

THE HOMILETIC REVIEW.

Vol. XXVIII.—OCTOBER, 1894.—No. 4.

REVIEW SECTION.

I.—THE FOUR GOSPELS AND THE FAITH OF CHRISTENDOM.

By D. S. SCHAFF, D.D., JACKSONVILLE, ILL.

THE four Gospels are the inner redoubts of Christendom. It is back to them ultimately that the Church will always go for the principles and justification of its faith. It is quite conceivable that the Christian faith might have perpetuated itself, if the Gospel message had never been committed to writing. The persistence of customs and unwritten faiths in the East is pledge of this. The Apostles promulgated the deeds, the sufferings, the resurrection of Christ, and His words by preaching. The oral Gospel was sufficient for the first generation of the Church, while eye-witnesses were still alive and the second coming of Christ was regarded as imminent. The churches, however, especially those at some distance from Judea, visited only once, or at best only occasionally, by an Apostle or apostolic helper, must have felt almost from the earliest times the need of an authoritative record of those things which were surely believed and fully established among Christians (Luke i. 3).

The four Evangelists of the New Testament give the oldest account of Christ in existence, and in general may be said to have been from time immemorial regarded as authoritative. Only a single saying of Christ is preserved in the other parts of the New Testament, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." The few original sayings attributed to Him by the fathers are, all but two or three, improbable, if not manifestly spurious. None of these words add anything to the portraiture of Christ given by the Evangelists, nor is any work of Christ—His appearances after the resurrection excepted (1 Cor. xv.)—ascribed to Him which contributes a single feature to the genuine outlines of His life and labors. The delineation of the four Gospels is final. The portrait of our Lord is complete.

Compared, even, with the other writings of the New Testament, the four Gospels are of unique and supreme importance. The Christian

Church could get along without the Acts, valuable as that book is by its fresh account of the early activity of the Apostles, their martyrdom, and the hopeful confidence with which they preached the Gospel until it was carried to Rome itself. It would continue to maintain itself and efficiently propagate its message, if the Epistles of Paul were destroyed, valuable as they are for the statement and proof of Christian doctrine. But without the Gospel records, the Church could not well maintain its present faith and activities. They are the main building, to which, without disparagement, the other apostolic writings may be regarded as occupying, say, the position of oriel windows and observatory. For the person of Christ and for the events of His life, for His discourses and miracles, we depend upon their narratives. These are the pillars and ground of a living faith. Origen, speaking of the Gospel of John, calls the Gospels the crown of the sacred writings, as John is the crown of the Gospels. It is not without significance that in a discovery such as has just been made on Mt. Sinai, the Lewis Codex, the portion of the Scripture preserved should be Matthew, Mark, John, and Luke (according to its order).

The Gospels accredit themselves chiefly and finally by their contents; all the external evidences together shrink in weight before this one. The reason Coleridge gives in the "Confessions of an Inquiring Spirit" for the superhuman origin of the Scripture, "that they found him out at greater depths of his being than any other writings," applies in the highest degree to the evidence of the Gospels. Their message must win the assent of the reader by its own intrinsic value. The exact names of the authors is a matter of importance. The date of their composition, at a period when eye-witnesses of the events of Christ's life were still living, is of very great importance. But that which is of preeminent importance is that the contents of these documents, like a light carried in the darkness, accredit themselves by their own unmistakable excellency, and as superior to the phosphorescent lights which may glisten here and there among the philosophies and literatures of the world. Here, in a profound sense, the entrance of God's Word giveth light to the soul. There is a self-evidencing power in the sunlight to the eye. Charts of astronomy are put aside after the stars themselves have arisen. The eye knows of itself that what it sees are the stars. The Gospels make an immediate appeal to the soul of man. They shine independent of everything else. Other arguments for the truth of Christianity, such as its victories in the world, are subsidiary to this primary evidence. The Gospel narrative itself, with its portraiture of Christ, makes the first and decisive appeal to faith. It responds to the cry of the soul searching after divine truth and longing for the throb of the heart of the Father in heaven. After we have studied the other proofs and have toiled through morasses and thickets of doubt, we return to the simple stories and the unadorned parables of the Gospel, and find in them a

satisfying proof of the divine origin of Christianity. It is a great mystery that the feet of God, in the person of Jesus Christ, should have walked the hills of Judea and left their traces so that we can walk where He walked; but the reverent reason can find rest in no other conclusion than that it was as these inimitable records state.

The childlike argument of immediate experience, or the adaptation of the Scriptures to the needs of the soul, is adduced by the Gospel narratives themselves. "He that doeth My will," said Christ, "he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God or whether I speak of Myself." "Come and see," was the simple appeal of Philip to Nathaniel, offsetting sight against the prejudice of predisposition. This, too, was the import of the last words of the Shechemites to the Samaritan woman: "Now we believe, not because of thy saying, for we have heard Him ourselves, and know that He is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world" (John iv. 42). Anselm couched the general idea in his aphorism, "*Credo ut intelligam.*"

Within the four Gospels there is no claim set up of inspiration. In view of theories which have prevailed in the Church, this absence merits adequate explanation, and the only explanation is that upon no assertion of external authority does their life-giving and convincing power depend. The very personality of the authors is concealed, except in the case of the fourth Evangelist, whose identity with John the apostle amounts to a certainty from the manner in which he makes reference to himself as the "other disciple" and "the disciple whom Jesus loved," in distinction from the rest of the twelve disciples (John xxi. 1-7). Nor is the personality of the first three Evangelists hinted at anywhere else in the New Testament. The reputed authorship aids the mind in its acceptance of the four narratives, and we should feel we had suffered a great loss if any possible discovery were to invalidate the claims of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. It is true that the "Imitation of Christ" would still remain a book of devotion, whether Chancellor Gerson or the Abbot of Vercelli were made out to be the authors instead of Thomas à Kempis, and the "Veni, Spiritus Sancte" would still hold its place in the worship of the sanctuary, if Robert of France were proved not to have been the writer. The case, however, is quite different with the Gospels, which record historical events and portray a personality claiming to be the Son of God. It is fortunate that, from the earliest mention, there is no dissent of any weight as to the authorship of the Gospels. It has been said again and again that no work of ancient times bears such a seal of truthfulness as they. (Schaff. Ch. Hist., vol. i., 585.)

The trustworthiness of the four Evangelists cannot stand upon the statement of St. Paul or St. Peter touching inspiration. When the former says, "All Scripture given by inspiration of God is profitable," there is no evidence that any one of our four Gospels was before Him. And the same may be said of Peter when he says,

"Holy men of old spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." In both cases the reference was almost beyond a doubt to the Old Testament writings. Much is to be said in favor of the divine authority of the four Gospels, when they are regarded as a part of a completed volume—the Divine Library, as Jerome calls it. The New Testament, taken as a whole, has a strong argument in its favor for a reverent faith, taught to believe that the Spirit of God operated in the Church, guiding it in the matter of the selection of the sacred Canon. A mosaic may bear upon its face the marks of a master's skill, which a single stone might not be regarded as possessing. The presence of "a presiding mind which planned the whole structure" is felt so powerfully that the Church has always said, "The Spirit of the Lord is here." The Council of Trent (iii. 2), no less emphatically than the Protestant Confessions, declares "God to be the author" of the Scripture.

The ground upon which a Christian faith bases its belief in the inspiration of the Evangelists is the nature and everlasting purport of their message. The purpose of God to redeem the world by Jesus Christ would seem to imply a record with infallible marks of divine authority. It is antecedently probable that the Holy Spirit would possess human agents in some extraordinary degree, so that they might become the unmistakable medium through which we should have the vision of God and His truth. John was in the spirit on the Lord's Day. Paul saw things it was not lawful for him to utter. On the day of Pentecost men spake with other tongues. And when we enter into the inner parts of the Temple of the Gospels, and gaze upon the outgoing glory of Christ and listen to the exalted sayings, we can only exclaim that there is something more than human wisdom there. These writings are from above, not from beneath. Their paternity is not of man. The same line of argument, reaching into the very essence of the thing, suggests itself as the one our Lord used when He placed before the Pharisees the alternative concerning the origin of His works, which they acknowledged to be *extra-human*, in such a way that they could not, without evident absurdity, ascribe them to any other than God, the source of good, and not to Beelzebub, the prince of evil.

No *à priori* argument—no argument from antecedent probability for the inspiration of the Gospel records—can be regarded as final and binding. Such argument, at best, can only be regarded as confirmatory. If there is, then, no claim by the Gospel writers to inspiration, and no statement otherwise in the New Testament which can be with certainty regarded as bearing upon it, the Church is left to the contents themselves and their immediate influence upon the soul, and to the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit, the *testimonium Sancti Spiritus*. Upon this final and only binding test of inspiration, the Westminster Confession, in agreement with the other Creeds of Protestantism, has

laid stress in noble language. "The authority of Holy Scripture, for which it ought to be believed and obeyed, dependeth not upon the testimony of any man or Church, but wholly upon God, the Author thereof; and therefore it is to be received because it is the Word of God (iv.)." "Our full persuasion and assurance of its infallible truth and divine authority is from the inward work of the Holy Spirit bearing witness by and with the Word in our hearts." A fundamental principle of Protestantism is involved in this acknowledgment.

The degree or manner of inspiration cannot be wisely settled by any *a priori* argument and made obligatory upon believers; nor has their exact definition at any time in the past been regarded as a condition of *ecclesiæ stantis vel cadentis*. The plain danger of defining too closely a theological doctrine would seem to be abundantly proved by the variant theories that have been held by godly men on this subject. The fact of the authority of Scripture is one thing; to formally commit a communion to an authoritative doctrine of the manner and degree of biblical inspiration is quite another, whatever views may be held by writers within its pale. In a realm where the mode of influence must be so subtle and mysterious, conjecture is precarious, and definitive formulation of doctrine beyond the statement of the fact of the special guidance of the Spirit should be modest. "We know not how our own spirits are acted upon by the Eternal Spirit," said Canon Liddon, "though we do not question the fact. We content ourselves with recognizing what we cannot explain."

It has been argued in favor of the so-called inerrancy of Scripture, which is synonymous with verbal inspiration, that because God cannot err, the Scripture must be inerrant. One might as plausibly argue that because one is born of the Spirit, he cannot sin. John, it is true, can be interpreted as saying as much, but he cannot mean that such a one does not commit faults. That would be contrary to experience. The sun created by God has, to speak as man speaketh, defects. Yet the sun is His workmanship, and does His bidding to the universe. The induction that the Gospels are so inspired as to be verbally inerrant has led to wild conclusions. Some of the older divines held the Masoretic pointing of the Hebrew text to be inerrant, as well as the grammar of the New Testament. Some of the older harmonists were led by this theory, in accounting for the differences in the Gospel narratives, into some very unprofitable exegesis, regarding the same event to have occurred two or even three times. Following this canon, one of the Osianders (1537) held that Peter's wife's mother was healed of the fever three distinct times! A theory of inspiration not only reasonable, because it is more evidently in harmony with the acknowledged differences in the narratives and according to the analogy in the natural world, but also sufficient for all purposes, is that the Evangelists, being under special providential guidance, have given to the world, "in all things pertaining to faith

and salvation," an adequate statement of God's will. The Scriptures, of which it is the heart, are the only, as well as the sufficient, guide to eternal life, as the sun is the only and the sufficient minister of light and life to the earth. There is, it seems to us, a higher view of inspiration than that which lingers at the inerrancy of the words of the Gospels, and the immaculate accuracy of all details in description. It is, that the glory of Christ so fills the chambers of the four Gospels that in spite of mistakes in the detail of narrative (if there be any) He is manifest as the Son of God, as the great Teacher and as the Saviour of the world. So the electric flame shines through the glass. So is the flower within the flower-pot. According to this view, as much as the theory, of a verbal inspiration, the words of Athanasius are true, "The Lord is in the words of Scripture;" and inviolable truth can be held to be wrapped up in a single word.

If it still be urged that the believer would in this case have no certain guide, the objector must be referred again to the inspiration promised to the individual Christian in all ages. The Holy Spirit will guide him into all truth in discerning the will of God in the pathways of the Holy Scripture. Does not Paul lay emphasis upon this when He speaks of the Spirit's witness in the believer's heart?

The Church has felt in these records the breathing of the Holy Ghost. In studying them, the mind comes to have a conception of a person who was more than any human being who has ever walked the earth—yet none other than the Son of God. In studying Irving's and other biographies of Washington, there emerges a conception of a man so real that we feel positive in saying of Washington that a certain course of conduct he would not have followed; a certain course he would. So, from the study of the Gospels, there emerges a conception of One unlike any one else of whom we have ever heard or that we know anything about. That comes from the personal contact of the soul, and is above the letter. "I read," said Rudolph Stier, in the third edition of his "Words of Jesus"—"I read the New Testament as a book written by the agency of the Holy Spirit; but I read it in this way, not because of any prior formulation of a doctrine of inspiration, nor because I had put myself in submission to any old system of dogmatic theology, but because this book accredits itself as inspired, more and more powerfully to my understanding, at first unsound but growing sounder through medicine, yea because this Living Word has molded in a thousand ways my inner life, with all its thinking, knowing, and willing, and is molding it. For this reason, I am obedient to it with the whole freedom of my soul." Equally with this confession of a devout and studious theologian, does the very striking confession of Goethe bear upon the evidence from the intrinsic merits of the Gospel. "I hold the Gospels," he said to Eckermann, "for genuine through and through, for there is apparent in them the reflected glory of the majesty which went out from the person of Christ and which is divine

in its nature, as the divine only once was manifested here upon the earth." The statement of Wendt in his "Teaching of Jesus" recognizes this principle when he says that it "attests its own divine truth and value immediately to our consciousness without needing to be accredited by an external authority." The inspiration of the Gospels is the measure of Christ's power over the soul and in the Church. As Irenæus said, "*Ubi Christus, ibi inspiratio.*"

Eccelesiastical authority may call attention to the supreme excellency of the Gospels. It cannot be a substitute for the intrinsic form, which makes direct appeal to the soul. There must be, first, the willing heart and seeing eye. The parable of the Sower still illustrates. The sower's seed must find response in good soil. Had it been left to man to choose a way for the transmission of the revealed will of God, His wisdom might have suggested some incontrovertible external marks of authorship. These do not exist. Letters from Bombay or Peking bear witness of their starting-point in the stamp on their face. The autographs of the Apostles are not extant, and if by any possibility they should be discovered, who could certify that they were genuine? It would require a miracle to do this. God has chosen some other way to accredit His Word. It is not His method in nature to label the leaf and the petal, "God made me." Faith reads the signs of a divine creation where no alphabet is visible. In the spiritual kingdom, also, the internal force of truth is left to make immediate appeal to conscience, reason, and faith.

(To be continued.)

II.—THE STUDY OF COMPARATIVE RELIGION IN OUR THEOLOGICAL SEMINARIES.

BY WILLIAM ELLIOT GRIFFIS, D.D., ITHACA, N. Y.

To the Parliament of Religions neither the Sultan of Turkey nor the Archbishop of Canterbury sent any official delegate. The Nichirenites, the most fanatical of all the Japanese heretical Buddhist sects, sent a letter denouncing their coreligionists from Japan as misrepresenting the teachings of Gautama.

The mental attitude of these men does not seem to us to be that of our Lord, or of His great apostle, Paul. Yet the example of these politico-religious dignitaries of Canterbury and Constantinople is too often that of certain theological teachers. The trainers of our Christian young men who are to be pastors and missionaries are perhaps too apt to proscribe, if not to outlaw, any other religion than that of Christendom; or, possibly, it may be nearer the truth to say, than some fragment or phase of it which is national, denominational, or sectarian.

THE HOMILETIC REVIEW.

VOL. XXVIII. — NOVEMBER, 1894. — No. 5.

REVIEW SECTION.

I.—WHAT THE PREACHER MAY GAIN FROM A STUDY OF COLERIDGE.

BY PROF. J. O. MURRAY, D.D., PRINCETON, N. J.

AMONG the books which should be found in the library of every minister may be named, with some decisiveness, the works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge. It is a large debt which the Christian ministry owes to Dr. Shedd for his writings. And it admits of little question that the edition of Coleridge's complete works,* published under his editorial care, with an introductory essay from his pen, and Dr. Marsh's preliminary essay to "Aids to Reflection," makes a very considerable part of that obligation. Coleridge will never be introduced to the public under better auspices. This edition appeared in 1856. The influence of Coleridge upon American thought is perhaps less to-day than it was a generation since. The same may be true of England. The best authors fluctuate in their hold on the public mind. But there are some signs that interest in the writings of this remarkable man is far from extinct. Such essays as that of James Martineau, "Personal Influences on Present Theology: J. H. Newman, S. T. Coleridge, T. Carlyle;" or that of Professor Shairp, in his "Studies in Poetry and Philosophy," on Coleridge; "The Life of Coleridge," in the "English Men of Letters Series," by Mr. H. D. Traill, clearly evince that he has not yet passed to the limbo of neglected or forgotten authors. As I write these lines, there comes into my hands a little volume of "Selections from Coleridge's Prose Writings," by Professor Beers of Yale University, in a series of "Readings for Students."

But whether or no Coleridge holds the influential place in English and American thought he once held, it is certain that both in England and America he has powerfully molded the thinking of some of our ablest divines. I am well aware that in some quarters there has existed, and does still exist, distrust of his methods and of his influence. The epithet "Coleridgian" carried with it a suspicious sound.

* Coleridge's Complete Works. Edited by Professor Shedd. In seven volumes: Harper & Brothers.

with ostrich carelessness and ostrich oblivion." But his example is a warning to many men far inferior to him in intellectual gifts, to avoid these shoals and quicksands of desultory intellectual habits. In spite of his wonderful genius, this mental vice robbed Coleridge of more than half his power for good among men. The sin of desultoriness will play fearful havoc with men of average capacities. They need all their powers focused upon an effort. They cannot afford to scatter their mental energies. They may read Coleridge and take warning.

II.—THE FOUR GOSPELS AND THE FAITH OF CHRISTENDOM.

BY D. S. SCHAFF, D.D., JACKSONVILLE, ILL.

(Continued from page 297.)

The canon of the New Testament fixed itself before ecclesiastical authority sat upon it. "It did not meddle with the canon until that question had pretty well settled itself" (Salmon). Sooner or later, the original documents of Christianity would become matter for conciliar discussion and action. But instead of weakening the authority of the four Gospels and the other writings of the New Testament, it must be considered of the highest apologetic importance that they found their own way, and were accepted by general consent long before any Council enumerated the sacred books. When the Council spoke, the faith of the Church was already fixed. All conciliar declarations are vain concerning the Scriptures, unless there be the living faith in Christians, moved thereunto by the Holy Spirit. Luther found out that Church Councils also could err when he was exercised with the case of John Huss. His statement of the doctrine of Inspiration in the first edition of his German New Testament is liable to abuse, but it is far-reaching. "That which does not teach Christ is not apostolic, though Peter and Paul should teach it; and again, whatsoever teaches Christ is apostolic, though Judas, Annas, Pilate, and Herod should teach it." Church assemblies have claims upon our regard only in proportion as the men constituting them were men of piety and full of wisdom. A Synod of Ephesus (431) gets the notoriety of the Robber Synod, in spite of its being composed of ecclesiastics. The opinion of a single individual like Augustin, Bernard, or Fenelon may be of more value than the decisions of all the Councils of Toulouse or Toledo. There is no virtue in the decision of a Council of itself. The Gospels will not stand by the counsel of man. They came into recognition by their merits, as the diamond among other white crystal organisms. The canon was settled before the Synod of Laodicea (363) convened, or Eusebius made the distinction between Homologoumena and Antilegomena on the one hand, and spurious and heretical books on the other.

The Church expects her documents to be subjected to constant investigation. The sacredness of the Christian system is no reason why it should have immunity from scrutiny and energetic assault. The human mind will always claim the right to test their trustworthiness by the most searching methods. The Berean spirit is the mother of a living faith. If investors test with minute care before they make a purchase of silver mines in Colorado or a sapphire field in Montana, earnest students of the supernatural will demand the prerogative of going behind the decisions of even the most venerable Councils. Annoying as assaults are which tend to shake the faith of Christendom, they are inevitable except in a stagnant condition of the Church. The true attitude of the Christian Church is to welcome all fair investigation. The way to meet assaults is for it to maintain a constant watch over its own breastworks, and in time of peace to prepare for war. On this principle, the English Government has recently reorganized the defenses on the fortress of Gibraltar. The old redoubts of Christian apologetics need to be furnished with all the new defenses drawn from the archeological discovery and scientific achievement of the nineteenth century, in order that the Church may meet the assaults of the doubt of the nineteenth century. Assaults from without are no more dangerous than the sullen or apathetic silence of death within the Church. Indeed, they may be made the occasion of renewed spiritual activity, as has proved the case with the attacks of this century and the latter part of the eighteenth century upon the integrity of the New Testament, stirring up a vast amount of patient and painstaking research, and resulting in the discovery of harmonies and depths in the Gospel before not adequately recognized. "These assaults," Bishop Westcott has said, "upon their historic truth have brought out, with the most striking clearness, the separate characteristics of the Gospels." It is as if the keepers of a castle were aroused by menacing voices outside, but being awakened, not only repelled the enemy, but saw the bright lights of an aurora borealis they would otherwise have missed. Ecclesiastical decisions are valuable, as they are the summing up of the results of clear and far-reaching investigation. Fulminations only for a time seem to clear the ecclesiastical breastworks. The besiegers will make assault again. Nay, in a thinking and restless age, such fulminations will be but as the report of harmless bombs, if not an impediment to future generations, which their apologetics will have to clear away in order that the path of faith may become plain.

A special design of Providence has been discerned in the transmission of more than a single Gospel record. Irenæus went so far as to argue that there must be four Gospels, just as there are four winds, and four quarters of the earth. They have been compared with the four rivers that went out from the Garden of Eden and to the four cherubim of Ezekiel. If there is any advantage to be derived from

seeing an object from different angles, we have that advantage in the four records. If only the Gospel had come down to us which Paul called "My Gospel," we would have had an infallible guide, but we would be, in an unutterable degree, less rich than we are now, by reason of the four narratives. They present Jesus Christ at four sittings, as it were, and yet He is the man Christ. It is as if four tourists had ascended the same mountain from different points of the compass and given an account of what they saw. The hill is the same; the descriptions vary both in their material and in the statement of the same phenomena. A careful comparison of the Gospels reveals a remarkable unity in the main narration; with differences in detail. The underlying purpose of the Evangelists is the same; namely, to depict the mission of Jesus Christ, His work and suffering for the redemption of the world. The cardinal features which they have in common are: First, that Jesus was the Son of God; second, He wrought miracles; third, He spake as never man spake; fourth, He was the promised Messiah; fifth, He came to establish the kingdom of God; sixth, He was crucified; seventh, rose again; eighth, the Gospel must be preached on the earth. With these striking agreements, there are noticeable differences, but not so noticeable as to arrest the average reader. A faultless harmony of the Gospel has not been reached, but in all great essentials the agreement is evident. The differences in details attest the independence of the writers, and at the same time refute the theory that they were simply as phonophones used by the Spirit without any reference to their own natural endowments. They also have served a purpose by stirring up careful study. "Lively attention, minute observation, careful comparison and inquiry, which is never fully satisfied, are awakened at every step by that singular combination of resemblances and differences, and the mind is thus engaged to dwell longer on the scenes, conversing among them in a more animated spirit, and with an interest which is perpetually refreshed" (Bernard). The Church has contended always that, while there are striking differences in the narrations of the Evangelists, there are no discrepancies. Aspects of Christ's person and work may be presented in Matthew that are not found emphasized in John, but there are no contradictions to be reconciled in essential statements of facts and discourses. Sometimes there are difficulties at which scholarship must be silent; but what Origen said may contain some truth, that "the divine Word ordered some stumbling-blocks and stones of offense in the sacred records, that we might not be led away by the unalloyed attractiveness of the narratives, and seek for nothing more divine." Any differences in the fundamental treatment of their subject may be attributed to differences in the intellectual constitution of the Evangelists, their training, the constituencies for whom they wrote, and, as in the case of John, the age in which they wrote.

From the earliest times, the diversity in the Evangelists' treatment

has been emphasized. Matthew, the tax-gatherer, writing for Jews, presents Christ as the Messiah; and a "doctrinal epitome" of his Gospel may be found in the words, "I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil" (Farrar). Mark, with the best opportunities for gathering materials from his residence in Jerusalem, and his companionship with Peter, who calls him his son, Marcus, wrote for Romans, and presents Christ as the Mighty Conqueror. Beginning with the public ministry, he emphasizes the impression of wonderment made by the mighty works. If Matthew's is the didactic Gospel, Mark's is the energetic Gospel. Luke, as the companion of St. Paul, lays stress upon the doctrine of free salvation. He alone gives the parables of the Good Samaritan and the Prodigal Son, and the account of Zaccheus. His is the Gospel of sacred song and of childhood—the Gospel, as Lange has said, "of the Son of Man, of the humanity of Christ, the sublimation of all humanity." Renan has called the third Gospel the most beautiful of all writings, as he has called Matthew's Gospel "the most important book of Christendom, yea the most important book ever written" (*Les Evangiles*, p. 212). John's Gospel plainly states its purpose to be that men might be led to "believe that Jesus is the Son of God, and that, believing, men might have life." The Synoptists used to be called the bodily Gospels, John's the spiritual Gospel, "giving," as Herder puts it, "the echo of the older Gospels in the upper choirs." It is the Gospel of the Incarnation of the "I am"—of the mystic relations between the Son and the Father, and the Master and His disciples. The early Church saw reason for calling John preeminently "the theologian."

The chief problem of New Testament criticism lies in harmonizing the treatment of John's Gospel with the Synoptist Gospels. The presentation of the latter is in fundamental particulars the same. The careful reader observes no difference of level as he passes from the one to the other. It is otherwise with John. Here he finds himself ascending a staircase to another standpoint. This fact may be easily explained by the purpose which John had in writing, the age in which he wrote, the constituency for whom he wrote, and his own personality. From Matthew, the tax-gatherer, and the other disciples, John differed in a metaphysical turn of mind, a mystical intuition. He leaned upon the Saviour's bosom, was in most intimate intercourse with Him, saw into the depths of His soul as no other one did. Peter was adapted to be an ecclesiastical leader; John to be the personal biographer of the Lord. This was his gift. The personality of Christ fixed itself upon his soul as upon a mirror, and when his time came, he was able to present that image with mystical features such as are not prominent in the other Gospels. The parables are missing in his Gospel, but the profound allegorical discourses and the last sayings are given, which reveal the deep feelings of Christ's soul. The time at which John wrote, in the last years of the first century, demanded a

presentation such as John could give. The sharp antagonism of gnosticism, and the refined perversion of docetism had already begun to manifest themselves. At Ephesus, the meeting-place of Hellenic philosophy and Asiatic theosophy, the pure Christian system was already subjected to adulteration, as it has been, say, in India, with the school of the Brahmo Somaj as the outcome. John, discerning the docetic tendencies, laid stress upon the personal contact of the disciples with the Son of God: "The Word was made flesh"; "We beheld His glory." On the other hand, discerning the seeds of gnosticism, He lays stress upon faith as opposed to knowledge, and upon the full assumption by the eternal Logos of human nature. "He dwelt among us," and was not a mere flitting phenomenon, the temporary indwelling of an *eon*.

If John seems to lay an emphasis on the divine side of the Lord's person, which the other Evangelists have been charged with not appreciating, we must not forget that He is no less careful to lay emphasis upon the miraculous agency, not only by recording eight miracles, and some of them the greatest, but by urgent statement (iii. 2; vii. 31; x. 41; xi. 47, etc.). If Jesus was the Eternal Word, He also, according to John's delineation, was subject to human infirmities. He was troubled in spirit; wearied at Jacob's well; He wept at the grave. If John magnifies love, it is not at the expense of faith—a word which, in its verbal form, he uses more often than the other three Gospels together.

The scholarly and well-meant attempt of many theologians, and more recently the most able attempts of Weiss and Holtzmann, to solve the agreements and disagreements of the Gospels by making Mark or one of the other Gospels the original and model Gospel, must be regarded as thus far unsatisfying—in fact, a failure. The same may be said of the attempt to show the dependence of the Synoptists, at least, upon some primary source, whether it be a supposed original Mark, or the *Logia* of Matthew mentioned by Papias and supposed to be a volume different from the present Gospel of Matthew. However ingenious the reasoning may be, these theories will remain conjectures, and nothing more, until a source like the one suggested be discovered. The faith of Christendom finds a sufficient explanation of the four Gospels as they lie before us in the oral statement of the Gospel, as it was made current through preaching, and in the ample opportunity each of the accredited authors had of being acquainted with the facts they record.

The differences of the canonical Gospels in matters of detail are of the highest apologetic importance, as making impossible the charge of collusion among the Evangelists. Each wrote in his own way from personal conviction, and with the purpose of delivering a message of world-wide significance. Whence was it, then, that, with practical unanimity in all parts of Christendom, these Gospel records came at

so early a period to have weight, if it was not from the fact that the writers were men of superior authority in the Church, by reason of their exceptional opportunities to know the facts of Christ's life? In the first three Gospels, the authors have incorporated nothing of a personal nature. In the case of the Gospel by Matthew, not a word, not a question, not an act of his own, is inserted, albeit he was one of the twelve. The Evangelists were solely intent upon presenting the person and work of Christ; and it was with no selfish or sordid purpose, but because they could not help but write the things which they knew. The easiest solution of the substantial agreement of four persons in presenting a portrait, so superior to any presented anywhere else in history, is in the historic reality of it and the trustworthiness of the writers. This Christ was a root out of dry ground. No materials existed in that age for the invention of such a character. The Gospel authors were not endowed by original faculties or fitted by surroundings to invent it themselves, nor would martyrs from the first have given their lives for a myth of Matthew's brain or a legend of Luke's invention. "That the Jewish mind," said the late Archbishop Thomson, "in its lowest decay, should have invented the character of Jesus of Nazareth, and the sublime system of morality contained in his teaching; that four writers should have fixed the popular impression in four plain, unadorned narratives, without any outbursts of national prejudice, or any attempt to give a political tone to the events they wrote of, would be in itself a miracle harder to believe than that Lazarus, at the Lord's call, came out from his four days' tomb."

Another line of argument, by which the faith of Christendom renews its reverence for the four Gospels, is by contemplating their infinite superiority to the so-called Apocryphal Gospels. There, attempts to fill out the gaps left by the canonical records, and to satisfy the prurient curiosity of a certain constituency, bear upon their face the marks of invention, and inure to the estimation of the genuine Gospels, as a torch lit in the daytime only brings out more strongly the pre-eminent glory of the sun. Here Christ is presented as a thaumaturge. There is a protrusion of the marvelous. The wanton use of miraculous power runs into cruelty, as when the child Jesus invokes death upon the children who interfere with His play. And while there is this surfeit of the marvelous, the moral purpose insisted upon in the New Testament is wanting. A most subordinate place is given to the teachings of Christ, and not a single saying is reported—not in the four Evangelists—which is of the least credibility. Of our Lord's discourses, it must be said that in all early Patristic literature there is nothing comparable to them, and that a marked change is felt in this respect when we pass from the Gospels to the apostolic Epistles, what there is said being a development, as it were, from the Lord's recorded words. The disappearance of other attempts to record the

life of Jesus of Nazareth, and the unapproached majesty of the four Gospels when compared with the oldest and least crude of the Apocryphal Gospels, can only be accounted for, as Professor Dods has again said, on the ground that they were by witnesses who had immediate access to authoritative information. As according to the saying of the Romans, those who have once drank from the fountains of Trevi will be sure to return; so one, after having once drawn from the springs of life in the four Gospels, will turn back to them again.

It is probable that all the Gospel the Church shall know till Christ comes again is contained in these four records of the Evangelists. This is not because they exhausted their subject, as is evident from St. John's distinct statement that he had only given a part of the memorials of the Lord (John xxi. 25). The rich discoveries of Patristic documents and Scriptural manuscripts have added no single feature to the portraiture of Christ. The Gospel is open to new elucidations, but during eighteen centuries has received no addition of new materials. All ritual observances, all ecclesiastical ordinances (distinct from the two sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper, and the fundamental offices of worship), have in them no recognition. The honor conferred upon St. Peter (Matt. xvi. 18) and the authority conferred upon the Apostles (John xx. 22-23) are the only elements of ecclesiastical discipline there suggested with any distinctness whatsoever. This is a source of great encouragement to those who look for the spiritual reunion of Christendom upon the basis, not of a strict formulation of esoteric doctrines or a liturgical code of ecclesiastical ceremonies of universal obligation, but upon a filial obedience to the command given by Christ at the opening and again at the close of His life, "Follow Me." In personal union of heart to the Christ of the four Evangelists, who is alive forevermore, lies the secret of the power and the hope for the extension of the kingdom of God among men. Back to the Person whose portrait-lines they draw the Church will ever go for the justification and fervor of its faith, finding in it, and so in their narratives, all the elements of that "everlasting Gospel which is to be preached to them that dwell upon the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people" (Rev. xiv. 16).

III.—A HINDU MISSIONARY IN AMERICA.

By F. F. ELLINWOOD, D.D., NEW YORK CITY.

WHATEVER may be the final outcome of the Parliament of Religions held in Chicago in 1893, some results are already apparent. For one thing, the idea of a general brotherhood of all religious faiths which was there proclaimed has not been accepted as an accomplished fact by our Oriental guests. At the close of the sessions certain represent-