

Review.

The Gospel according to St. Luke, with Notes critical and practical. By the Rev. F. M. SADLER, Rector of Honiton, etc. London: George Bell and Sons. 1886.

WITHIN the space of about five years Mr. Sadler has published commentaries on all four Gospels. This at first sight appears to be rather an audacious proceeding; but Mr. Sadler has already produced so much of a kindred nature, that the work of writing these commentaries must have been to a considerable extent the mere arranging in a definite order materials accumulated during many years of reading, experience, and thought. We advisedly insert experience; for the experiences of Christian life, and especially of clerical life, are among the best helps to a right and full comprehension of Bible truth. We congratulate the author on the completion of this portion of his literary work. Commentaries, especially on the Gospels, abound at the present time; but Mr. Sadler's are not quite like any others with which we are acquainted, and there is plenty of room for them side by side with their numerous predecessors. They are, perhaps, most like Trench's works on the miracles and parables, of which they make considerable use; but without ceasing to be scholarly, they are more popular and more devotional than Trench. They are not the commentaries to select in order to prepare for an episcopal or university examination; but they are well adapted to assist intelligent and earnest Christians in obtaining a knowledge of the deeper meanings of Scripture. The clergy, and especially the younger clergy, will find them very useful in the preparation of material for sermons.

If our readers wish to make a selection out of these four commentaries, we have no hesitation in giving advice. That on St. Matthew, which appeared first, seems to us to be still the best of the four, and that on St. Mark, which immediately preceded the one now before us, the worst. The St. Mark showed some signs of haste in composition, and contained far too large a proportion of quotations from quite ordinary books. From different points of view the commentary on St. Luke might be placed either above or below that on St. John. On the whole, we are inclined to prefer it to the work on the fourth Gospel; but we can quite understand other people holding the opposite opinion. Our advice would be, therefore, "By all means get Sadler on St. Matthew, and, if you find that you like it, go on to his St. Luke or St. John."

What strikes us as specially valuable in these commentaries is the combination of reverence, intelligence, and independence. Scripture is treated in a thoroughly devout and earnest spirit, but at the same time with a courage which does not shrink from accepting the results of modern criticism *where it has made good its case*. Mr. Sadler, while fully maintaining the inspiration of the Bible in the highest sense, at the same time admits that the inspiration of human agents has limits, and that we have no right to expect it to preserve the inspired writer from a slip of the pen, such as "Zechariah the son of Barachiah." Our own view on this difficult question would be something of this kind. The Bible is given us to save our souls. What the human reason can discover by patient research we need not expect to find stated clearly and infallibly in Scripture. What we have a right to assume is, that in all spiritual matters, in all those all-important questions which the human intellect could never solve, the inspired writer is by his inspiration kept absolutely free from error. Science, without inspiration, may one day tell us with absolute certainty what the exact order of Creation was; therefore we need

not look for a perfect exposition of that order in Scripture. Science without inspiration can never tell us with absolute certainty the existence or nature of God, the Divinity of Jesus Christ, or the immortality of the soul; therefore we are justified in expecting to find infallible statements about these great truths in the inspired writings. Perhaps not all our readers will assent to this way of stating the case; but we venture to commend it to their consideration as a reasonable way of explaining those defects which criticism claims to have demonstrated as existing in the Bible.

We often find ourselves dissenting from Mr. Sadler's reasoning and conclusions. Does it follow from such expressions as that of Gabriel, "I am sent to speak unto thee," that "there is place and distance in the unseen world"? We do not presume to decide the question of fact; but even if there be no such condition as space in the other world, it would still be necessary to use language which implies space in order to be intelligible to a human mind. Is it reasonable to suppose that Joseph and Mary went to Bethlehem at the time of the "taxing," not because the decree was urgent, but because they "knew the prophecy," knew that the Child was to be the Messiah, and therefore ought to be born at Bethlehem? The natural meaning of the Gospel narrative is that a circumstance, which seemed to be accidental, providentially caused them to fulfil the prophecy, without their having any thought of doing so. Is it not a serious exaggeration to say of Simeon that "no description of a Christian character can be higher than this of his"? A man may be "just and devout," and yet be far from Christian perfection. Are we justified in asserting positively that in the interview with the doctors in the Temple, "we are not for a moment to suppose that our Lord in thus hearing them and asking them questions undertook to teach them"? How can we know? And the probabilities seem to be the other way. On this very occasion He "undertook to teach" His parents where they ought to have looked for Him; and it is reasonable to suppose that the questions and answers which amazed the doctors were calculated to enlighten their souls. But we do not press this: we merely protest against the assertion, without proof or evidence, that this view is not to be entertained "for a moment."

And here we venture respectfully to suggest that this positive tone about matters in which there is much room for difference of opinion is a defect against which Mr. Sadler has need to be on his guard. In all his commentaries it is far too common. He is too fond of asserting that things *must* be so, when from the nature of the case certainty is not attainable. Thus, on vii. 39 he says, "It is impossible that the Pharisee should have hitherto received any spiritual benefit from Christ if he could harbour such a thought as this." Again, on xxii. 3 he tells us that Judas was "no doubt perfectly conscious that Christ knew well all about his secret speculations;" an assertion which seems to be rendered more than doubtful by the fact that Judas asked Christ, "Is it I?" Would he have thus risked exposure before the whole eleven, if he was quite certain that Christ knew all his guilt? On "the chief priests" in xxii. 52, Mr. Sadler remarks, "Of course not Annas or Caiaphas, but some of the heads of the courses." Now, that "chief priests" or (as it should rather be translated) "high-priests" ever means the heads of the courses is only a conjecture. It is much more probable that "high-priest" in the New Testament always has the same meaning; viz., one who holds, or *has held*, that office. In our Lord's time there may have been four or five *ex-high-priests*, of whom Annas was certainly one. Of him Mr. Sadler asserts, "Annas *must* have been the real high priest" (p. 580); and on the next page, among some very judicious remarks about discrepancies between the

Gospels, he says that if there were no such things, "the evangelists *must* have compared notes." That four witnesses should be absolutely harmonious renders their independence suspicious; but it does not *prove* that they have laid their heads together in order to make their evidence agree. On all these points, and many others, we prefer the advice which Mr. Sadler gives to another commentator: "It would be well if we did not express ourselves so dogmatically" (p. 552).

Sometimes Mr. Sadler, after being rather severe on some one view, adopts almost the same view himself. In what seems to us to be rather a confused discussion of the temptation, he rejects the subjective hypothesis, and yet contends that what Satan showed Christ was not the kingdoms of the world, for "of course the highest mountain in the world would not afford a prospect of above one or two hundred miles," but "representations" of them. Were these representations material or mental? We cannot suppose that Mr. Sadler means actual paintings or models; and if the representations were mental, then the temptation was subjective. Similarly on ii. 35 he remarks, "It is surprising how most commentators apply this to the grief in the Virgin's heart at the rejection of her Son;" and then goes on to say, "It seems to me that the only adequate fulfilment, the only one worth naming, is the intense grief which must have pierced her soul when she saw her Son upon the Cross" — which, of course, is included in the rejection.

In textual criticism Mr. Sadler is a little more trustworthy than the writer of whom he rightly makes most use in exegesis, Godet; but we do not advise students to accept the conclusions of either without investigation. With regard to the A. V., it is surely paying it ill-judged respect to quote it as it stands, where it is admitted by everyone to be seriously wrong. On pp. 10 and 27 Mr. Sadler quotes John v. 33 and even Phil. ii. 6 without correction.

But we must conclude by pointing out a few of the many excellent points. The short Introduction is well done, especially the relation between St. Luke and St. Paul. Excepting the point criticized above, the remarks on ii. 41-52 are for the most part excellent; so also are those on v. 1-10, viii. 19, and the difficult verse xi. 36. Our readers will not agree with all that Mr. Sadler says about the Eucharist (pp. 553-563), but they will find it well worth reading. We are convinced neither by him nor by the July number of the *Church Quarterly Review* that *ποιεῖν* in "Do this in remembrance of Me" has the sacrificial sense. No doubt *ποιεῖν* sometimes has this meaning, and may, therefore, *possibly* have it in this passage; but we do not think this probable, and to treat it as practically certain is unjustifiable. Suppose, for the sake of argument, that *no* sacrificial allusion was intended, what more natural word than *ποιεῖν* could have been used? We are glad to see that Mr. Sadler retracts his opinion (given on Mark xv. 40) that the "sinner" in Luke vii. 37 is Mary Magdalene. He now thinks that unlikely; and we hope that in another edition of this commentary he will be able to see his way to increasing its very great merits by modifying some of the passages to which exception has been taken. He is already at work on the Acts, and we hope that after that he will take Revelation. That is a book on which Mr. Sadler could give us a very valuable commentary.

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¹ See the temperate argument and very useful notes in *The Eucharist Considered in its Sacrificial Aspect*, pp. 19—21 (Elliot Stock). "No evidence has been brought forward, so far as we are aware, of the words having been rendered 'offer this' or 'sacrifice this' in any ancient Version or in any ancient Liturgy."