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THE DATES AND ORIGINS OF THE GOSPELS

I

THE Problem originates from several sources and causes due to the manner in which the facts concerning the life of Our Lord have been presented. The following questions may help to define what the problem really is.

1. Why have we four different accounts by four persons each giving certain facts, instead of one whole and complete selection of the acts and words of Our Lord? This would have simplified the account and freed it from the present apparent discrepancies.

2. Why do these four accounts differ so widely from each other in recording

(a) events not given by the others? As for instance St. Matthew's early accounts of the birth of Our Lord, the Sermon on the mount, and many parables and miracles. St. Luke has also additions relating to events previous to the birth of Our Lord and events of His youth, as well as a whole block relating the journey towards Jerusalem. Again nearly the whole of Mark is contained in either Matthew or Luke in some form or other, whilst the Gospel of St. John is almost entirely peculiar to him.

(b) the same events by addition or omission of details as well as in phraseology and words amounting sometimes to several verses.

(c) the same events in different sequence and order.

3. Is there any Thesis that would give an adequate explanation of these phenomena in the four Gospels as we now have them?

It is not difficult to suggest solutions; but do these solutions account for all the differences and difficulties?

It is this problem which has for almost a century engaged many learned writers and professors at our Universities, both Clerical and Lay, at home and abroad.

We may now consider the solution in the light of the views which have been put forth by various writers as to the sources from which the Gospels have been derived, and how they have assumed their present form and contents.

Bishop Westcott takes the view that the Gospel, connoting by that term events in the Life of Christ, was first oral, and "existed from the first both in Aramaic and Greek . . . where two languages were generally current" (p. 192). So "the narrative was the embodiment of the oral accounts" (p. 191). He affirms that the "internal character" is favourable to this view. "The general form of the Gospels points to an oral source" (p. 208)—And that "they seem to have been shaped by the pressure of recurring needs, and not by deliberate forethought of their authors" (p. 209). He thinks St. Mark "to be the most direct representation of the first Evangelical tradition, of the common foundation on which the others were reared" (p. 209). "St. Matthew and St. Luke represent the two great types of recension" (p. 209). In this way Westcott solves the problem of the resemblances, both verbal and narrative, as well as the differences and peculiarities of the synoptic Gospels.

Professor Flinders Petrie, in his book *The Growth of the Gospels*, suggests that there was a "large floating mass of written memoranda or oral tradition" (p. 33), that of this mass, the synoptic writers had a common nucleus which determined the same order of events. Then they copied from other documents which stood in the same relation to the nucleus. Then extracts from other documents were interpolated together with scattered episodes and isolated sayings. Such, in brief, is Petrie's solution.

Dr. J. A. Robinson, in his *The Study of the Gospels*, explains the phenomena by saying that both Matthew and Luke used the work of Mark, adding to it new matter and often modifying its language (p. 15). He says "St. Luke pruned St. Mark in the process, many little details fell away" (p. 33), and "St. Matthew takes such parts as he needs. He abbreviated" (p. 34). Again on p. 67 "we have been proceeding on the hypothesis that our St. Mark lay before the writers of the first and third Gospels and that between them they embodied almost the whole of it, modifying its language at many points and largely adding to it from other sources of information". And on p. 141, he postulates what others have designated the "Q" document. "They (St. Matthew and St. Luke) accepted the clear scheme which

they found in St. Mark. They made indeed large additions, mainly of a didactic character, from another document which lay before them both."

We must now turn to that masterly and comprehensive book by one who has given a life-long and exhaustive study of the subject, and embodied it in his *The Four Gospels, A Study of Origins*. Canon Streeter was an undoubted authority, yet one feels bound to differ profoundly from the conclusions drawn from the observed facts which are not in dispute. His view, put briefly is this: In a diagram on page 150 and argued in the following pages, he represents Mark as the first and original independent Gospel, composed about A.D. 60 and circulated at Rome, and the chief source of the other two synoptic Gospels. Matthew, in addition to Mark, has two other sources to account for his additional matter—a Matthew document composed at Jerusalem about A.D. 65, and a document called "Q" composed at Antioch about A.D. 50, resulting in Matthew's Gospel as we now have it about A.D. 85.

Similarly Luke has two other sources besides Mark—the "Q" document and a Lukan document composed at Caesarea about A.D. 60. These two then form a Proto-Luke resulting in Luke's Gospel at Corinth about A.D. 80.

II

All this involves the assumption that neither Matthew nor Luke was an original independent document, although it is difficult to imagine why they should not have written independently as well as Mark. For after all, St. Matthew held an important position in the Roman Civil Service, a position demanding some education and ability. St. Luke, too, was a man of the educated class, being of the medical profession. Of this, his Gospel gives examples of niceties in the description of diseases, a proof of his ability to sift and analyze facts. It might, therefore, be allowed that their Gospels may be entirely independent, if it were not for the assumption that they must have copied St. Mark, since both together have absorbed almost his whole contents. The independence of each writer of the Gospels may be assumed as the most probable solution of the difficulties presented. Due consideration should be given to the statements in the Gospels themselves and the historical background of the early Church which demanded a Gospel suitable to its

own time and circumstances, and was supplied under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. It is this one element which most writers, who regard the Gospels as merely human compositions, ignore, and yet it is that which lifts the Gospels up to the higher plane of the Divine, and guarantees their accuracy apart from copyists' errors.

Our Lord knew the weakness and frailty of human nature, and could not leave His Church to be dependent for guidance and instruction upon human weakness. Therefore He promised and gave the Holy Spirit for guidance, teaching and bringing to their remembrance His words and deeds. There was much in Our Lord's Life and conduct not understood by the disciples at the time, until they had received the Holy Spirit. "But when Jesus was glorified, then remembered they that these things were written of him, and that they had done these things unto Him" (John xii. 16). There is also this promise, "But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you" (John xiv. 26). Also this "When the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak, and he will shew you things to come. He shall glorify me, for he shall receive of mine, and shew it unto you" (John xvi. 13-14).

St. John, writing towards the end of his life, seems here to confirm the truth and accuracy of the other three Gospels as well as his own, as written under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, Who has enabled the writers to call to mind the words and deeds of Our Lord and understand their true import to the Church and the world for all time. To ignore this fact is to ignore the one great deciding factor in the origins of the Gospels, and its omission by various writers vitiates all their conclusions. As well might a Chemist leave out the chief ingredient in a prescription, and then declare he has made up a reliable medicine, adequate to its purpose.

This guarantee demands a careful study of the writings, so that we may view what each writer meant from his own standpoint; why he recorded some things and left out others; why he presented the same thing in a different setting and varied words. There was much material to select from in a life of three years crowded with acts of kindness to multitudes,

instruction to the disciples and people, so much so that on occasion He was tired and weary, and had no leisure to eat. St. John perhaps speaks hyperbolically when he says "if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written" (John xxi. 25).

We know nothing, apart from the Gospels, of the life of Our Lord. And we have not sufficient knowledge to say that the writers have wrongly recorded any event. It behoves us, therefore, to avoid saying there is a contradiction here or there; but rather to ask for the guidance of the same Spirit to have a right understanding of what is written. The Bible is rather the "critic" of our hearts and minds, than our thoughts the critics of the Bible.

III

We may now ask, "Did they copy one from the other?" There are to my mind three reasons why we may return a negative answer:

First. Similar events must not be confounded or be thought to be conflated. They should be taken as distinct events, when the order, the language and circumstances demand it, unless we allow that the writers contradict each other. Neither should we disallow that Our Lord may and did repeat the same things on different occasions, as in the sentiments of the Sermon on the Mount, one recorded by St. Matthew, the other by St. Luke. There were many blind men healed and the method may very well in many cases have been similar, yet not the same persons. Take for example, the record of those healed near Jericho. St. Luke xviii. 35 f. records the one "as he came nigh Jericho". St. Matthew xx. 29 f. records the healing of two as "they departed from Jericho", and St. Mark, a third man whom he names "as He went out of Jericho", Mark x. 46 f.

Or again, the call of the four disciples. The one call recorded by St. Matt. iv. 18 f. and Mark i. 16 f. and another and different call recorded by St. Mark v. 1 f. Both, by the occasion and circumstances, shew that they are different. So, too, the Lord's Prayer may have been given on different occasions.

Then, secondly, the same events, miracles or parables, may be recorded differently to suit the more immediate purpose of the writer; little touches may be added by one, which are

omitted by the other, as will be seen by examining such a work as Thompson's "Synoptic Gospels in parallel columns"; often whole verses are added by Matthew to those in Mark. If Matthew copied Mark, then in the parable of the sower he made twelve mistakes by using different words.

Then, thirdly, there are omissions and additions which are patent to every one. The large additions in Matthew, giving the genealogy from Abraham, an account of the birth of Christ and several incidents connected therewith, the sermon on the mount, and many parables which are not recorded elsewhere. The same is true of St. Luke, with his accounts of the birth of John Baptist, other incidents in connection with our Lord's birth, and childhood songs and hymns, as well as a different genealogy up to Adam, and also from chapter ix. 51 to xviii. 14 are all peculiar to St. Luke and are a point in favour of independent authorship. And as for St. John, his is almost wholly additional to the other three, and by no means a copy of theirs.

With these undoubted facts before us it is pressing too much upon our credulity to ask us to believe that they copied Mark; rather would the facts point to Mark copying from Matthew and Luke, but we are forbidden this by the fact of the additions and differences in the verbal expressions with which he clothes his statements. So the answer to the question of copying by either is negative.

How then can the problem be solved? By the Thesis that each writer had in view a definite purpose in presenting Our Lord in a particular aspect and therefore selected the facts with this purpose under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

The Four Gospels are a "complete whole" and "required to set forth the four aspects of the life of Christ" which no one Gospel could do. They are a four-fold witness to Christ the Son of Man, the Son of God, the Saviour of the World.

The solution will be found in considering the early history of the preaching of the Gospel and the formation of the Church. This will indicate the character of the Gospel required for that particular period and circumstances. The command of Our Lord to His disciples was to "preach repentance and remission of sins in his name among all nations *beginning* at Jerusalem", and then in ever-widening circles of Judea, and Samaria. The Acts of the Apostles agrees with this instruction. On the day of

Pentecost, Peter preached to the Jews and devout men assembled at Jerusalem from all parts of the world and speaking various languages. Of this great multitude, some three thousand souls were convinced of the truth of the Apostolic message that Jesus was both Lord and Christ, the Messiah promised in the Old Testament and expected by the Jews. Those believers were baptized and formed the Church at Jerusalem. In Acts iv. 14 we are informed that "many of them that heard the word, believed, and the number of the men was about five thousand". Again v. 14, "Believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women". "In those days the number of the Disciples was multiplied" . . . "And the Word of God increased, and the number of the Disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly and a great company of the Priests were obedient to the faith" (vi. 1-7).

Would it be too much to say that there were twenty thousand Jews in Jerusalem who believed that Jesus Christ was the promised Messiah, King, Priest, and Prophet? And many of these were those closely connected by their ministerial office with the Temple sacrifices which were rendered nugatory by the one offering of Christ upon the Cross for the sins of the whole world. Is it any wonder then that there arose great opposition and persecution from those who could not "resist the wisdom and the Spirit" with which the Apostles spoke, and so had recourse to physical force, coming to a head in the case of Stephen, his defence and final stoning to death, followed by "a great persecution against the Church which was at Jerusalem", and "they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria" except the Apostles.

IV

Do not these circumstances suggest the need of a life of Christ which would encourage and confirm those persecuted believers in their faith, and at the same time confute their opponents and prove to both that the Gospel was not a break with, or contradiction to the teaching of the Old Testament, but a fulfilment of the promises made to Abraham and his seed? For to them were given the Oracles of God. "To whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service, and the promises: whose are the fathers, and of whom, as concerning the

flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever." (Rom. ix. 4-5.)

It is with this mental background: St Peter's preaching on the day of Pentecost—the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and the manifestation of His Power in the fulfilment of the prophecy of Joel. Jesus of Nazareth, whose miracles they had seen; Whom being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God they by wicked hands had crucified whom God raised up as foretold and spoken of by David in Psalm xvi. and He being by the right hand of God exalted, the Holy Spirit had come, and “therefore let all the House of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made this same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ”. We turn to the third chapter and note St. Peter's remarks concerning the healing of the lame man; the source of power is “The God of Abraham and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our fathers, hath glorified His Son Jesus . . . The Holy one, the Just one . . . the Prince of Life whom God hath raised from the dead”. . . . “Through faith in His Name hath made this man strong . . . But those things which God before hath showed by the mouth of all His Prophets, that Christ should suffer, He hath fulfilled.” He is the Prophet raised up like to Moses. Yea and all the Prophets from Samuel, as many as have spoken have foretold of these days: “This is the Covenant made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, and in Thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed.”

To the Jews' Council, Peter again testifies, “The God of our fathers raised up Jesus. . . . Him hath God exalted with His right hand to be a Prince (or founder, or author) and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins”.

Thus the Gospel moves in the atmosphere of the Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms, from the first until the death of Stephen.

With this Old Testament foundation for the Gospel and faith of the Church consisting almost entirely of Jews who were nurtured in these principles and now being persecuted by the official and ruling class, and its members being scattered, what more likely than that the Apostles, who were not yet dispersed, saw the need of a written Life of Christ based upon the same foundation which would encourage and confirm the believers in their faith under their heavy trials?

Would it be stretching one's imagination too much to think of the Apostles meeting under the guidance of the Holy Spirit to consider the circumstances and depute Matthew to write just such a Gospel, giving him the outline as well as facts to be included? If so, then Matthew's Gospel may be considered as emanating from the Apostolic Body and with their cognizance and approval.

Matthew was no doubt the best qualified to write the Gospel. He was of the class and standing of a Civil Servant, a man of education, possibly in the service of Herod Antipas. He was "deeply learned in the history and prophecies of his race, and eagerly looking forward to their realization".

In his Gospel he sets forth Christ as the anointed King of the Jews. His text might have been Zechariah ix. 9. "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass". And again Jer. xxiii. 5. "I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper. . . . This is his name whereby he shall be called The Lord our Righteousness".

This is the character of St. Matthew's Gospel. Its very first words indicate this: "The Book of the Generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham," followed by the genealogy through the Royal line of David and Solomon. It was to Abraham and David that the solemn promises of national blessings were made. The description of the birth confirms this, as well as the title "Emmanuel" God with us. It is the "King of the Jews" whom the men from the East come and worship, and whom King Herod fears. The Sermon on the Mount contains the laws of the Kingdom, laws not contrary to the Old Testament, but deepened and made to penetrate the thoughts of the heart, and not restricted to mere actual deeds. In Christ the promises of the Old Testament are fulfilled. He moves in their sphere, as it is written of Him. He heals the sick, and so fulfils that which was spoken of by the prophet Esaias—"Himself took our infirmities and bare our sicknesses". He sends His ambassadors with sovereign power over diseases and evil spirits, to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, to preach that the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand. There are no less than nineteen references to the Old Testament as

being fulfilled in the life of Our Lord, and they have to do with the direct question of the Messiahship of Jesus as "would be the case if the Gospel were composed about A.D. 42". The parables of the "Kingdom of Heaven" conform to this view, as well as the final words of the Gospel—"All power, all authority is given unto Me in heaven and in earth. Go—teach all nations, I am with you alway". Thus it ends on the note of sovereignty of Him Who is King of Kings. It is the transition from the Old Testament covenant to the New Testament covenant.

V

We must now consider the second stage in the history of the Early Church; and what character of Gospel will fit in with the circumstances. For we cannot but conceive that the Apostles were fully alert to the "good estate of the Catholic Church".

The Gospel after the death of Stephen was carried further afield "For they that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the Gospel . . . and Philip went to Samaria and preached Christ to them". Thus the second circle is reached. In the 10th and 11th chapters of Acts, we are informed of the Gospel being preached to those outside the Jewish community. But we note that St. Peter has still a limitation in his mind, it is "he that feareth God, and worketh righteousness is accepted with Him". Many Roman officers, as Cornelius, were favourable to the Jewish Religion, as also many Roman citizens resident in Palestine, "with a growing number of Greeks at Antioch and in Asia Minor". The first journey of St. Paul led him to Cyprus, there to effect the conversion of a Roman Deputy. The Gospel was "preached to the Grecians at Antioch and a great number believed and turned to the Lord". Thus, about the year 48, we have a Church which includes many Gentiles, especially Romans. And we may ask what sort of Gospel is now needed to meet this condition?

It is fair to assume that this large element of Roman soldiers, Civil Servants, and residents who believed, would be dominated by a sense of service to the State. So that a Gospel emphasizing the Christian life of service by the example of the life of Our Lord, would be readily understood and accepted. This is what we find characterizes the Gospel of St. Mark.

It might be headed—"Behold my Servant, Whom I uphold; Mine elect in Whom My soul delighteth: I have put My Spirit upon Him, He shall bring forth judgement to the Gentiles". And again—"I bring forth my Servant the Branch". The Gospel opens almost abruptly with a statement about John as the messenger, and Jesus being baptized. There is no genealogy as in Matthew, for we do not enquire about the genealogy of a servant, but rather the qualification for efficient service. This aspect of Jesus Christ is presented by St. Peter to Cornelius, the Roman Centurion. He reminds him of the baptism by John. "How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: Who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil: for God was with Him." The Gospel of St. Mark assumes, as would be the case of official and resident Romans, acquaintance with Jewish customs and Palestinian topography and makes use of Latinisms. It is characteristic of St. Mark that he omits the word "Lord" as used of Christ as compared with St. Matthew. The Leper addresses Him as "Lord" in St. Matthew. St. Mark omits it. The disciples say "Lord, is it I?" in St. Matthew; St. Mark omits the word. The disciples are rather companions in service, not as in St. Matthew men commanded to go. "If others need Him, He is their servant, 'always girded' ever ready to do them good."

At this point we may suggest that the probable cause of St. Mark "departing from them" may have been his lack of vision to preach the Gospel beyond those who were not in some sense proselytes, whilst St. Paul was bent upon evangelizing the heathen who knew not God.

The third stage in the spread of the Gospel was reached after St. Paul had "turned to the Gentiles", when the Jews "filled with envy, spoke against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming". Then some preached the necessity for these Gentiles to accept the Jewish sign of the covenant. This resulted in the Council of Jerusalem which declared emphatically that no such burden was to be placed upon them, because God had "put no difference between us (the Jews) and them (the Gentiles) purifying their hearts by faith". Thus the Gospel found its world-wide extension. "For all are the Children of God by Faith in Christ Jesus. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is

neither male nor female; for ye are all one in Christ Jesus." In this way all national, religious, civilized, social superiority of privilege, in access to God was abolished.

This condition of the Church gives rise to the demand for an aspect of the life of Christ which embraces the whole world within its scope. This is what we have in the Gospel of St. Luke, which presents the Lord Jesus as "Jehovah's Man" according to Zechariah vi. 12, "Behold the man, whose name is The Branch, and he shall grow up out of his place, and he shall build the temple of the Lord". Hence, St. Luke gives His human genealogy upward to Adam. For Christ is the second Man, who has restored all that was lost in the first Adam, "who is the figure of Him that was to come". It is not difficult to see traces of this universality of the Gospel depicted by St. Luke. We can see it in several instances in contrast with St. Matthew, who speaks of Christ as King. "Where is He that is born *King of the Jews*", records St. Matthew. But St. Luke records the message of the Angels—"For behold I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to *all people*. For unto you is born this day in the city of David, a *Saviour* which is Christ the Lord". No mention of King, but "Lord"; and "*all people*", both terms implying universality. Simeon speaks of Him as "A light to lighten the Gentiles". The sermon at Nazareth indicates God's wider mercy towards those outside the pale of the Jews, as illustrated by Naaman the leper, and the widow of Zarepta; these are mentioned only by St. Luke. Other examples of this world-wide object of the Gospel are the Parables of the Good Samaritan, The Pharisee and Publican, and The Prodigal Son. There is also the place given to women as of equal nearness with men to God. All this illustrates the truth that in Christ Jesus there is no distinction made as between male or female, bond or free, nor as between one race and another. It is this wider Gentile outlook that accounts for St. Luke using different expressions from either Matthew or Mark. Take a few examples:—(a) In the account of John the Baptist's preaching, (b) St. Matthew says "In those days"; but St. Luke gives exact time by reference to the dates of Rulers, "Fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Cæsar, etc". (c) St. Matthew and St. Mark describe John's dress of camel's hair, a character familiar to Jews. St. Luke says nothing about it. (d) St. Matthew says "This is He that was spoken of by Isaiah the prophet". St.

Luke says "so it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet" and adds the expression "and all flesh shall see the salvation of God". There are several other variations more understandable to Gentiles. For example—St. Matthew, in the temptation, speaks of the "Holy City", whereas St. Luke merely says "Jerusalem", a term better understood by Gentiles.

It is in this way we can account for St. Luke differing from the other two Gospels by additions, alterations and omissions, and all three being independent writers, and each with a separate purpose in view.

VI

We now turn to consider the fourth Gospel on the same historic principle.

By the time of the death of St. Paul, the Church may be said to have been fully established as a living force in the Roman Empire. The Gospel had been "preached in the whole world (*oikoumenē*) for a testimony unto all nations". Then followed the end of the Jewish dispensation by the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70.

The Christian teaching and the Church now came up against the Greek culture and philosophy, indications of which St. Paul gives us in his Epistles. In him particularly, the Church lost her chief overseer and guide; consequently, the three Gospels and his Epistles were the security and ground of the Church's teaching.

The Christian teaching was exposed to the more insidious attack from corruption by the Philosophers of the Universities carrying over their philosophical teaching into the Christian doctrine, much in the same way as the Jewish converts added the necessity of observing the Levitical law for salvation. There are indications in St. Paul's later Epistles, that he was fully alive to this menace; over against which he sets the superiority of the Christian doctrine of the God-head and Deity of the Lord Jesus Christ. Here are a few examples:—Colossians i. 15-16. "Who is the image of the invisible God, the first born of all creation; for in him were all things created, in the heavens and upon the earth, things visible and things invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers; all things have been created through him, and unto him; and he is before all things, and in him all things consist".

In chapter ii. vv. 3, 4, 8, we have a solemn warning, based on this completeness. "In Him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, and this I say, that no one may delude you with persuasiveness of speech." "Take heed lest there should be any one that maketh spoil of you through his philosophy and vain deceit, after the traditions of men, after the rudiments of the world and not after Christ." And again as regards worship—verse 18. "Let no man rob you of your prize by a voluntary humility and worshipping of the angels, dwelling in things which he hath seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind, and not holding fast the Head."

When we turn to the Epistles to Timothy, we find the warnings intensified. There is an implied reference to gnosticism in i Tim. i. 4—"neither to give heed to fables and endless genealogies." Again in iv. 1—"some shall fall away from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils." And 2 Tim. ii. 23—"But foolish and ignorant questionings refuse," and iii. 1—"In the last days grievous times shall come" (R.V.). Nor is St. John ignorant of this corrupting condition and danger to the Church. He warns his readers that "it is the last time, and as ye have heard that Antichrist shall come, even now there are many Antichrists" (Tim ii. 18). These are persons who deny that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh. These he describes as "liars," and warns his readers to try the spirits, "because many false prophets have gone out into the world"; only those who confess that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh are of God. These are "deceivers" (i John iv. 1-3. ii John 7.). If these were but the beginnings, to what extent must the contest have grown towards the end of the first century? What kind of Gospel of Our Lord is required to meet this kind of philosophy? None of the first three is adequate. There is required something more than setting forth Christ as the Messiah of the Jews, or The Servant, or The Man. Something that will over-top all these and set forth Christ as the supreme Head and source of wisdom and morality. This we have in the fourth Gospel, written, we may suppose, near the end of the century, by St. John the Apostle who was an eye witness.

He presents Christ as Jehovah Himself. "Behold your God!" (Isa. xl. 9). "In that day shall Jehovah's Branch be beautiful and glorious" (Isa. iv. 2). Hence there is no genealogy,

nor could there be. No account of His birth, or of His Temptation in the Wilderness, or Agony in the Garden. They would have been out of harmony with the Theme which fearlessly and boldly begins "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." (John i. 1). This Theme resounds throughout the Gospel, which was necessary for a complete view of the Life of Christ as being both perfect God and perfect man.

It presents itself in many ways of which it is only necessary to give indications by references to passages.

His omniscience is seen in the statement that He knew what was in man and had no need that any man should tell Him. (Cap. ii. 25). He knew when Nathanael was under the fig tree (Cap. i. 48). He was able to indicate to the woman of Samaria that He knew her past life (Cap. iv. 29).

His equality with the Father is both stated and implied. St. John does not use the usual word for prayer of Our Lord, but one which signifies an equal asking of an equal (Cap. xvi. 26, 27; ix. 15, 20). His Deity and equality with the Father is plain from many verses, as the following quotations prove. "All things were made by him, and without him was not anything made that was made" (Cap. i. 3). "We beheld his glory, the glory as the only begotten of the Father" (Cap. i. 14). "That all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father" (v. 23). "For as the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself" (v. 26). The Jews acknowledged that He made Himself equal with God (v. 18). And His prayer assumes that oneness. "That they all may be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee" (xvii. 21). "Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me" (xvii. 24).

St. John may well state that his purpose in writing the Gospel was "That ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God" (xx. 31).

I therefore conclude that the synoptic problem, as far as it is a problem, must be solved by the historical setting, that is to say, by the needs of the Church as it grew and expanded and extended. Thus St. Matthew wrote for the Early Christians who were principally Jews, soon after the martyrdom of Stephen.

St. Mark wrote for a wider circle, which included many Roman officers and proselytes about the time of the end of St. Paul's first missionary journey. St. Luke wrote for a wider circle still, when the Church was composed of persons out of all nations in the Roman Empire, about the time of the end of St. Paul's second missionary journey. St. John wrote when gnosticism and other philosophies were affecting the Church, about the end of the first century. He lifts the Gospel on to the Divine plane of the Deity of Christ. The Gospel is of Divine origin—not of man.

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