

Such is something of the nature of the subject before us, which it will be sufficient briefly to have indicated in the present Introductory remarks, reserving for future papers the consideration of individual *New Testament Saints not Commemorated*.

Be it ours to study in humility, to imitate by grace, till we

“Soar those elder saints to meet,
Gather'd long since at Jesus' feet,
No world of passions to destroy,
Our prayers and struggles o'er, our task
all praise and joy!”

T. T. PEROWNE.



ART. III.—THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO ST. JOHN.

PART I.

EVERY observation that is made respecting any of the four Gospels can be brought under one or other of the following heads:—(I.) The Evangelist; (II.) The Gospel itself; (III.) The readers for whom the Gospel was designed; (IV.) The Portraiture of our Lord which each Gospel severally displays.

Of these four, the last, if it can be distinguished with any certainty, is immeasurably more important than the other three. If the Gospels are what the Christian Church has always taken them to be, it is this Divine Portraiture which has determined all the other circumstances and surroundings of the Gospel, and made them what they are.

I have found the greatest help in the study of the Gospels, by keeping continually before me their several relations to the fourfold living Creature that was seen “under the God of Israel” by the seers and prophets of the Old Testament, and under His throne in heaven by St. John in the Apocalypse of the New Testament. When men have been permitted to “behold His glory” the vehicle has been always of the same form.¹ The Gospels are no exception to this statement.

The analogy has been thought fanciful, chiefly, I believe, because it has been variously (and therefore sometimes incorrectly) exhibited. The form it has generally taken in church

¹ Compare the description given in full, Ezek. i. and x. with the partial descriptions found in Exod. xxiv. 10, Isa. vi. 2, and the account in Rev. iv., where the song of the seraphim heard by Isa. is combined with the faces seen by Ezek. Note also the “firmament” in Exod. xxiv. 10 and Ezek. i. 22, and the name “God of Israel” common to Exod. xxiv. 10 and Ezek. x. 20.

decoration is not the one which is best supported by the facts of the case.

The right arrangement, as it appears to me, after close and continued examination, is that which brings the four Gospels as they stand in the New Testament into the same order with the four living creatures presented in the Book of Revelation : (iv. 7)—“And the first was like a lion, the second was like a calf, the third had a face as the face of a man, and the fourth was like a flying eagle.”¹

The characters associated with these forms throughout the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are taken up in the same order in the fourfold Gospel, and displayed in the Person of our Lord.

The Lion of the tribe of Judah is the symbol that best befits Him Who was “born King of the Jews” (St. Matt. ii. 2), and is constantly set forth to us by St. Matthew as “the King.”²

The continual labours of St. Mark’s narrative, from “the beginning of the Gospel” throughout its pages, to the great sacrifice, and the work still prolonged in heaven (xvi. 20), “the Lord working with them,” are entirely suited to the creature whose life is the chosen symbol of the Gospel workman. “Thou shalt not muzzle the *mouth of the ox when he treadeth out the corn* ;” and “the labourer is worthy of his hire.” Is not this the very figure of Him Who was chief in labour and sacrifice; “Who came, not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many”? Not that the other three Gospels are silent on these topics. But St. Mark is silent upon almost everything else.³

That the face of our Lord in St. Luke’s Gospel is the “face of a man,” seems beyond all doubt when we collect the details of humanity which are here furnished, from the swaddling-

¹ This is the arrangement adopted by Mr. Jukes in his little book on the Gospels, which is one of the most useful of his works.

² Note the frequent presentation of our Lord in this Gospel as the Judge of all, and the many allusions to the rewards and punishments of the last day—ch. v. 22, 26 ; vi. 2, 4, 6 ; vii. 22, 23 ; viii. 11, 12, 29 ; x. 15 ; xi. 22, 24 ; xii. 36, 41, 42 ; xiii. 30, 41, 42, 49, 50 ; xvi. 27, 28 ; xviii. 8, 9, and 23-35 ; xix. 28-30 ; xx. 8 ; xxi. 5, 41, 44 ; xxii. 11-13 ; xxiv. ; xxv. especially verses 34, 40 ; xxvi. 64 ; xxviii. 18. Some of these are common to other Evangelists, but many are peculiar to St. Matthew. And in no other Gospel do these references accumulate as they do in the first.

³ I cannot but feel that St. Mark’s Gospel has suffered recently from the non-recognition of its true place among the four. It is too often treated as though it were no more than a first edition of the oral Gospel when committed to writing ; and the two other synoptic Gospels are made a kind of development of it. And the “synopticon” recently constructed is made to furnish proof of the theory. To my mind this mode of treatment is profoundly unsatisfactory. But it is not a subject that can be dealt with in the compass of a note.

bands at Bethlehem to the agony in Gethsemane, and the intensely human scenes and pictures of Easter Day. The parables of this Gospel are human; the prayers are human; the close similarity between the records of the birth of our Lord and His forerunner make Him a prophet "from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me." His growth "in wisdom and stature," His constant sympathy as here displayed, belong to the same picture: and it is the portrait of the Son of Adam which was the Son of God.

The symbol which belongs to St. John has, I believe, never been disputed. The man, the lion, and the ox have been variously assigned. But the eagle has been uniformly associated with St. John. Comparing this with the three former symbols, and exchanging the symbol for the thing signified in each case, we obtain the following arrangement: Our Lord is first depicted to us, by St. Matthew, as THE KING; next, by St. Mark, as THE SERVANT of His people; St. Luke sets Him before us as MAN, the Son of Man; and St. John as GOD, of GOD (*Θεὸς ἐκ Θεοῦ*). I do not forget, in regard to the living creatures seen by Ezekiel, that "*they four* had their faces and their wings." They were distinct, but not separate beings. All that they had belonged to all of them. So, every aspect of our Lord's work and Person belongs to all the Gospels. But, if we ask which aspect is prominent in each Gospel, the answer must, I think, be that which I have given here. In this observation I am thinking more especially of St. Mark i. 1, where we read of "the Gospel of Jesus Christ, *the Son of God.*" The first verse of St. Mark seems to me to be intentionally antithetical to St. Matt. i. 1. A similar antithesis may be noted in St. Luke ii. 2, with St. John i. 1. The God-head of Him Who took the form of a servant, and the dignity of Him Who was born in Bethlehem, may not be forgotten. Still, the two first Gospels contrast Him in His offices and labours; the last two contrast Him in His two natures, the human and the Divine.

But in what way is the eagle fitted to be the expression of this character among the four? We can see that the lion of the Scripture is king and conqueror, the ox unmistakably fitted for service and sacrifice, and the face of man befits man. But how is the eagle especially suited to the character of God?

The answer in the light of the Old Testament is clear enough. To Moses and the children of Israel, the Lord was graciously pleased to describe Himself as the eagle in relation to her young. So He said at Sinai: "I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto Myself" (Exod. xix. 4). So again in the last prophetic utterance which He gave to Moses (Deut. xxxii. 11, 12), "As an eagle stirreth up her nest,

fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings, so the Lord alone did lead him, and there was no strange God with him." So, once more, in the Psalm which follows the "prayer of Moses the man of God" in the Psalter, "He shall defend thee with *His wings*, and thou shalt be safe *under His feathers*."¹ In the prophets the symbol is not used so directly, but there is a passage in Ezekiel where, after describing the protectorate of the Kings of Babylon and Egypt over Judah, as the work of two great eagles in relation to a vine, the Lord Himself says, "I also will take of the highest branch of the high cedar, and will set it;" as though He were the true Eagle of Israel still.

The description of this creature given by the Creator, when "the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind," can hardly be overlooked in the interpretation of the symbol. "Doth the eagle mount up at thy command, and make her nest on high? She dwelleth and abideth on the rock, on the crag of the rock, and the strong place. From thence she seeketh the prey, and her eyes behold afar off. Her young ones also suck up blood, and where the slain are, there is she" (Job xxxix. 27-30). The eagle in Hebrew is masculine, and we might, if needful, go nearer to the original, and say "Where the wounded are, there is He;" and note that "He was *wounded* for our transgressions" (Isa. liii. 5) is a sentence belonging to the Most High. And this is not the only part of the description that can be read two ways. Like our Lord's pregnant saying, "Wheresoever the body is, thither will the eagles be gathered together,"² it seems hardly possible to deny that the description in Job may have two meanings, and that the natural meaning enfolds the other like an enigma, or "dark saying," not by direct analogy, but by the associations connected with Scriptural terms.

Leaving this for those who care to follow it, I may point out what is undeniable, that the description of the eagle in the Old Testament directly illustrates a certain relation of Jehovah to Israel, which forms the subject of a great part of the Gospel according to St. John. Although this Gospel is acknowledged to have been written after the destruction of Jerusalem, and to have been more directly intended for the Christian (as

¹ Ps. xc. has been shown by internal evidence to bear out its title, "A Prayer of Moses the man of God." There is some reason to think that Ps. xci. is by the same hand. The fact that Satan answered our Lord's reference to the writings of Moses, by citing Ps. xci., is not exactly a proof that Moses was the author of the Psalm; but it at least suggests the possibility, and adds some force to the argument.

² πτώμα, "carcase," in St. Matt. xxiv. 28; σώμα, "body," St. Luke xvii. 36—a suggestive distinction.

distinct from Jew or Gentile) than any other of the four,¹ yet it is here that we have the clearest account of our Lord's pleading with His own people who received Him not. Nowhere else can we so clearly trace the first beginnings of hostility, the excitement of Jewish prejudice on the one side, and the exact steps which aroused it and might have removed it on the other. We can see the "Eagle" "stirring up His nest" again and again, in full knowledge of the difficulty and reluctance which would be experienced by those whom He sought to make partakers of His most lofty flight. We see Him driven away once and again by the disobedience of Jerusalem, and as often returning to hover over the nest once more. And side by side with this, we see everywhere in St. John's Gospel our Lord's tenderness in dealing with individuals. It is very remarkable how large a portion of the Gospel is taken up with the private history of our Lord's disciples. Scarcely a chapter passes which does not contain an instance. The two disciples and Nathanael, in ch. i.; Nicodemus and the woman of Samaria, in chs. iii. and iv.; the man healed privately and privately instructed, in ch. v.; the miracle seen by the twelve, and concealed from all others, in ch. vi.; the words spoken to His brethren, in ch. vii.; and to one listener, in ch. viii.; the blind man's first recognition of the Saviour, in ch. ix.; the private intercourse with the Sisters of Bethany, in ch. xi.; and its bearing on Mary's wonderful act of worship, in ch. xii.; the long discourse with the eleven disciples, in chs. xiii. to xvii.; the private examinations before Annas and Pilate on His trial; the words spoken to His nearest and dearest on the Cross; the private interview with Mary Magdalene, on Easter morning, and the personal appeal to Thomas on the next Lord's Day; the miracle wrought almost in the early twilight before seven disciples, in ch. xxi.; and the personal prophecies concerning St. Peter and St. John, with which the Gospel is brought to a close — all are characteristic of the same personal and individual care. All this is thoroughly in harmony with what He Himself said of the Eagle in the prophetic song: "So the Lord alone did lead Him, and there was no strange God with Him." And, having thus far demonstrated the strict analogy between the symbol in the Law and the narrative in the Gospel, may we not proceed to illustrate the "*flying eagle*" of the Apocalypse by some of those sentences in the Lord's answer from the whirlwind, which describe that lofty flight?

"Is it at thy word" (literally, *upon thy mouth*) "that the

¹ See Bishop Ellicott's note in the introduction to the "Life of Christ."

² Note especially the unanswered query in verse 25—"Rabbi, when camest Thou hither?"

eagle soareth, and that she setteth her nest so high?" No, indeed. But what of His mouth, of Whom they said in this Gospel, that "Never man spake like this man"? Nowhere else is the language so lofty, the utterance so sublime. "The cliff is her dwelling and her abode" (by night especially), "upon the point" (Heb., *tooth*) "of the cliff, and the fortress." It is not here the rock easily smitten, but the cliff that can hardly be climbed.¹ Is it possible to read the words in this light and not be reminded of "the Son of man Who is in heaven," Who said, "He that sent Me is with Me; the Father hath not left Me alone?" "From thence she hath spied out meat" (Heb., *okel*; cf. the Greek *βρώσις* and *βρώμα*), the meat of Him Who said, "I have meat to eat that ye know not of;" "and her eyes behold afar off." What a long train of passages in St. John's Gospel might be brought to illustrate this last feature, from the story of Him Who saw Nathanael "under the fig-tree," and "knew what was in man" at the beginning, to Him Who foretold St. Peter's death, and more than St. John would venture to interpret of his own future at the end.

Can it be an accidental coincidence that "her young ones also suck up blood" is the next clause of the description, while St. John's Gospel alone supplies the report of that discourse where "the flesh of the Son of man" and "His blood" are shown to be meat and drink to His children? Here we have no *analogy*, it is true; but the natural saying, as an enigma, contains the spiritual. The eagles that are gathered together unto Him must learn to soar before they can thus be fed. And that thought, at least, is no new one to the Church of Christ.

All these details suggest to us, in the Lord's own language from the Book of Job, the Personal life of our Saviour as described by St. John quite as truly as the details gathered from the Pentateuch suggest His life in relation to His own, both the few who received Him and the many who received Him not.

It is on these lines that I propose to examine the fourth Gospel; working from the centre to the surroundings, and not *vice versa*. I do not think that the state of the Church and the peculiar form of Gnosticism then prevailing gave to this Gospel the form which we see. That St. John supplied

¹ Note the distinction between the *Tsar* in Exod. xvii., which Moses was commanded to smite, and the *Selagh* (cliff) in Num. xx., which he was bidden to invoke, but not to climb, far less to smite it. For want of attending to this distinction, and the emphasis in the original of Num. xx. 10, "Must we fetch you water out of this cliff?" the story and its interpretation are constantly spoiled.

exactly what was then needed I do not doubt. "The Eagle" had not ceased to "stir up the nest" and stimulate the flight of the nestlings, even when He had left the society of the "wounded" for His seat on the pinnacle above. But the glory of Christ was the guiding principle which completed the fourfold chariot that was under Him in this special form. That the Eagle Gospel came last was not unbecoming. It was not till the disciples had time to think of the Ascension and to reflect on the wonders that had passed so rapidly before them, that they could properly appreciate such a portrait of their Lord as this. The Jewish question demanded His presentation as the King of the Jews (St. Matthew). The missionary question called imperatively for the record of His missionary work (St. Mark). The fulness of the Gentiles who flowed in cried out for the sympathies of His humanity (St. Luke). All alike called loudly, and none could be denied. The thronging multitudes must be first healed and quieted and fed before the disciples could sit down calmly and look upward from the dust of the earth to the throne of the Majesty on high. The three synoptic Gospels, in the order in which we have them, responded in turn, and gave the right answer to the needs of the new-born Church, when the nestlings of the eagle cried for food. But it is the fourth Gospel that calls them to spread their wings and mount up where He has gone before. The time had come when they might well be invited thus to rise. And what "other disciple" was so well fitted to invite the effort as the beloved St. John? None of them had enjoyed a closer intimacy with the Lord on earth, a longer intercourse with Him in the Spirit on the Lord's days that had since intervened. And, in view of the first great conflict with heresy that the universal Church must presently begin—the dispute concerning the precise nature of the Divinity of our Lord—the Gospel of St. John was needed to teach His followers that belief which they must presently confess with one voice, unanimous throughout the world. It would have been far too late to begin St. John's Gospel if it had been delayed until the Arian heresy. But we may safely say that the deep-rooted belief in the Godhead of our Master, which all Christ's living servants hold unquestioned, rests more on this last Gospel than on anything else in the world. We cannot doubt for ourselves Who He is, whatever men may say of Him, or whatever arguments they may ask us to meet. The "pinnacle of the cliff" where He is seated is also the "fortress" of the Church. We mount at His command, and take our seat with Him in the heavenly places; and we cannot hesitate as to what or Who He is, because we can see where we ourselves are.

Let me not be misunderstood here. I am not saying that the doctrine of our Lord's Deity was developed after His ascension. The fact was confessed, the faith of His disciples bound up with it, while He was on earth. But it is one thing to confess a truth in words, and even put the right words together; and another thing to realize all that the words mean. The example of St. Peter will at once occur to every one. He confessed the Godhead of his Master in the borders of Cæsarea Philippi. And it was a truth that even then "flesh and blood" had not revealed to him, but "My Father which is in heaven." Just so, St. Paul declares that "none can say that Jesus is the Lord," and put together the two words, *Κύριος Ἰησοῦς*, "but by the Holy Ghost." Yet will any one venture to say that St. Peter as fully realized the truth his lips confessed, as did Thomas after the resurrection, when he said, "My Lord and my God"? May we not say that, if our Lord's presence on earth enabled those who companied with Him to feel that God had indeed become man, some experience of the dispensation of the Spirit was needed in order to bring the truth home to them, of the taking of the Manhood into God. It was not that the truth itself was new, but the apprehension of the truth was enlarged; and I suspect this enlarged apprehension was due as much to the fourth Gospel as to any other means.

C. H. WALLER.



ART. IV.—THREE WEEKS ON A HIGHLAND MOOR.

"I SAY, station-master, where in the world are those porters?" "Oh, he'll no be ferra lang the noo, surr," with which consolation, exit the station-master, knowing, what we do not, that "ferra lang" has a very different meaning in Scotland, and especially in the Highlands, from that usually attached to it by our matter-of-fact English minds. So we wait in our saloon carriage at the little station for another twenty minutes, being already a comfortable two hours and a half late. The rain is pouring down; we have piles of luggage, including a goodly hamper, on which our hostess keeps her hazel eye; everything is soaking wet, and we have nothing but an open conveyance, with a seven-mile drive before us. A dreary prospect at the best, not improved by a twenty-two hours' journey and a sleepless night preceding it.

Seven weary miles. How we tried in a gloomy way to be cheerful, and pretended that we rather enjoyed the streams