

His testimony to the glory of Christ. Here one must write perhaps more individually than in other parts of this paper; but one rejoices to know of the deep and living sympathy of the brethren there, in all the practical, and in most of the doctrinal, parts of the teaching as to Him, His Person, and His work. We all believe in the personality of the Holy Ghost; we all believe that He is the Agent in the work of regeneration, bringing a dead soul to life by His Divine power; we all believe that He is the sanctifier of the soul which He has created anew unto good works; we all believe in His communion, in His anointing, and that there is such a thing as being "filled with the Spirit," as the apostles frequently were, from time to time; and as the Christians in Ephesus were exhorted to be. The recognition of Him, the dependence upon Him, the personal fellowship with Him, the being possessed by Him,—these things seem to me to make the greatest possible difference in the Christian life. The concluding chapters in St. John's Gospel, where our Lord speaks more fully, more deeply, and with the longing love of one about to depart, become to us more precious than ever, when we understand and receive the fulness of the Holy Ghost. It was when Jesus

Christ "was glorified" that He "received" the gift of the Holy Ghost. No doubt, in Eph. iv. 8, the apostle, in quoting Ps. lxxviii. 18, uses not the word "received," but the word "gave." And had this stood alone, we might have supposed it possible that the "reception" did not take place at the time of Christ's ascension, but only the bestowal of the "gift" unto men. This interpretation, however, will not stand in view of Acts ii. 33, where St. Peter states that the ascended Christ "received" the Spirit promised of the Father, and poured it forth. The reception of the Spirit without measure by the Lord took place at His baptism,—the fulness for Himself, as Messiah, which is His for ever, in His human nature. The reception of the Spirit—not for Himself, but for His people—took place at His "glorification"; and was at once poured forth!

14. I close, then, here this paper, perhaps unduly long, but in doing so I must add that the novelty at Keswick is not *in the teaching*, but *in the experience*. It is where these and other truths have been taken into the heart and life of the believer, for the first time, that even for him the old has passed away and "all things have become new," because "all things are of God."

## The Gospels and Modern Criticism.

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### IV.

BUT, to turn to another point of the inquiry, when a man writes in a foreign language he is apt to use the idioms of his mother tongue.

A Frenchman seldom writes idiomatic English. When he attempts to do so, an Englishman who knows French can generally detect a multitude of French idioms underlying the English words. Much more in days of old, when a Jew undertook to write Greek, was he likely to introduce Semitic idioms into his work, especially if that work was a translation from Aramaic. Semitic languages co-ordinate rather than subordinate their sentences. The conjunction "and" occurs with monotonous frequency. St. John's Gospel is a good example of this. "And," "therefore," "because," have almost driven out the rich array of Hellenic connecting particles. And this because the apostle thinks in Aramaic, though he writes in Greek.

Now, St. Mark was St. Peter's interpreter, to translate (as I have shown) his Aramaic lessons for the Greek catechumens, not (as is commonly supposed) to translate St. Peter's Greek into Latin. "And" is his favourite conjunction. One of the strongest internal arguments against the genuineness of the last twelve verses is the sudden reduction in the frequency of this word.

But St. Mark has another peculiarity. To connect narratives he writes, "And straightway." Forty-five times does this combination occur. It is apparently a mannerism, arising from want of literary skill in securing variety.

St. Matthew makes short work with this "straightway." St. Luke in nearly every instance gets rid of it. And so their style is improved. There is less monotony and tediousness.

It is an axiom in such cases that the crude and

uncouth shall come first. St. Mark's translation was used by the other Greek catechists, but every one of them would contribute something to improve it, until it reaches its most polished form in St. Luke's edition. The oldest form of the gospel is that which is fullest in matter, but rudest in expression.

So far we have dealt with broad principles. Now I will give two petty details, to confirm what has been said.

All the Evangelists use a certain number of Latin words, connected for the most part with Roman money, law, or military rule. Such words were necessarily current in countries which were under Roman government, but to introduce them into a Greek treatise was a disfigurement. It was false in art and offensive to correct taste. Now St. Mark uses the Latin *centurio* for a centurion. He so writes it three times in the fifteenth chapter. But St. Matthew and St. Luke substitute for it the Greek equivalent *ἐκατοντάρχης*. According to Mr. Halcombe's view, St. Mark found the correct Greek word in St. Matthew's Gospel, and deliberately altered it into the incorrect. This, I submit, is incredible.

Again, the word "man" is frequently expressed in Aramaic by the phrase "son of man." Thus in St. John i. 6, the Peshito Syriac gives "There was a son of man sent from God, whose name was John." This expression was unknown to Greek authors, and would mislead the Greek reader. Now in St. Mark iii. 28 it is written, "Verily I say unto you, that all things shall be forgiven to the sons of men, their sins and the blasphemies wherewith soever they shall blaspheme." This in St. Matthew's parallel (xii. 31) becomes, "Wherefore I say unto you, every sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven to men" (for which the Peshito of course gives "to the sons of men"). Here St. Mark, translating St. Peter's Aramaic, has evidently reproduced the Aramaic idiom instead of substituting the proper Greek equivalent, but some Greek catechist has seen the mistake and corrected it. According to Mr. Halcombe, however, St. Mark found the correct idiom in St. Matthew, and deliberately, without reason, substituted for it the unintelligible Aramaic idiom. This also I consider to be incredible.

I could bring forward some cogent proofs to show that St. Luke had never read St. Matthew's Gospel. But I prefer to ask my readers to study the question for themselves. Let them take the

first two chapters of St. Matthew, and endeavour to fit them into the first two chapters of St. Luke, so as to secure a continuous history of what really happened. Let them do this honestly, without consulting a commentary or a harmony, and if they have a strong sense of historical truth, they will see that neither of these writers was acquainted with what his fellow had written.

Harmonists appear to me to have no hesitation in putting a strain upon our sense of truth in order to secure the "inerrancy" of Holy Scripture. Thus one of the most strongly-marked narratives in the Gospels is, I should say, the healing of blind Bartimæus. It is narrated by all the Synoptists in almost identical words. Yet because St. Matthew speaks of two men, while St. Mark and St. Luke only mention one, and because St. Luke puts the encounter at the entrance into Jericho, though St. Mark, in a singularly tautological sentence, which would naturally lead to confusion, puts it on the departure from that city, Mr. Halcombe is compelled by his principles to maintain that four blind men were healed on three separate occasions. All four cried out, "Thou son of David," an unusual phrase, not found in St. Mark or St. Luke in any other miracle. In every case the multitudes bade them to be silent. In every case they cried the more or the louder. In every case Jesus put the question, "What wilt thou that I should do?" In every case, after receiving sight, they followed Jesus on the way.

Mr. Halcombe has some misgivings. In his second volume he speaks doubtfully of the multiplication of this miracle. I have not seen the second edition of his first volume, and cannot tell whether he there completes the retractation. If he does not, why does he not insist that St. Matthew's narrative of the Gerasene demoniacs is distinct from St. Mark's and St. Luke's? For not only did the one take place at Gadara, the other at Gerasa, but in St. Matthew two men were healed, in St. Mark and St. Luke only one. The chronology also is different. Dr. Stanley Leathes is more courageous. He holds that the Gadarene and Gerasene miracles were quite distinct, and that on two separate occasions a herd of swine rushed down the steep and were choked in the lake. Harmonists have their differences as well as critics.

But Mr. Halcombe insists that the Gospels are not fragmentary but complete records. He has divided them into 364 sections, and is confident

that our Lord's ministry lasted four years, neither more nor less. Now 31 of the sections apply to the period before our Lord's ministry began, or to the ministry of the Baptist; so only 333 remain for Christ, of which St. John records 102. In four years there are 1461 days, and Christ did or said some ministerial thing on 333 out of 1461 days. He was therefore silent on three days out of four, and did not lead the life of incessant toil which Christians have fondly imagined. The work of the second year consists of fifteen incidents only. Is not the mere statement of this fact a sufficient refutation? (John xxi. 25.) I have considered elsewhere<sup>1</sup> the very difficult question of the duration of our Lord's ministry, and my conclusions do not agree with Mr. Halcombe's.

The critical study of the Gospels demands more attention from English biblical students than it has hitherto received. It is a fascinating pursuit in itself, and one that leads to most important consequences. It makes the Gospels easier to understand, and protects us from treating them arbitrarily. In the infancy of the new science alarmingly destructive results were obtained, which appeared to threaten the foundations of the faith. There are still writers who advocate what I consider false views. They can only be met by diligent and honest examination of the facts. The truth has nothing to fear. The higher criticism, when applied without partiality or distortion of the evidence, strongly supports the general trustworthiness of the Gospels. It proves that the essential points are those best attested; but it also proves, what most scholars have already learned from other facts, that what is called verbal inspiration must be given up.

The Gospels do not preserve the exact utterances of Christ. One example may suffice to prove this. St. Mark writes that our Lord said to the Syrophenician woman, "For this saying go thy way, the demon is gone out of thy daughter. But St. Matthew writes, "O woman, great is thy faith; be it unto thee even as thou wilt." Shall we, after the manner of Tatian, piece these sentences together and maintain that Christ said, "O woman, great is thy faith; for this saying, go thy way; be it unto thee even as thou wilt; the demon is gone out of thy daughter." This on the Nasmyth hammer

hypothesis is of course possible. But does any serious historian suppose that Christ was guilty of such verbosity? My solution of the difficulty is this: We do not know the exact words which Christ used. St. Mark gives us what St. Peter recollected of them. But the catechists of Jerusalem, aware that St. Peter's words in this case were capable of a false interpretation—as though the girl had been cured by her mother's merit and not by her mother's faith—took upon themselves to alter the phrase in the interests of truth. Their doing so, presumptuous as it must appear to the traditional exegete, proves that the primitive Christians, under the guidance of the apostles, were not such slaves of the letter, as modern commentators would make them.

The same observation I hold to be true of nearly every saying of Christ. Even where three Evangelists agree *verbatim*, as they very seldom do for more than six or seven words together, the only safe conclusion is that they have reproduced St. Peter's recollections with greater accuracy than usual. And if the substance rather than the letter of Christ's words is given us, why should we suppose that less important matters—as dates—are to be trusted? St. John says that the anointing at Bethany took place six days before the Passover, St. Mark two days. St. Matthew says that while Christ was speaking the parable of the new wine in the old bottles, Jairus came to announce that his daughter was dead. St. Mark and St. Luke say that Jairus came several months after this, according to Mr. Halcombe's own chronology, and announced that his daughter was living, but *in extremis*. Are these discrepancies "superficial appearances," or clear indications that the adjustments of the Nasmyth hammer are not to be expected?

God, I repeat, has been pleased to employ human agents for making known the truth. "We know in part" might have been said by the Evangelists as much as by St. Paul. The diversities in their narratives prove that they did not possess, and therefore could not bequeath to us, a perfect record of Christ's words and deeds. We have what God in His providence has been pleased to give us. We have records which exhibit the belief of whole Churches in the primitive days. They have sufficed for Christians in all days. They will suffice for us, in the power of the same Spirit who inspired the men that wrote them, and is ready to inspire us to understand them, to the saving of our souls.

<sup>1</sup> "The Date of the Crucifixion," four articles in the *Biblical World*, Chicago (Luzac & Co., London), July-October 1893.