinct elements which entered into the formation of the Synoptics. The first was an original Gospel, containing a brief account of the chief events of Christ’s life from His baptism to His death, used by Paul, and which he strangely attributes to

¹ Especially by Bertholdt of Erlangen in his *Historisch-Kritische Einleitung in sämtliche kanonische und apokryphische Schriften des alten und neuen Testaments*.

² See Schleiermacher, *Commentary on St. Luke*, and a valuable introduction to it by the translator, Bishop Thirlwall.

³ *Ibid.* p. 7. “It is more natural,” he observes, “to imagine many circumstantial memorials of detached incidents, than a single connected but scanty narrative.”

Philip the deacon. The second is the collection of our Lord's sayings made by Matthew, as mentioned by Papias. The third is Mark's Gospel, made up of these two. The fourth is what he calls "the book of the higher history," being an enlargement of the original Gospel. The fifth is our canonical Gospel of Matthew, based upon the preceding writings. The sixth, seventh, and eighth are three lost works—detailed accounts of special events in our Lord's life. The ninth is the Gospel of Luke, based on all the other documents, with the exception of the fifth document, namely, the Gospel of Matthew.¹ Such a theory, though ingenious, is very fanciful, and without much ground to rest upon.

Dr. Edwin Abbott has brought forward a new theory. He marks all those passages where Matthew, Mark, and Luke agree, which he calls the common or triple tradition.² This tradition constitutes a kind of narrative; and this he supposes to have formed the original Gospel, from which the three evangelists borrowed independently of each other. "Is it not possible," he observes, "that the condensed narrative which we can pick out of the three Synoptic records represents the 'elliptical style' of the earliest Gospel notes or Memoirs, which needed to be expanded before they could be used for the purposes of teaching, and which might naturally be expanded with various and sometimes divergent amplification?"³ According to this theory, the Gospels are independent expansions of notes taken down of the teachings of the apostles. Such a hypothesis has met with no favour from any critic.⁴ It does not account for the twofold tradition of Matthew and Mark, of Mark and Luke, and of Matthew and Luke; whilst it leaves the diversities found in the Gospels without explanation.

There is one other theory which, on account of its ingenuity, plausibility, and originality we would not omit,

¹ Bleek's *Introduction to N.T.* vol. ii. pp. 256, 257.

² Article on the Gospels in the *Encyclopædia Britannica*; Abbott and Rushbrooke, *Common Tradition of the Synoptic Gospels*.

³ Abbott and Rushbrooke, p. 11.

⁴ For adverse remarks on the hypothesis of Dr. Abbott, see Salmon, *Introduction to the N.T.* p. 177. It is in its main features a revival of the hypothesis of Eichhorn.

that of Mr. Smith of Jordanhill.¹ He supposes—(1) That several of the apostles, especially Matthew, Peter, and John, committed to writing accounts of our Lord's life, in the Aramaic language. (2) That Matthew drew up, from the original Memoirs a life of Christ, both in Hebrew and in Greek. (3) That Luke composed another life, founded upon the authority of eye-witnesses and ministers of the word, including the Hebrew Memoir of Peter and the Greek Gospel of Matthew. (4) That after Peter's death, Mark translated the Memoir written by Peter into Greek.² This hypothesis he illustrates in a most ingenious manner. He takes three histories of the Peninsular War—those of Suchet, Napier, and Alison. Suchet's history was the testimony of an eye-witness, and was translated into English, and used both by Napier and Alison; whilst Napier's history was known and made use of by Alison. He places three quotations from their histories in parallel columns, showing the remarkable resemblance between them—a resemblance containing sometimes a sameness of expression in all three, and at other times extending only to two of the histories.³ He draws a parallel between these resemblances and the resemblances in the three Gospels, and in this manner explains their verbal coincidences. Certainly the parallel is very striking in these histories; there is the same mixture of variety and identity of expression as is found in the Gospels.

Recently much has been made of the theory of an original Aramaic or Hebrew document lying at the root of the Synoptic Gospels. This theory has been unfolded in several interesting and valuable articles by Professor Marshall in the *Expositor*,⁴ and especially by Resch in his work, entitled, *The Agrapha*.⁵ It is in some respects a revival of Eichhorn's

¹ *Dissertation on the Origin and Connection of the Gospels*; the author of that classical work, *The Voyage of St. Paul*.

² *Ibid.* p. xxv.

³ *Ibid.* pp. xxix.—xxxix.

⁴ These articles are to be found in the *Expositor* for the year 1891.

⁵ This is a work of enormous labour and erudition, the result of upwards of twenty years' research. It proceeds on the assumptions that there was an original Gospel in the Hebrew language, that this was chiefly composed of the sayings of our Lord, and that it not only formed one of the main sources of our Synoptics, but was used by Paul and quoted by him.

theory, though not so mechanical and rigid in its nature. These writers suppose that there was an original document, an Ur-Evangelium, written according to Professor Marshall in Aramaic, and according to Resch in Hebrew. This document was used by all the evangelists. The variation in the words and clauses in the Gospels is accounted for by the different translations given to the Aramaic or Hebrew words. Both Professor Marshall and Resch give examples of how this may be done, and, if the vowel points are neglected as not belonging originally to the languages, how variations in the sense might easily have occurred. Resch gives a list of fifty-nine cases in point, where, as he supposes, Hebrew words in the original document are translated by different words in our Gospels.¹

This theory, if admitted, certainly accounts in many instances for variations in expression; but, when put to the test, it leaves most of these variations unexplained. It is, indeed, asserted by the Fathers that Matthew wrote his Gospel in Hebrew;² but the Gospel, to which these critics allude, is an entirely different Gospel from our canonical Matthew: it is an Aramaic Gospel which lies at the foundation, not of Matthew only, but of all the three Synoptics.

D.—THE TWO DOCUMENT THEORY.

According to this theory, not one but two documents form the main sources of the Gospel narrative. One document is a narrative of the events in the life of Christ—a statement of His actions, and the other is a collection of His sayings—a statement of His discourses. This hypothesis, it is supposed, affords a complete solution of the Synoptic problem. "The narrative of events" accounts for the great sameness of the incidents recorded by all three evangelists;

¹ Resch's *Agrapha*, pp. 59-64; as, for example, $\kappa\epsilon\tau\epsilon\lambda\epsilon\iota\tau\epsilon$ is rendered by $\lambda\alpha\mu\beta\acute{\alpha}\nu\epsilon\iota\tau\epsilon$ (Matt. x. 38), $\alpha\lambda\epsilon\iota\psi\epsilon\iota\tau\epsilon$ (Mark viii. 34), $\beta\alpha\sigma\tau\acute{\alpha}\lambda\epsilon\iota\tau\epsilon$ (Luke xiv. 27), in the same address of our Lord to His disciples that they must take up His cross.

² The language in which Matthew's Gospel was written is the subject of future discussion; so also is the "Gospel according to the Hebrews."

whilst "the collection of sayings" accounts for the striking resemblance in the expressions employed. But although this hypothesis is apparently simple, it is in reality highly complicated, and has given rise to great differences of opinion and to several distinct theories.

This hypothesis is supposed to be supported by the statement of Papias,¹ where, according to those critics who adopt this theory, these two documents are mentioned. Papias first affirms of Mark's Gospel, on the authority of John the Presbyter, that "Mark, having become the interpreter of Peter, wrote down accurately, though not in order, whatever he remembered of the things said and done by Christ, and that he followed Peter, who adapted his teaching to the needs of his hearers, but with no intention of giving a connected account of our Lord's discourses." In this record, containing the preaching of Peter, edited by Mark, we have one of these fundamental documents, whether this be the canonical Gospel of Mark or a previous Gospel (Ur-Marcus), from which our canonical Mark is derived.² Concerning Matthew, Papias writes: "So then Matthew wrote the oracles (λόγια) in the Hebrew language."³ In this collection of the λόγια of Christ made by Matthew we have the other primary document—whether this is the canonical Gospel of Matthew or a primary Gospel (Ur-Matthæus) used by some unknown person in the composition of our Matthew, and also used by Luke in the composition of his Gospel.

This hypothesis of two documents has been adopted by Reuss,⁴ Weizsäcker,⁵ Holtzmann, Weiss, Wendt, Beyschlag,⁶

¹ Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.* iii. 39 ; see *supra*, p. 19.

² Dr. Sanday remarks: "It is not improbable that our St. Mark is descended from a copy which did not exactly reproduce its predecessor, even after the Gospel had assumed substantially its present form." *Bampton Lectures*, p. 295.

³ The words μὲν οὖν, so then, show that this sentence in regard to Matthew does not immediately follow the passage in regard to Mark, quoted above.

⁴ *History of the New Testament*.

⁵ *Apost. Zeitalter und Untersuchungen über die evangelische Geschichte, ihre Quellen und der Gang ihrer Entwicklung*.

⁶ *Leben Jesu*.

Resch, Dr. Paul Ewald, Pfeiderer,¹ Sanday, and other recent writers on the Synoptic problem. "All things considered," observes Holtzmann, "the two source hypothesis appears the most probable solution of the Synoptic problem."

Dr. H. Holtzmann of Strasburg, who is regarded as the great authority on the Synoptic question, and has devoted much attention to the subject, supposes that these two documents—the record of the preaching of Peter given by Mark, and the Logia, or the collection of the sayings of our Lord compiled by Matthew—were the main sources of the Synoptic Gospels. He supposes the first document to be, not the canonical Gospel of Mark, but an earlier document (Ur-Marcus), fuller than the present Mark; and the second document to be, not the canonical Gospel of Matthew, but a collection of the discourses of Christ compiled by the Apostle Matthew (Ur-Matthæus). The canonical Mark is a revision of the Ur-Marcus, without any intermixture of the Logia of Matthew; whilst the canonical Matthew and Luke are formed from both documents, and from other written and oral sources. Recently Professor Holtzmann has somewhat modified and altered his views, and supposes that Luke had access to the canonical Gospel of Matthew, and made a free use of it, and, consequently, that all the discourses in Luke's Gospel need not necessarily be referred to the Logia; and he observes: "So that at least most of the reasons for distinguishing between an Ur-Marcus and the present Mark have been removed."²

The view of Weiss of Berlin differs from that of Holtzmann as to the prominence to be given to Matthew. He supposes that Mark not only used the "notes of Peter's preaching," but had also access to the Logia collected by Matthew. According to him, "the Logia of Matthew" is the oldest Gospel, and next to it is the Petrine Gospel, or the tradition transmitted by Mark from Peter's preaching. All three Gospels are composite, and these documents were used in

¹ *Gifford Lectures*, vol. ii. p. 27.

² For Holtzman's views, see *Die Synoptischen Evangelien*, 1863; *Einführung in das N.T.* 1885; commentary on the Synoptic Gospels, *Die Synoptiker*, 1889.

different proportions. The original Gospel was a Matthew (Ur-Matthæus), containing the Logia, with a small number of incidents. The canonical Mark is a combination of the Memoirs of Peter and a portion of the Logia of Matthew: the canonical Matthew and the canonical Luke are dependent on Mark and on the Logia.¹

Wendt, of Heidelberg, also adopts the two document hypothesis. He asserts the priority of Mark to Matthew and Luke, and supposes that the series of narratives reported by Mark consists chiefly of the oral evangelical discourses of Peter. Both Matthew and Luke used Mark's Gospel. The Logia of Matthew lies at the foundation of the Gospels of Matthew and Luke, and Wendt attempts the reconstruction of the text of the Logia from these Gospels. He restricts the Logia to the discourses of Jesus.²

Resch, in his *Agrapha*, maintains the following points:—
 1. The priority of the Gospel of Mark. 2. The existence of a Hebrew original Gospel containing chiefly the discourses of Jesus, written before the canonical writings, and lost at an early period. 3. The two document hypothesis. From these two documents—the Gospel of Mark and the pre-canonical Gospel—the first and third canonical Gospels were chiefly composed. 4. The secondary character of the first Gospel. The Gospel of Matthew is in no sense an original Gospel, also not a translation of the original Hebrew Gospel ascribed to that apostle, but a combination of Mark's Gospel with a Hebrew Gospel source, and that by an author who personally was not an eye-witness, but was in a position to add several traditionary facts to the two chief sources. 5. The use of the pre-canonical Gospel of Mark.³

Dr. Sanday of Oxford, in a series of valuable articles in the *Expositor*,⁴ and in his elaborate article on the Gospels in the new edition of Smith's *Dictionary of the Bible*, gives what is the present state of the Synoptic problem. He himself adopts, or, at least, greatly favours, the two document hypo-

¹ For Weiss' views, see *Das Marcus Evangelium und seine Synoptischen Parallelen, Leben Jesu*, and *Einführung in das N.T.*

² Wendt's *Die Lehre Jesu*.

³ Resch's *Agrapha*, p. 27.

⁴ *Expositor* for the year 1891, fourth series, vol. iii.

thesis. He considers the following particulars as practically proved :—1. That there was a fundamental document. 2. That it is represented most nearly by the Gospel of Mark. 3. That it is highly probable that the common foundation of the three Gospels was a document, strictly so called, written, and not oral. 4. That the exact relation of this document to our present Mark must be regarded as still an open question.¹ With regard to the second document, or the Logia of Matthew, Dr. Sanday thinks that it was chiefly restricted to the sayings of Christ, and that these sayings or discourses were employed in the first and third Gospels. He considers that the Apostle Matthew did not write the first Gospel as we have it, but that it was called by his name, because it contained the Logia collected by him, a section so important that the name passed from that to the whole.²

One great point of dispute regards the meaning to be affixed to the term *λόγια* as used by Papias when referring to the writings of Matthew,—whether it is to be restricted to the sayings and discourses of Jesus, or whether it also includes the incidents of His life. The critics above mentioned, as Holtzmann and also Meyer, restrict the term chiefly to the sayings of Jesus; whilst other critics, as Bleek and Zahn, assert that it was not so restricted, but included the whole life of Jesus—His actions as well as His discourses. This opinion has also been maintained by Bishop Lightfoot.³ The term in the New Testament is used for the Scriptures (of course, of the Old Testament), and is not restricted to mere sayings. Thus Paul, speaking of the privileges of the Jews, says that unto them were committed “the oracles of God” (*τὰ λόγια τοῦ θεοῦ*, Rom. iii. 2).⁴ And the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews refers to “the first principles of the oracles of God” (Heb. v. 12). In both passages the reference is to the Scriptures of the Old Testament.⁵ The word, then, as applied

¹ *Expositor*, vol. iii. fourth series, p. 180.

² *Ibid.* p. 303.

³ *Essays on Supernatural Religion*, pp. 173, 174.

⁴ See Philippi, *Commentary on the Romans*, vol. i. p. 105, translation.

⁵ The word occurs only in two other passages in the New Testament, and there also the reference appears to be to the Scriptures of the Old Testament, Acts vii. 38 and 1 Pet. iv. 11.

to the New Testament, would be nearly equivalent to εὐαγγέλιον; and in this sense it is used by the early Fathers.¹ "There is nothing," observes Bleek, "in the manner in which Papias expresses himself to justify this supposition (namely, that the expression simply refers to a writing wherein Christ's discourses only were collected); he would certainly have expressed himself as he does, if he meant an historical work like our New Testament Gospels, if he were referring to a writing the contents of which were those of our Greek Gospel according to Matthew. Papias uses the name τὰ λόγια of the entire Gospel, without making any distinction between the historical narrative and the discourses of Christ."²

Some progress in the solution of the Synoptic problem has been made. It is now generally agreed by those critics who have studied the question, that the Gospel of Mark, or a writing closely resembling it, and a collection or collections of the sayings of Jesus, are among the main sources of the Synoptic Gospels. A theory which embraces these two points, forming a modification of the two document hypothesis, is now regarded as the probable solution of the Synoptic problem.

1. The canonical Gospel of Mark, or at least a document closely resembling it, is supposed to be the primitive or original Gospel—one of the main sources of the Gospels of Matthew and Luke—used by them either directly or indirectly. For reasons already stated, we inferred the probability that the first and third evangelists were cognisant of the writing of the second. In order to remove certain difficulties, to which we have already alluded, attending the assumption of the use of Mark's Gospel by Matthew and Luke, some critics affirm that not our canonical Mark, but an original Mark, an Ur-Marcus, of which our Mark is a recension, containing a narrative of our Lord's life, is the common foundation of the three Synoptics.³ Some suppose that the original Mark was of larger compass than the present Mark, and embraced those

¹ Irenæus, *Adv. Hær.* i. 8. 1; Polycarp, *Phil.* 7.

² Bleek's *Introduction to the N.T.* vol. ii. pp. 109, 110.

³ This opinion has been adopted by Köstlin, Volkmar, Weizsäcker; and was at one time advocated by Holtzmann, though afterwards abandoned by him.

sections in which Matthew and Luke agree almost verbatim. Others think that it was shorter. Those who do so, argue that the statement of Papias, that Mark wrote down accurately though not in order (οὐ μέντοι τάξει), that is, not consecutively, is only suitable to a shorter Gospel than that which we now possess, inasmuch as the canonical Gospel of Mark is generally considered the most systematic of the three Synoptics.

But, so far as we can see, there exists no reason for this supposition. The Fathers mention no such previous Gospel. They speak of the Gospel of Mark, but never indicate that this was only an edition or recension of a former Gospel now lost. Papias distinctly asserts that Mark wrote his Gospel from the teaching of Peter; and Irenæus affirms that the second Gospel was written by Mark, the disciple and interpreter of Peter. The substitution of the canonical Gospel of Mark for a lost Gospel must have occurred either before Papias wrote (A.D. 116) or between the time of Papias and Irenæus (A.D. 180). It could not have occurred before the time of Papias, for there is not the least indication given by him of a previous Gospel, and the time between the composition of the Gospel of Mark and Papias is too short to admit of a silent, unnoticed substitution of one Gospel for another. Still more incredible is it to suppose that it disappeared after Papias wrote and before Irenæus composed his work against heresies; for we have an almost unbroken chain of testimony between these two periods, alluding to the Gospel of Mark; so that the Gospel mentioned by Papias could not possibly have been superseded by a different Gospel, without some statement or intimation of this fact in the writings of the early Fathers.¹ We conclude, then, that our canonical Gospel of Mark, as we have it, is the primitive Gospel which the other two evangelists saw and used, and which was one of the chief sources of their Gospels.² The use of this Gospel by Matthew and Luke

¹ This argument against the existence of an Ur-Marcus is well put by Barnes in his *Canonical and Uncanonical Gospels*, p. 68.

² This opinion is now adopted by most critics. "The testimony of Papias," observes Meyer, "regarding the work of Mark furnishes no reason for regarding this work as different from our second canonical Gospel." *Commentary on Matthew*, vol. i. p. 38, translation.

accounts for the similarity of incidents in the three Gospels, and also of expressions where all three agree, and where Matthew and Mark, or Mark and Luke agree.

2. The collection or collections of the sayings of Christ, partly oral and partly written, was the other main source of the Synoptic Gospels. It was most natural, indeed inevitable, that the apostles and early Christians would treasure up the sayings of Christ. These sayings would be often repeated by them in their public assemblies, and become indelibly fixed in their memories, and would soon be reduced to writing. The shorter sayings, as that quoted by Paul, "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts xx. 35), would be retained in the memory; but there would also be written collections of the longer sayings or discourses of our Lord which would be taken down at an early period, before the recollection of them had faded away. We cannot suppose that twenty or thirty years would have elapsed before there were any written documents containing the parables of our Lord, or the words with which He taught the multitudes. "A few detached aphorisms," observes Professor Salmon, "of a great teacher may be carried by the memory for some time, and be passed from one to another; but discourses of the length we find in the Gospels would, in the ordinary course of things, have perished, if they had not been from the first either committed to writing or, if committed to memory, kept alive by constant repetition. It is surprising how little of spoken words ordinary memories are able to retain. . . . If Boswell has been able to give a vivid representation of Dr. Johnson's Table-Talk, it is because he used to stand behind the chair of the object of his veneration with note-book in hand."¹

Different collections of these sayings would be made in different localities for the use of different Churches. Some would be written in Aramaic for the use of the Hebrew converts, and some in Greek for the use of the Hellenistic converts. Such collections of the sayings of Christ, both oral and written, both in Aramaic and in Greek, would be used by all three evangelists in the composition of their Gospels.

¹ *Introduction to the New Testament*, p. 137.

This hypothesis accounts for the similarity, often amounting to identity of expression, found not only in all the three Gospels, but especially in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke. Thus, for example, the thanksgiving of our Lord to the Father, when the disciples recorded the success of their mission, found in almost identical words in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke (Matt. xi. 25-27; Luke x. 21, 22), is one of those sayings of Christ which these evangelists incorporated in their Gospels. We have already seen that the identity of expression occurs chiefly in the sayings or discourses of Christ. It has been objected that no such collections of sayings are mentioned by the early Fathers. But their existence was inevitable; the early Christians would feel constrained to collect the words of the Lord, and their incorporation into our Gospels may account for their disappearance. Besides, we do not suppose that there was any single authorised document containing the sayings of Christ, but only that fragmentary writings or detached narratives were dispersed throughout the Churches. We do not consider that the Logia of Matthew, mentioned by Papias, was one of these collections of sayings, because, as we have already observed, the term *λόγια* there employed is not used in a restricted sense; but, at the same time, it must be admitted that the Gospel of Matthew is remarkable among the other three Gospels for its collections of the sayings of Christ.

We do not know whether these collections of the sayings of Christ entirely disappeared in the apostolic age in consequence of their incorporation in the written Gospels. A collection of sayings attributed to our Lord, not recorded in the Gospels, but dispersed through the writings of the early Fathers, and preserved in the apocryphal writings, has been made by Bishop Westcott.¹ Wendt, in a valuable appendix to his *Die Lehre Jesu*, adverts to several indications of the words of Jesus in the Epistles of Paul; for example, he adduces the command of the Lord, that the wife should not depart from her husband (1 Cor. vii. 10); the injunction of the Lord, that they which preach the gospel should live of the

¹ Westcott's *Introduction to the Study of the Gospel*, 1st ed. Appendix C, pp. 424-438.

gospel (1 Cor. ix. 14); the institution of the Lord's Supper (1 Cor. xi. 23-25); and the announcement of the second coming of the Lord, which Paul introduces with the words: "This I say unto you by a word of the Lord" (1 Thess. iv. 15). Resch in his great work, the *Agrapha*, supposes that "sayings of Christ," contained, as he thinks, in the Logia of Matthew, written in the Hebrew language, are to be found in the Epistles of Paul and other canonical writings, as well as in the writings of the Fathers. He gives a list of sixty-two Logia found in the canonical Epistles and in the writings of the Fathers, which he considers to have been the words of Christ—*Agrapha* not contained in the Gospels.¹

We shall, when we come to the investigation of the three Synoptic Gospels separately, consider at length the sources from which each Gospel is derived; but it may be advisable before we close this discussion to advert to these sources in a general manner.

Many suppose that the Gospel of Matthew is a compilation, and that Matthew's name is attached to it because he wrote a section so important that his name passed from that to the whole; an opinion which we shall afterwards consider. The sources of Matthew's Gospel, according to our hypothesis, are the Gospel of Mark, the sayings or discourses of our Lord either handed down by tradition or in written fragments, and Matthew's own personal observation as an apostle, and his communications with his fellow apostles—of those who were "eye-witnesses and ministers of the word."

Papias, on the authority of John the Presbyter, informs us that Mark, being the interpreter of Peter, wrote down whatever he (Peter) remembered of the things said or done by Christ: nor is there any reason to discredit this statement, as it is confirmed and attested by the Fathers. But, besides the oral teaching of Peter, the general oral tradition of the Church would form another source of Mark's Gospel. Mark appears to have been a native of Jerusalem, and to have been intimately connected with the apostolic Church.

Luke, in his preface, informs us how his Gospel was

¹ The most remarkable of these found in the Epistles of Paul are 1 Cor. ii. 9, vii. 10, ix. 10; Eph. v. 14; 1 Thess. iv. 15; 1 Tim. v. 18.

composed. He used his utmost diligence in the collection of authentic facts and sayings of our Lord, "tracing the course of all things accurately from the first." One of the documents which he would employ was the Gospel of Mark. He would, no doubt, make a careful selection of the evangelical fragments in circulation containing the sayings of Christ. He might have learned the account of the birth of our Lord either from the brothers of Christ, or it may be from Mary herself. His intercourse with Paul, and perhaps his residence in Judæa during Paul's imprisonment in Cæsarea, afforded him exceptional opportunities of ascertaining the incidents in our Lord's life. And perhaps also there was an additional narrative or document to which he had access, the so-called great insertion or Peræan section (Luke ix. 51-xviii. 14), which does not appear to have been used by the other two evangelists.

The subject is still beset with difficulties; there are still many points not ascertained or settled; many objections to which no satisfactory answers have been given. Especially the relation of Mark's Gospel to the Gospels of Matthew and Luke requires to be more closely examined. We reject the theories of an Ur-Matthæus and an Ur-Marcus as not supported by the statements of the Fathers, and in themselves improbable. And with regard to the statement of Papias, we do not think that it refers to a previous Mark, or to a document containing a collection of the sayings of Christ by Matthew, but to the canonical Gospels of Matthew and Mark then existing, and which came under his notice. At the same time, we must leave the question concerning the sources of the Synoptic Gospels in a considerable measure unanswered, but we look hopefully forward to a satisfactory solution by future critics.

VI. INTERPRETATION OF THE SYNOPTIC GOSPELS.

In the interpretation of the Synoptic Gospels, as of all other ancient writings, the first prerequisite is to secure as correct a text as the nature of the case will permit. For the attainment of this we have the greatest advantages.

The materials for forming such a text are numerous: there are more than two thousand manuscripts of the Greek New Testament, besides numerous versions and quotations from patristic writings. Eminent scholars have expended much labour in a critical examination of these materials, and have published carefully studied critical editions of the Greek Testament. Griesbach arranged the different manuscripts into families, and formed a new text on the basis of the *textus receptus*.¹ Lachmann advanced a step farther, by forming a new text from the most ancient manuscripts, giving no preference to the *textus receptus*, and thus made it his object to restore the text to the state in which it was in the fourth century.² Tischendorf, by the discovery of numerous manuscripts, especially the Codex Sinaiticus, and by the collation of the most important, formed a text which may be regarded as perfect as can possibly be made, almost a restoration of the originals.³ Tregelles, in our own country, carefully collected additional manuscripts, and published a Greek Testament, vying in accuracy with the editions of those illustrious German scholars.⁴ And Westcott and Hort, profiting by the labours of their great predecessors, conjointly published a critical edition,⁵ which by many is considered as a standard work, almost rendering all additional research unnecessary, unless new materials for examination should be discovered. The result of these investigations has been thus stated by Dr. Hort, in terms certainly not too strongly expressed: "In the variety and fulness of the evidence on which it rests, the text of the New Testament stands absolutely and unapproachably alone among ancient prose writings."⁶

¹ Griesbach, *Novum Testamentum græce*, Londini, 1818.

² Lachmann's *Novum Testamentum græce et latine*, Berlin, 1832.

³ Tischendorf, *Novum Testamentum græce*, editio septima, Leipsic, 1889; editio octava, 1873.

⁴ Tregelles, *The Greek New Testament*, edited from ancient authorities with their various readings in full, London, 1857-1879.

⁵ *The New Testament in the original Greek*. The text revised by Dr. Westcott and Dr. Hort. By the recent death of Dr. Hort, the Church of England lost one of its ablest scholars, and one of the most amiable of men.

⁶ The manuscripts of the New Testament are divided into two classes, those written in uncial characters, which are the most ancient, and those

Having obtained a correct text, the next task is to translate it. Whatever modification the element of inspiration may necessitate in giving to the text a higher and more spiritual meaning, yet, in the first instance, the ordinary methods of interpretation must be employed to ascertain its literal sense. As the late Professor Jowett observes: "Interpret the Scripture like any other book. There are many respects in which Scripture is unlike any other book; these will appear in the results of such an interpretation. The first step is to know the meaning, and this can only be done in the same careful and impartial way that we ascertain the meaning of Sophocles or of Plato." "Scripture is to be interpreted like other books, with attention to the character of its authors and the prevailing state of civilisation and knowledge, with allowance for peculiarities of style and language, and modes of thought and figures of speech."¹

written in cursive characters, which are the most recent. No manuscript has been discovered older than the fourth century. Of ancient manuscripts there are five which have pre-eminence on account of their age and the consequent value of their readings; these are the Codex Sinaiticus (S), discovered by Tischendorf, and now in St. Petersburg; the Codex Alexandrinus (A), now in the British Museum; the Codex Vaticanus (B), now in the Vatican; the Codex Ephræm (C), a palimpsest, containing fragments of the New Testament, now in the Imperial Library of Paris; and the Codex Bezae, now in the University Library of Cambridge. Perhaps Westcott and Hort, in their critical edition, have ranked too highly the Sinaiticus and the Vaticanus to the disparagement of the Codex Alexandrinus. The cursive manuscripts are much more numerous than the uncial; and it has been thought by Dean Burgon, Canon Cook, and others, that their value has been underestimated, and an undue preference given to the uncial, inasmuch as many of these cursive manuscripts are doubtless transcripts of older manuscripts than any which we possess; but as it is impossible to prove this, the only course left open to us is to form our text chiefly from the readings of the most ancient codices. Of the versions of the New Testament the most valuable are the Old Latin and the Syriac, both of which were formed about the middle of the second century, and thus contain readings older than those of our oldest Greek manuscripts. The quotations from the Fathers are for critical purposes of inferior value, unless on those rare occasions when a peculiar reading is mentioned, because most of these quotations were made from memory.

¹ Jowett's essay on the Interpretation of Scripture in *Essays and Reviews*, 8th ed. pp. 377, 404. The whole essay is well worthy of a careful perusal; some of the statements are of doubtful tendency.

The result of all these scholarly investigations has in our age been the publication of the *Revised Version*, a work which occupied for several years the attention of the most distinguished biblical scholars, both of this country and of America. It has not, it must be admitted, answered the expectations either of those engaged on it or of its admirers. The Authorised Version has not, as was fondly expected, been superseded by it, nor are there any symptoms of this ever being the case; yet it is a great gain to Christians in our country, and a great advantage to biblical scholars. The translation possesses the weight of authority. It is formed on the most approved text, the nearest approach that has yet been made to the original, and hence several passages which are inserted in the Authorised Version are now, after a careful examination of authorities, regarded as interpolations, and a few which were omitted are now inserted as genuine. The chief omissions are the doxology to the conclusion of the Lord's Prayer (Matt. vii. 13), and the testimony of the heavenly witnesses (1 John v. 7); in 1 Tim. iii. 16, He is substituted for God; whilst the incident of the woman taken in adultery (John viii. 1-11), and the concluding verses of Mark's Gospel (Mark xvi. 9-20), are marked as doubtful. The additions to the Authorised text are few; in 1 John ii. 23, the clause: "He that confesseth the Son hath the Father also," is no longer printed in italics, as if it were doubtful. The translation is also distinguished for its accuracy; and thus many obscure passages are elucidated, and many misapprehensions corrected. The great fault of the Revised Version is that it often departs unnecessarily from the fine old English of the Authorised Version, which has endeared itself to the hearts of the people, and has had almost a sanctity imparted to it. Some of the alterations are also of doubtful advantage, as the substitution of "the evil one" for "evil" in the petition in the Lord's Prayer: "Deliver us from evil."

A number of words used in the Synoptic Gospels may be considered as translations either from the Hebrew or from the Aramaic. We have already alluded to the hypothesis of a Hebrew or Aramaic Gospel, advanced by Professor Marshall and Resch, as one of the main sources

of the Synoptics.¹ But although we do not think that there is much or any ground for this hypothesis, yet we have the testimony of Papias, followed by many of the early Fathers, that Matthew wrote his Gospel in Hebrew. This important statement will afterwards be considered; but, if we admit its truth, it follows that the Gospel of Matthew, as we now have it, is a translation from Aramaic or Hebrew into Greek. There may also have been Gospel-fragments in Hebrew used by all three evangelists. If this is the case, it would account for many verbal variations which occur in the Synoptics, in describing the same events and recording the same discourses. As already observed, it never happens that two translators of a passage use precisely the same words; and this is especially the case when translating from the Hebrew and Aramaic, owing to the peculiarities of these languages with regard to their vocalisation; the omission or change of vowel points, which are of comparatively recent origin, occasions a variation of meaning.

On account of its importance, we repeat what has already been said in our *Introduction to the Pauline Epistles*, that an essential prerequisite for the interpretation of Scripture, and of the Synoptic Gospels in particular, is *candour*. This is a quality in which many biblical scholars and exegetes are sadly deficient. From sectarian or doctrinal bias we are apt to err in this particular, and to come to the study of the Synoptic Gospels with preconceived opinions, and seek to read into them our doctrinal views. This is especially seen in the numerous and conflicting interpretations which are given to the Sermon on the Mount.² We must reverse the process, and come to the study of the Scriptures as much as possible without prepossession; not asserting dogmatically that such must be the meaning of a passage because such are the views we have adopted; but that such are our views, because such is the obvious meaning of Scripture.³

¹ See *supra*, p. 60.

² Besides the interpretations given in the different commentaries, the reader is especially referred to the suggestive views of Count Tolstoi.

³ *Introduction to the Pauline Epistles*, p. 54.

Another prerequisite for the interpretation of the Synoptic Gospels is to put ourselves as much as possible in the times when these Gospels were written. We must acquire a knowledge of the circumstances of the times, of the political condition of Judæa, of the opinions of the various parties into which the Jews were divided,—the Pharisees and the Sadducees,—and of the feelings which actuated the mass of the people. We must try and understand the disposition of the Jews toward Christ; His popularity with the people at first, and its gradual decline; and the reason of the hostility of the chief rulers which culminated in His death.¹ We must, with the spirit of a historian, live over in thought that period. "If," says Cardinal Wiseman, "we wish to understand an author, we must transplant ourselves from our age and country, and place ourselves in the posture of those whom our Saviour addressed. We must invest ourselves with their knowledge, their feelings, habits, opinions, if we wish to understand the discourses which were addressed primarily and immediately to them. For the true meaning of a word or phrase is that which was attached to it at the time when the person whom we interpret wrote or spoke."

It has been objected, that if the evangelists had not written their Gospels independently, but either used each other's Gospel, or incorporated other written documents, or had recourse to oral traditions; especially if there were original Gospels, now lost, that lay at the foundation of our canonical Gospels, they cannot be considered as inspired; the evangelists are left entirely to the use of their own mental powers, and in many respects are mere compilers. "The inspiration of the Gospels," says Mr. Sadler, "is incompatible with the theory that they were all taken from one document, for in such a case that unknown and lost document must have been the only one that could be called the work of the Spirit; and the alterations which each one made in it, which their mutual discrepancies show, prove

¹ See especially on this point the great and exhaustive work of Schürer, *The Jewish People in the Time of Christ*; also Hausrath's *History of the New Testament Times: The Time of Jesus*.

that in altering it they individually were not so far guided by the Holy Spirit."¹

It is foreign to an Introduction to the Synoptic Gospels to enter into any discussion of inspiration, either in proof of its truth or in explanation of its nature and extent; this belongs to the sphere of dogmatic theology. The inspiration of the Gospels does not affect the mode of interpretation, nor the consideration of the sources from which they were derived. The Gospel-fragments, used by the evangelists, or incorporated into their writings, may have been inspired documents; of course of this we have no direct evidence, except that which arises from the nature of their contents. Luke, for example, in his preface, indicates that he had access to several traditionary accounts or written documents, and among them might be the Gospel of Mark and these Gospel-fragments. The Holy Spirit might influence him in the choice of his materials, and might guide and direct him to what was true and important. Our Lord, on the eve of His departure, promised the gift of inspiration to His apostles. The Holy Spirit was to enlighten their minds in the knowledge of the truth, to guide them into all truth, to show them things to come, to reveal those "many things" which Christ had not disclosed, and to assist them in their apologies before kings and rulers. "These things have I spoken unto you, while yet abiding with you. But the Comforter, even the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in My name, He shall teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I have said unto you" (John xiv. 25, 26). "When He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He shall guide you into all truth: for He shall not speak from Himself; but what things soever He shall hear, these shall He speak: and He shall declare unto you the things that are to come" (John xvi. 13). The Fathers repeatedly assert the inspiration of the sacred writers. Tertullian speaks of them as having their minds flooded with the Holy Spirit;² and Origen affirms that the sacred books are not the works of men, but were written by inspiration of the Holy Spirit.³

¹ Quoted in Salmon's *Introduction to the N.T.* p. 156, note. ² *Apol.* 18.

³ *De Princip.* iv. 9. It is difficult, if not impossible, to define the

It has, however, been asserted that there are discrepancies in the Synoptic Gospels of such a nature as disprove their inspiration. Whether these discrepancies exist is one question; and whether, granting their existence, they are of such a character as to disprove the inspiration of the Gospels, is another. We have already admitted, what is indeed undeniable, that there are great differences in the Gospels, especially in those of Matthew and Luke, in their narratives of the birth of our Lord, of His sufferings and death, and of His resurrection; and we have dwelt upon these differences in considering the nature of the Synoptic problem. But many of these differences are not inaccuracies or discrepancies, but additions to the history or variations in the statement of the same incidents seen from different points of view.¹ It is also to be observed that there may have been a repetition of the same incidents. Thus to take a notable example: we learn from Matthew and Mark that there were two occasions on which our Lord miraculously fed the multitude, with points of similarity and dissimilarity in the accounts, whilst only one of these instances is recorded by Luke. Now, supposing that Matthew and Mark had only recorded one of those miracles, the feeding of the four thousand, whilst the other miracle, the feeding of the five thousand, was only recorded by Luke, it would be asserted that there were numerous discrepancies in the accounts of the evangelists; the one account asserting the number of those fed to be four thousand, and the other five thousand; according to the one the supply of food was seven loaves, according to the other four loaves and two fishes; the fragments gathered, according to one narrative, were seven baskets full, and according to the other, twelve baskets. Whereas all these discrepancies are at once

nature of inspiration; and hence in confessions of faith, whilst the inspiration of Scripture is asserted, it is generally left unexplained. It implies that the sacred writers were influenced by the Spirit of God. But this general assertion does not admit of being particularised. See Sanday's *Bampton Lectures* on "Inspiration," pp. 31 ff.; Row's *Bampton Lectures*, pp. 443-448.

¹ For the consideration of these differences in the Synoptic Gospels the reader is referred to the various commentaries, especially those of Meyer, Godet, Alford, Morison, McClellan, etc.

removed and disappear by the information we possess, that our Lord fed the multitude, not on a single, but on two occasions. A similar solution may solve other difficulties; as, for example, in the case of the anointing of our Lord; one anointing is related by Luke (vii. 36-40), and another by Matthew (xxvi. 6, 7) and Mark (xiv. 3). Both agree in the facts that the person who anointed was a woman, and that the name of the person in whose house it occurred was Simon, one of the most common Jewish names. But in all other particulars they differ essentially; the one occurred during the course of our Lord's ministry in Galilee, the other in Bethany shortly before His passion; in the one case the woman was a penitent sinner, in the other she was the saintly Mary, the sister of Lazarus. All these differences disappear on the reasonable supposition that the anointing occurred on two different occasions. So also there is nothing improbable in the supposition that the disciples twice disputed among themselves which of them should be the greatest (Luke ix. 46, xxii. 24); and that our Lord twice purified the temple by casting out the buyers and sellers, once at the beginning (John ii. 13-17), and a second time at the close of His ministry (Matt. xxi. 12, 13). Many of the sayings of our Lord might have been repeated, as they partook of the nature of proverbial expressions, as "He that humbleth himself shall be exalted; and he that exalteth himself shall be humbled" (Luke xiv. 11, xviii. 14). "Whosoever shall save his life shall lose it" (Luke ix. 24, xvii. 33). So also much of the Sermon on the Mount may have been twice repeated, and our Lord may have given to His disciples on two occasions a similar form of prayer.¹ The alleged discrepancies in the Gospels are greatly diminished in number by these considerations, and the differences which do still exist are proofs of the comparative independence of the writers;

¹ In Matthew's Gospel, the Lord's Prayer constitutes part of the Sermon on the Mount, whilst in Luke's Gospel our Lord is represented as giving it in answer to the request of the disciples to instruct them in the mode of prayer (Luke xi. 1). There are also considerable verbal variations in the two forms. See on doublets in the Gospels, *supra*, p. 37.

indeed, the marvel is that so few alleged discrepancies exist.¹

There is one incident, however, which requires special consideration owing to the extreme difficulty of harmonising the accounts. We allude to the incident of the cure of the blind man at Jericho, as given by all three evangelists (Matt. xx. 29-34; Mark x. 46-52; Luke xviii. 35-43). In the accounts given there is a twofold variation as regards the number of those cured, and as regards the locality where the miracle was performed. Matthew affirms that there were two men,² whilst Mark and Luke seem to intimate that there was only one. Luke tells us that the cure was performed as our Lord entered Jericho, whilst Matthew and Mark say that it happened when He departed from Jericho. The attempted solutions of these discrepancies have hitherto been forced and unnatural, mere evasions of the difficulty. McClellan supposes that as our Lord entered Jericho two blind men sat by the wayside begging, but made no application; and, on the next day, when our Lord was departing, they cried out, "Jesus, Thou Son of David, have mercy on us!" and were cured;³ which is certainly at variance with the account given us by Luke. Greswell supposes that two miracles were performed in Jericho, but at different times and on different individuals; that Mark relates one of the miracles performed when Jesus was departing from Jericho, and Luke relates the other as Jesus was entering Jericho, and that Matthew embraces both cures in one narrative.⁴ But the language employed by the blind men and our Lord, as recorded by all the evangelists, was the same, thus indicating that the miracle was the same. Surely it is

¹ Other apparent discrepancies, as the genealogies, the census of Quirinius, the prophecy of Zechariah referred to Jeremiah, are discussed farther on. The difference between the Synoptics and St. John as to the day of our Lord's death is discussed in the *Introduction to the Johannine Writings*.

² In Matthew's Gospel the number cured is often doubled: as here the two blind men at Jericho, the two demoniacs at Gadara (Matt. viii. 28), the two blind men at Capernaum (Matt. ix. 27).

³ McClellan's *New Testament*, vol. i. p. 467.

⁴ Greswell's *Dissertations*, vol. ii. p. 569.

better frankly to admit the discrepancy than to have recourse to such forced methods of conciliation. There may be some method of reconciliation of which we are ignorant, owing to the scantiness of our information. Even admitting the discrepancy, it is evidently of a slight nature, and does not at all affect the principal fact, that a miracle of healing was performed at Jericho.¹

It is an obvious remark, that in interpreting any writing there must be a certain sympathy between the reader and the writing: a poetical spirit can only understand and appreciate poetry; a mathematical mind can only solve the problems of mathematics; a philosophical mind can only follow the discussions of metaphysicians; an historical mind can only fully enter into the great political and social questions of the age. This is especially the case with the interpretation of the Scriptures: the word of God can only be truly understood by a religious mind. There must be an inspiration within us, an indwelling of the Holy Spirit, to correspond with the inspiration of the Scriptures without us. In this sense we may understand the words of the apostle: "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him; and he cannot know them, because they are spiritually judged" (1 Cor. ii. 14). In order, then, to interpret the Synoptic Gospels aright, to fathom the depth of their meaning, to grasp the fulness of spiritual truth which they contain, we must have spiritual discernment: we must feel the truth in our hearts.²

The Synoptic Gospels to the religious mind possess internal evidences of their inspiration; they bear impressed upon them the mark of their supernatural origin. The

¹ See on this subject some excellent remarks by Row, *Bampton Lectures*, pp. 472, 473. Tatian mentions only one blind man, Bartimeus, who was cured when Jesus was departing from Jericho.

² The Scriptures address themselves not so much to man's rational nature, the *ψυχή*, as to man's spiritual nature, the *πνεῦμα*. We require the assistance of a higher spirit than our own, even the Spirit of God, the great Inspirer, to understand His word; we must be in sympathy with the great Author. There is great truth in Neander's famous adage: *Pectus est quod theologum facit*. See some excellent remarks on Inspiration in the *Westminster Confession*, ch. i. 5.

discourses recorded in them are the words of One who spoke as never man spoke. The parables of our Lord, for example, are full of inspiration. Those wonderful discourses, linking the world of spirit with the world of matter, transfiguring with a divine glory the phenomena of nature, at once so simple and so profound, so natural and so supernatural, so many-sided, awakening a response, not merely in the hearts of those to whom they were primarily addressed, but in the heart of humanity, are revelations of the Spirit of God.

So also that wonderful discourse of our Lord to which we have already adverted, the so-called Sermon on the Mount, whether we consider it as given on a single occasion in one discourse as is recorded in Matthew's Gospel, or whether we consider it as given in detached portions on different occasions as related in Luke's Gospel, has been almost universally acknowledged to bear upon itself the impress of inspiration.¹ It is the most wonderfully inspired discourse that ever was uttered. It is the revelation of the laws of the Gospel—not the destruction, but the fulfilment and completion of the law—rescuing it from the formal interpretation of the scribes and Pharisees, bringing its precepts to bear upon the heart, declaring that it relates not to outward actions, but to the disposition. It is the inauguration of the kingdom of God. There was doubtless, after the completion of our Lord's work by His death and resurrection, and after His departure from the world, a subsequent development of Christianity by the apostles; but the germs are found in this discourse; it is the fountain from which all subsequent streams of spiritual truth have issued. Plato and Socrates never uttered truths so profound, so living, so transforming, so universal in their application, as those given in this discourse by Jesus of Nazareth.

¹ In all probability the large portion of it given by Luke, the so-called Sermon on the Plain (Luke vi. 20-49), is identical with the occasion when the Sermon on the Mount was delivered. The circumstances attending both discourses are similar, there being in both cases multitudes of hearers from Galilee and Judæa and from beyond Jordan; and the time when they were spoken appears to coincide. So Stroud, Tholuck, Ewald, Alford, Wordsworth, Westcott, M'Clellan, and Ellicott. See *supra*, p. 39.

It has been maintained that the Sermon on the Mount and the other discourses and parables of our Lord contained in the Synoptics form the main truths of Christianity—the fundamentals of the religion of Jesus. We have been, it is said, too long deriving our Christianity from the teaching of Paul, we must return to the Christianity of Christ. We must draw the living water, not from the stream, but from the fountain-head. On all sides the cry is: "Back to Christ!"¹ It is from His teaching, as recorded in the Synoptic Gospels chiefly, that we derive our knowledge of the way of salvation. Even the Gospel of John, long regarded as "the spiritual Gospel," as disclosing the heart of Jesus, must, it is said, yield the palm to the Synoptics, and occupy a secondary place. "The heart of the man Jesus in its rich fulness of grace and spiritual truth, is more adequately shown in the first three Gospels than in the fourth."² And with regard to the Epistles of Paul, the view of Christianity, as there exhibited, must be regarded as inferior to the revelation in the Synoptic Gospels. "Paul's point of view is individual; Christ's is social." "It is the business of theology to determine the affinities between the Galilean and the Pauline Gospels, but it is the privilege of religious faith to enter into life by the door which Jesus has opened, without stopping to inquire whether Paul's key fits the lock. The words of Jesus are 'words of eternal life,' and no truth not spoken by Him can be essential to salvation, however helpful for upbuilding in faith."³ Even with regard to the death of Christ, whilst Paul insists on it as the great atonement for sin, yet he has not "presented in all its aspects the meaning of Christ's death; he has not taught with breadth and emphasis the precious doctrine of Christ's temptations and priestly sympathy."⁴

Now this exaltation of the Sermon on the Mount and

¹ Bruce, *The Kingdom of God*, p. 329. See also this thought developed in Principal Fairbairn's recent suggestive work, *Christ in Modern Theology*.

² Bruce's *Apologetics*, pp. 485-490. See, on the contrary, Tholuck's *Sermon on the Mount*, trans. p. 35; here he states: "In the further development of Rationalism, the ground it took was most plainly indicated by its preference of the Epistle of St. James to those of St. Paul, and of the Sermon on the Mount to the Gospel of St. John."

³ Bruce's *Apologetics*, pp. 427, 428.

⁴ *Ibid.* pp. 426, 427.

the Synoptic discourses above other parts of Scripture, appears to us erroneous. Most certainly the teaching of Christ is of primary importance; but it did not contain the full revelation, it was necessarily of a preparatory character. Jesus Himself said: "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He shall guide you into all the truth" (John xvi. 12, 13). The apostles during the life of their Lord were not capable of receiving the full revelation of salvation; the atoning nature of the death of Christ could not be fully declared until Christ had died and the atonement had actually been made: the Holy Spirit was not given until Jesus was glorified (John vii. 39). He by His teaching laid the foundation of the spiritual temple, but the apostles under the guidance of the Holy Spirit were the instruments employed in rearing the superstructure. Paul and the other sacred writers unfolded truths which Jesus had only revealed in part. They explained the way of salvation more distinctly; the agency and work of the Holy Spirit was not clearly made known until the outpouring of His influences on the day of Pentecost.

The three Synoptic Gospels have their distinctive peculiarities. There are properly not three Gospels, but one Gospel under different aspects. It is one Person who is described; they contain memorabilia of Christ. They are three photographs of one original, shown in different lights, and placed in different positions. Yet there is no unvaried uniformity; the characteristics of each writer are impressed upon his writing: there is no slavish copying of one from the other: inspiration does not obliterate the personality of the evangelists. Matthew, writing to the Jews, dwells upon Jesus as the Messiah; he heaps proof upon proof that the prophecies of the Old Testament were fulfilled in Him; he does not dwell so much as the other evangelists on the incidents of our Lord's life, but groups His discourses and gives them in a compact form: he imparts to us the teaching of Him who came to redeem Israel and establish the kingdom of God. Mark, writing perhaps to the Romans, dwells upon Jesus as the Emperor, the great King of men, the Son of God: he

dwells chiefly on His miracles and less on His discourses; he writes with the freshness of an eye-witness, and gives graphic and lifelike descriptions of the incidents he records. Luke dwells on the human nature of Jesus: he discloses His divine compassion and condescension; he describes Him, not so much as the Son of David, but as the Son of Man; he indicates the universality of His mission, and reveals Him as the Saviour, not of the Jews merely, but of the world, as the Friend and Redeemer of the human race.¹

VII. THE HARMONY OF THE GOSPELS.

It is natural to endeavour to arrange the statements of the three evangelists into a harmony; to represent the life of Christ as a unity. This was attempted at a very early period. Many suppose that Justin Martyr (A.D. 150) in quoting from the Gospels, as the memorials of Christ, used a harmony. It is certain that shortly afterwards (A.D. 160) Tatian drew up his celebrated Diatessaron, or the four Gospels in one (εὐαγγέλιον διὰ τῶν τεσσάρων).² He was followed by Ammonius (ἁρμόνιον, A.D. 230) and Augustine (*De consensu evangelistarum*). Calvin drew up a harmony of the Gospels in a liberal manner, making full allowance for their variations: according to him, in Matthew the greatest attention is paid to consecutive order; in Luke, the least. Osiander in his *Harmonia evangeliorum* proceeded on an entirely different principle. His dogmatic assumption was that as the evangelists were inspired, the discourses of Jesus, when there was any considerable difference, must have been repeated, and His actions must have been related in the exact order in which they occurred; hence the same events were represented as having

¹ For the distinctive peculiarities of the Gospels, see Ellicott's *Hulsean Lectures* on the life of our Lord Jesus Christ, Lecture V.; Westcott's *Introduction to the Study of the Gospels*, pp. 308-313; Fairbairn's *Christ in Modern Theology*, pp. 334-338.

² We have now (1894) the great advantage of perusing the Diatessaron of Tatian in a translation from the Arabic, and have to express our high admiration of it. As a harmony it is not inferior to many of modern times.

happened twice or even three times.¹ Modern harmonies of the Gospels are exceedingly numerous, and some of them of great value. Greswell's *Dissertations upon the principles and arrangement of the Harmony of the Gospels*,² contain matter of high importance, well deserving of attentive study. Stroud, arranging the Gospels in parallel columns, formed out of them a combined Greek text.³ Wieseler's *Synopsis of the Four Gospels*,⁴ is chiefly a series of important discussions on the chronology of our Lord's life. The value of Rushbrooke's *Synopticon* has already been adverted to.⁵

But the question meets us: Is a harmony of the Synoptic Gospels possible? If the evangelists do not follow a chronological order, how can we draw up a harmony of their accounts? Alford denies this possibility, and asserts that all attempts at arrangement are fruitless labours. The endeavours of harmonists to force into agreement the different accounts, he asserts, have been most prejudicial, and have given occa-

¹ Schaff asserts that according to Osiander, Peter's wife's mother was healed three times.

² Published at Oxford, 1830.

³ Stroud's *Greek Harmony of the Four Gospels*, London, 1853. This is a work of great labour and erudition. There is a long introduction or dissertation of 216 pages. Stroud was not a clergyman, but a physician.

⁴ Translated by Venables, Cambridge, 1864.

⁵ We give a list of the principal Harmonies of the Gospels given alphabetically: Anger's *Synopsis Evangeliorum*; Bengel's *Richtige Harmonie der vier Evangelien*, Tübingen, 1736; Calvin on the Gospels; Campbell, Dr. Colin, *Greek of the Three First Gospels*, Glasgow, 1882; Caspari's *Life of Christ*, trans. T. & T. Clark, Edinburgh, 1876; Chemnitz, *Harmonia quatuor Evangelistarum*, Hamburg, 1704; Credner's *Einleitung*, pp. 161 ff.; Doddridge's *Family Expositor*; Greswell's *Harmonia Evangelica*, Oxford, 1840; Griesbach, *Synopsis Evangeliorum*, Halle, 1776; Lightfoot's *Harmony*, London, 1655; Macknight's *Harmony of the Gospels*, London, 1763; Michaelis, *Introduction*, translated by Marsh, vol. iv. pp. 40-84; McClellan's *New Testament*, pp. 539-621; Newcome, *Harmony of the Gospels*, Dublin, 1778; Robinson, *Harmony of the Four Gospels*, Boston, 1848; Roediger's *Synopsis Evangeliorum*, Halle, 1739; Rushbrooke's *Synopticon*, London, 1880; Stroud's *Greek Harmony of the Gospels*, London, 1853; Tischendorf's *Synopsis Evangelica*, Leipzig, 1851; Thomson (Archbishop), *Table of the Harmony of the Gospels* in Smith's *Dictionary of the Bible*; article, "The Gospels"; Wieseler's *Chronologische Synopsis der vier Evangelien*, Hamburg, 1843.

sion to objections to the Gospel narrative.¹ But although a minute harmony, embracing details, is perhaps impossible, yet there is a general harmony; the great events of our Lord's life can be arranged in the order of their occurrence, although the subordinate events cannot. Luke, in his preface, states that having traced the course of all things accurately from the first, he intended to write them in order (*καθεξῆς*); but this order is only generally maintained. On the other hand, Papias declares that Mark followed Peter, who adapted his teaching to the needs of his hearers, but with no intention of giving a connected account of our Lord's discourses (*οὐχ ὥσπερ σύνταξιν τῶν κυριακῶν ποιούμενος λόγων*).² The allusion here may be only to our Lord's discourses, and not to the incidents of His life; for it is now generally admitted that the order observed in Mark's Gospel is the most trustworthy. Whilst, then, it cannot be maintained universally that the order of events, as given in harmonies, is chronologically correct, yet there is an undisputed order in which many particulars are recorded. The baptism of John inaugurated the ministry of our Lord, then follows an account of His missionary journeys through Galilee, with the two great crises in His life, the confession of His Messiahship by His apostles, and His transfiguration; then His entrance into Jerusalem, and the account of His passion. The record of the six days which intervened between His entrance into Jerusalem and His death, can be so drawn up that the events of each day can be recorded with extreme probability.³

Until our Lord's last visit to Jerusalem, the Synoptic Gospels are restricted to His ministry in Galilee. The time occupied in that ministry is not stated, and hence the arrangement of these Gospels is not according to time, but according to the special missionary journeys through Galilee. It would appear from these Gospels that three circuits of

¹ Alford's *Greek Testament*, ch. i. § vii., "The practicability of constructing a formal harmony of the three Gospels."

² He also says that he wrote down accurately, but not in order (*οὐ τάξει*).

³ Definite marks of time and place are seldom given; the particles of transition are in general indefinite; and it is only rarely that a connected series of events is recorded.

Galilee are mentioned, each of them proceeding from and returning to Capernaum. The first circuit was at the commencement of the ministry, and is recorded by all the evangelists. They tell us that Jesus went about in all Galilee, teaching in the synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people (Matt. iv. 23 ; Mark i. 35-39 ; Luke iv. 42-44). It was at the close of this circuit that the Sermon on the Mount was delivered. The second circuit is most fully recorded in Luke's Gospel, where we read that "afterwards He went through cities and villages preaching and bringing the good tidings of the kingdom of God," accompanied by the women of Galilee, who ministered unto Him of their substance (Luke viii. 1-3). It was during this journey that He commenced teaching the people by means of parables. The third circuit is mentioned by Matthew and Mark in language precisely similar to the statement of the first circuit: "Jesus went through all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom" (Matt. ix. 35-38 ; Mark vi. 6). It was during this journey that He twice performed the miracle of feeding the multitude, and sent forth His apostles to pave the way for His mission ; then also the confession of His Messiahship by the apostles and the Transfiguration occurred. Greswell remarks that there are "clear evidences of three general, and, at least, two partial circuits—the two last of the general and each of the partial within the compass of the same year, and the first of the general during the six months of the year before."¹ A harmony of the Synoptic Gospels may be drawn up according to these three circuits and the events stated, which probably occurred during each of them.

If, however, the Fourth Gospel is taken into account, then the harmony of the Gospels must proceed upon a different principle—not according to the circuits in Galilee, but according to the order of time. From John's Gospel we

¹ Greswell's *Dissertations*, vol. ii. p. 343. See also for the missionary journeys of Jesus in Galilee, and starting from Capernaum, Halcomb, *What think ye of the Gospels?* pp. 48 ff.

learn that our Lord's ministry must have extended over two to three years, as three Passovers are mentioned (John ii. 13, vi. 3, 4, xii. 1). Accordingly, harmonies have been made comprising the three years' ministry, stating the events which in all probability happened in each of these years.¹ This is a difficult task, as the only incident in John's Gospel which comes in contact with the ministry of our Lord, as recorded by the Synoptics, is the feeding of the five thousand (John vi. 1-13), until we come to the narrative of the Passion. Most of this arrangement must, of course, be conjectural.

It is unnecessary to give a table of the harmony of the Gospels, as this has been so frequently done by others. If, as is most probable, Mark is the original Gospel, and was consulted by Matthew and Luke, then it is best to use the Gospel of Mark as the basis, and to draw up the harmony with the order there laid down. In this manner it is not difficult to group all the events recorded in the three Gospels (the triple narrative). We can then fill up the outline with the incidents recorded separately by Matthew, Mark, and Luke. It is probable that the great insertion in Luke's Gospel (Luke ix. 51-xviii. 14) is correctly termed the Peræan Gospel, and that the incidents therein recorded occurred in Peræa during our Lord's residence in that district, as stated by John, toward the close of His ministry (John x. 40).

¹ See especially Caspari's *Chronological Introduction to the Life of Christ*.