REMARKS
ON
"MICHAELIS'S INTRODUCTION
TO
THE NEW TESTAMENT,
VOLS. III. IV.
Translated by the Rev. HERBERT MARSH,
AND AUGMENTED WITH NOTES."

BY WAY OF CAUTION TO STUDENTS IN DIVINITY.

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too much praise cannot be bestowed on the spirit which has been excited of late years in this country of minutely scrutinizing every part of the holy scriptures, and on the zeal with which such researches have been pursued. The same seems to have extended to Germany, and to have been followed there, if possible, with redoubled ardour. We, who trust in the divine perfection and authority of the scriptures, can have no doubt but that they will pass through this fiery ordeal unhurt, and even come out with increased splendour. I speak at present not in relation to the inquiries instituted for the purpose of establishing the genuine text of the sacred scriptures, or the truth of the Christian doctrines, and the construction of the several passages on which they depend: but rather with respect to those in which all the minute articles of history, of the persons of the authors, and of the particular time, place, and occasion of writing, have been studiously
studiously investigated and considered. It is evident that some elucidation of doctrine may be derived from hence, for the meaning of the author will be better understood, when we have ascertained to whom he primarily addresses himself, on what occasion, and for what purpose. The canon of the holy scriptures may also receive, and has actually received, considerable strength from hence: because the agreement of the several books with each other even in smaller matters, and such as are merely incidental, as of St. Paul's Epistles with the Acts of the Apostles, and consequently the consistency of the whole, and the proofs of its genuineness, become more apparent. But, independently of these considerations, the very research is laudable. The study itself is both elegant and instructive, as everyone will acknowledge who has a just sense of the excellency of the sacred books: it tends to make them more familiar to the persons so employed, and to those who read their writings, and to give a clearer and more distinct view of every part; as well as to remove those little causes of offence, which the strangeness of these writings, and their remoteness from the present manners, may occasion on the first reading of them, or to the superficial reader.

These things being premised, I trust that the reader will not think it is my intention to depreciate in the smallest degree the labours of those learned
learned men who have thus employed themselves, if I put in my claim to add, that even these valuable researches may be pursued too far; that they are liable to some abuse, and may be attended with some danger. They are so, if we suffer the mind to be too much led away with them, and to be drawn off from greater objects; an error which it is always apt to incur from becoming enamoured of its own present pursuits, and wholly engrossed by them. Let us consider that the general perfection and authority of the scriptures depend upon other arguments, and stand, I trust, upon so firm a basis, as not to be shaken, though multitudes of such little circumstances should remain unaccounted for. It is satisfactory to the divine and the scholar to clear them up; but, if we suffer embarrassments arising from hence so to dwell upon our minds as to teach us to think less reverently of the sacred books than before, I think I may venture to say, that we raise them above their proper level. This would be to make the main fortress to depend upon the finishing or decoration of some of the outworks.

I assume for the present that the authenticity of the books of Scripture (I mean that they were the genuine works of authors having divine authority to teach the religion of Christ) is confirmed with very little exception by the testimony of the Christian church from the beginning, publicly
licly known, and even declared at an early time, and to be collected from private evidence at a much earlier: and, if this be granted, I maintain that, in general, the truth of the doctrines to be believed, or the authority on which we believe them, will not be affected, if several inferior circumstances with regard to the time and place when each event happened, or at which each book was written, should remain unknown; or if difficulties should be raised about them which are not easily solved, or even appear unanswerable. It is possible that some future investigator may find the solution of them, or some solution may be conceived which is now lost or obliterated by time. It may be that Providence has caused such difficulties to exist for our employment and trial. Certain it is that, whilst everything substantial is clearly laid before us, we have very obscure and scanty data respecting the particulars of the propagation of the Christian religion, and the establishment and government of the Christian churches. Whilst, therefore, the investigation of such particulars deserves to be encouraged, the weight of them should at the same time be appreciated, lest they promote a spirit of scepticism which is safe and useful in a certain degree, but dangerous when carried too far. On my hypothesis there are great and fundamental truths in revealed as well as natural religion, which are so firmly established as to preclude all doubt,
doubt, and greatly to preponderate over any difficulties which they may draw after them. Experienced men will acknowledge this, and will be in no danger of being entangled in any intricacies into which the most busy and curious inquirer may lead them; but there is great danger left the young and inexperienced should suffer their minds to be possessed, and led away, with these minute researches, before the greater truths are firmly rooted in their minds, and should imbibe too strong a tincture of the spirit of scepticism thus excited, so as, from the view of little difficulties, to acquire the habit of doubting concerning the most important and best established truths.

These reflections have occurred to my mind on reading over a late publication of considerable merit and value, viz. "Introduction to the New Testament, by J. D. Michaelis, translated and considerably augmented with notes by Herbert Marsh. Vol. III. IV." I admire the talents, the extensive erudition, the labour and diligence both of the Author and of his learned Commentator. I believe that the Author, after all the minuteness of research with which others have preceded him in the same track, has even struck out new arguments on these subjects, or at least has so put together the internal and external evidence as to place them often in a new light; and his Commentator has followed up his plan with an increased
creased portion of diligence and exactness in the research. Yet I cannot but think that they have both fallen into the mistake of setting too high a value on the object of their researches, and, by passing over the stronger proofs in the opposite scale, have, in several instances, arrived at conclusions which derogate from the character of the sacred books, and consequently are injurious to Christianity. If, learned and able as they are, they have themselves incurred this error, it will follow that the book, considered as a book of instruction, or "Introduction to the New Testament," as the title is, may have a mischievous tendency, and be in a greater degree the means of misleading others, less able to distinguish what is principal and essential in the question, what subordinate or accidental. The free inquirer, it may be said, should follow his argument, regardless of the consequences, to whatever conclusions it may lead him. I grant it; but then he should be careful not to omit considerations which might check him in his career; nor to magnify difficulties of an inferior kind, so as to confound them with the main arguments on which the merits of the question essentially depend. Much less as an instructor should he lead his followers into these by-paths; it being his business in that character to lay the foundation well, and to present to the first view of the learner some great and leading truths, which
which may serve as landmarks in any future pursuits.

These reasons will be better understood as I proceed to particulars. It is not, however, my intention to review the whole, and to point out every thing in the book which seems to me exceptionable, or of a dangerous tendency. I have not leisure and opportunity, if I had ability for this. I will rather select some passages by way of examples; and, if my reasoning be allowed to be just with regard to these instances, the same cautions requisite here may with little alteration be applied to other instances as there may be occasion.

I will therefore confine myself chiefly to the Gospels, which, as they stand first in the order of discussion in the book under consideration, so are they undoubtedly the chief in dignity and value of the sacred books of the New Testament: and the rather, because a very laboured disquisition of the Commentator on the origin of three of them, the result of which, he holds forth as a new and valuable discovery, appears to me one of the most exceptionable parts.

But let me first advert to the use made of the practice which has prevailed of reducing the Gospels to Harmonies.
I cannot but think that an excessive use has been made of this practice, and too much stress laid on it. Harmonies are certainly of considerable use in many respects; as, in bringing together parallel passages, and comparing them for the purpose of mutual illustration, or of observing and accounting for the differences: with which view I should suppose the sections of Ammonius, and canons of Eusebius, to have been framed in early times. They are useful also in the giving a sort of compound order and method to the contents of the four Gospels, which is very necessary for the right understanding of those parts which consist entirely or chiefly of an historical narrative of facts, as those which relate to the birth and early history of Christ, his death, and resurrection. And, since it seems to have been the intention of our Lord to open gradually the purpose of his mission, and the mysteries of his Gospel, hence it is plain that we shall better follow him through the course of this gradual revelation, if we have the whole, or as much as may be, digested in regular series. Many parts of the Gospel are capable of this arrangement, and, wherever they are so, it is useful. But, whilst men are thus employed, there arises the propensity of forcing every thing into such exact method; even those parts which were not so
so contrived by the authors as to fall into it; and
of which, to say the least, it is indifferent whether
they stand before or after some others. Of this
there is a remarkable instance in Archbishop
Newcome's Harmony, who has broken the con-
tinuity of Christ's institution of the Sacrament
under both kinds, by the intermediate insertion
of a long discourse of our Saviour, neither aris-
ing out of that institution, nor having any close con-
nection with it *

Now the authors before us, both Michaelis and
his Commentator, with many others, consider the
Evangelists as mere historians, and therefore sub-
ject to the law by which historians are bound of
relating every thing in exact order of time, or in
such manner that others may find no contrarieties
or inconsistencies in endeavouring to digest the
things which they relate in that order. Accord-
ing to what has been already said, there are
passages liable to this rule; those which are de-
pendent upon others in the process of the gradual
revelation ought to be capable of having a sub-
sequent place allotted to them; but there are
others of which it is perfectly indifferent at what
time and place they were said: and we may sup-
pose each Evangelist to have placed them as there
occurred a fit opportunity in his own particular
work, or with reference to his own particular view
in writing. Whatever degree of inspiration we

* John xiv. 1—30.
suppose; unless we extend it beyond its proper end, each writer may be conceived to have been at liberty to transpose such matters ad libitum; or at least within certain limits. A disagreement in such matters is no material disagreement. Shew me the dependence of one thing upon another, and I am solicitous to find the proper order of each: if there is no such connexion, I am contented with any convenient order.

Michaelis, indeed, allows that the Evangelists did not write in chronological order; which position his Commentator controverts. The former says, that the difference between an annalist and an historian arises out of this circumstance, and that the very excellence of the historian depends upon it. The latter argues that the arrangement of facts is the true criterion of their succession, and that the reader is liable to make false inferences if it is violated: which may be true in great measure; but still, in fact, the best historians have not confined themselves to this, especially when they have been intent upon what the annalist regards not, the causes and connexion of events, and a clear representation of such to the reader; insomuch that it often is not easy for the chronologer to find the exact date of every event even as related by the best historians. None, I believe it may safely be affirmed, have tied themselves down to so strict an order, as the harmonists wish to find in the Gospels. Michaelis farther argues, which comes nearer to our sub-
ject, that biographers are apt to take this liberty; which is also denied by his Commentator; except so far as they divide their history into subjects or classes, relating each in order of time. Yet I believe he will find few biographers so strict in their chronology. I am sure the great biographer of classical antiquity is not. It is true that he does not confound one end of his hero's life with the other; he observes a general method, but is very little attentive to the particular arrangement, and often digresses as the subject or his fancy leads him away; insomuch that, without other assistance, a chronologer would be puzzled to make out a very exact arrangement of his facts. Now I should deny that the Evangelists are either to be considered as historians or biographers. I mean that they are not such simply. It is true that they have made history the vehicle of all the instruction which they convey, and that some parts of the Gospels are purely historical; as their account of the birth and infancy, of the sufferings and resurrection, of Christ. They set out each of them with the former of these, and the latter are the common conclusion of all. But of what does the intermediate part consist? Not certainly of a regular life of Christ pursued in strict order from one end of it to the other; but of his ministry, consisting of two things, miracles performed, and doctrines delivered. Scarcely any other facts are mentioned unless incidentally,
and for the sake of these. Now these are not to be confounded together, so as that the last shall be first, and the first last; something of order and method must be observed, because a former miracle or doctrine may be introductory to a latter: but there is no necessity for a very exact chronological rule. The miracles are indeed historical facts, and, therefore, it is necessary that they be strictly true; with the material circumstances attendant upon them; but it is often immaterial which happened first, and which second, and so of the doctrines, which were delivered first, and which afterwards. For instance, if it be true that our Saviour performed the miracle of healing blind Bartimeus near Jericho, it makes no material difference whether he performed this, "as he "went out of Jericho," as St. Matthew and St. Mark *; or, "as he was come nigh to Jericho," as St. Luke: which is one of Michaelis's irreconcilable contradictions. So also, "The foxes have holes," &c.—And "Follow me, and let the dead "bury their dead †," being Christ's conversation with two persons who wished to become his disciples. The conversation neither gains nor suffers any thing in its value, whether it took place, as St. Matthew has it, near the lake of Genesaret, or as St. Luke, in Christ's last journey from

Galilee to Jerusalem. Again, whether St. Peter in his denial was questioned the second time by the same woman or another adds nothing to the instruction to be derived from the story *, and may therefore fairly be reckoned immaterial. Neither can I attach much consequence to the question on which so much is said, whether the unction at Bethany happened six days before the passover, or two †, the chief importance of which arises from an arbitrary supposition, that Judas was induced from this circumstance to betray Christ, in order to take revenge for the reflection then cast on him. Or, if that hypothesis be true, it may be a reason why St. Matthew and St. Mark placed it out of due order of time, next to that circumstance with which it was connected ‡. Michaelis says of this, that if the Evangelists did really determine the time, and refer this transaction to two different days, he would instantly give up the inspiration of one or both §. A rash assertion surely!

That the Evangelists were regardless of the exact order of time, as unnecessary to their purpose, is, I think, sufficiently intimated, by their having given few dates: the three first having not even given enough to determine the duration.

‡ See Townsend on this subject. Disc. iii. Sect. 5.
§ Vol. III. Part I. Sect. III.
of our Lord's ministry. And St. John, whose method is more strict, has not even left this question clear of doubt. In short, the whole difficulty arises from giving to the Gospels a character which their authors never intended they should bear, that of being purely historical. If they are to be compared to any work of classical antiquity, I know of none which bears so near a resemblance to them as Xenophon's *Memorabilia*. That author also begins from a certain point, and ends with an historical detail of the death of Socrates. The intermediate parts consist of several examples of the discourses of Socrates, selected and put together not without method, but by no means in exact order of time. And they have not for that reason the less weight. In neither case has the author made himself subject, equally with the historian or biographer, to the laws of chronology.

But our harmonists are again embarrased with some differences in the minute circumstances attending upon the facts: to which a similar answer may suffice. As long as these affected not the substance, the authors were not very solicitous to avoid them. And I believe none can be assigned which fairly invalidate any material fact or doctrine. The Evangelists, therefore, were left in such to their own recollection, and to the common variations of memory amongst men. Neither are these differences without their use; inasmuch as
as they shew that the authors wrote independently of each other, and are separate witnesses. Not that the case is parallel to historical painters, to which Mr. Marsh compares it; they invent the attendant circumstances according to their own fancy: the historian (being an eye-witness) relates them according to the view he had of them at the time, and his recollection of them at the time of writing. Michaelis thinks that such differences affect the inspiration of the Evangelists, but not their credibility as historians, or the genuineness of the Gospels. If we suppose the Spirit of God to be the immediate author of every tittle, (I will not say here of every word, but of every the minutest part as to its sense and meaning,) his position must be granted. But, if we suppose the Apostles in relating such facts to have been left to the powers of their own understanding, and to the habits of wisdom and knowledge with which they had been inspired, with no farther particular direction or superintendence of the Spirit than to secure them from material error, and to suggest every thing necessary for the instruction of a Christian, there is no occasion for his distinction. And on this hypothesis we may still have full assurance in the Scriptures as the word of God; so as that, fairly understood and rightly used, they can mislead no man: which, as I conceive, is the proper end of inspiration, and therefore the proper rule of the extent and degree of it.
it. We have in this case all the benefit which we can reasonably expect, from that Spirit which "should" teach them all things, and bring all "things to their remembrance." It disturbs not my faith, if the sacred historians have been suffered to recollect, with some little variation, the attendant circumstances of each fact, or to fall into a different manner of telling one and the same story. We should recollect that the testimony of the Apostles as eye-witnesses is the first step towards establishing the inspiration of the New Testament; and, therefore, there may have been reason for leaving it independent. I say nothing here of the differences being perhaps capable of being reconciled, even though the solution be not seen and known to us; or of their depending upon various readings: because my objection is to the principle; viz. that of demanding an entire agreement in matters of inferior consequence, where it is not necessary.

The danger of giving way to such a principle, will appear more at large in the next article relating to St. Luke's gospel.

OF ST. LUKE'S GOSPEL.

Our author, influenced by the difficulties already stated, does not scruple to assert that, "instead of "being losers, we should be real gainers, if we "were
were to consider St. Luke as a mere human historian*:" and does not hesitate to attribute to him several mistakes. Surely he is not aware of the consequences of this rash assertion. How Christianity should be a gainer by uncanonizing an Evangelist, and expunging one of the four Gospels, received without distinction by the Christian church from the beginning, it is difficult to conceive; unless a fabric were to derive strength from pulling down one of its main pillars. He observes, that St. Luke "lays no claim to super-
"natural assistance; but, on the contrary, grounds "the fidelity of his history merely on the accu-
"racy of his own researches." Neither do the other Evangelists insist on it: St. Matthew and St. John are equally silent on this head: the latter even where he strongly affirms the truth of his relation†. The reason of which probably was, that the first thing to be insisted upon was their competency as eye-witnesses to give testimony to the facts. Our Author indeed does.

* Chap. vi. sect. ii. comp. part. i. chap. iii. sect. 3. where St. Mark is also included. "If we abandon the inspiration "of his writings, as well as those of St. Mark, we shall "essentially serve the cause of our religion, and disarm our "adversaries at once, by depriving them of that pretext to "deny the truth of Christianity, which they derive from con-
"tradictions not wholly to be removed." † John xxi. 24.
xix. 35.
not allow St. Luke to have been one of the seventy, or an eye-witness; and in support of the latter quotes his own words παρηκολοθηκας ἀναθεν πᾶσιν ἀντιλοκαί"*: of which also his Commentator has made great use, agreeing in the same sense of them; and supposing his pretensions to be those of a person who had diligently investigated, and compared, former accounts, so as to compile a more accurate one himself. I know that learned men differ concerning the question, whether St. Luke was a disciple or not; there are respectable authorities on either side. Lightfoot, Fabricius, and Whitby, maintain the affirmative; Lardner inclines to this opinion; thinks at least that he was a follower of Christ. Others, as Beza and Grotius, hold the negative: but they collect it, not so much from the above words, as from the whole context, in which St. Luke seems to set himself in opposition to the other Evangelists in that particular†. Our Author is inclined to think him an heathen originally, from Col. iv. 10—14. but allows himself the argument not to be decisive. I cannot but think that the word παρηκολοθηκας means something more than a mere compiler. In its literal sense it certainly means

* Luke i. 3. † Randolph, on Christ's ministry, by altering the punctuation, supposes St. Luke on the contrary to have set himself on the same footing with the other Evangelists. But the construction is not so natural.
the being present with or accompanying a person or things. And it is remarkable that Josephus, where he is asserting his own credit in the same manner as St. Luke, uses the very word, διον ἐκεῖνῳ γινόμενον τῷ δὲ τῶν ἄλλων παράδοσιν πρᾶξεων ἀληθινῶν ὑποχρεόμενον, αὐτὸν ἐπίσκοπον ταύτας πρὸτερον ἀκριβῶς, ἡ παρηκολουθησότα τοῖς γεγονόσιν, ἡ παρὰ τῶν εἰσόδων πυθαγό-

So Demosthenes de Corona, c. 53. παρηκολουθησότα τοῖς πράγμασιν ἐξ ἀρχῆς †. Again, de Falsa Legatione, τὰ τῶν πενηλεύματα ἀκριβῶς-ἀτα εἰσώ, καὶ παρηκολούθησος ἀπασί ‡. The sense which it has in other places of the New Testament, though under a different application, comes near to this. I cannot take it therefore to denote less than some


Him. Polyb. L. 1. p. 28. Raphelius, who cites this, adds another passage from Lucian. He has other instances of a more remote sense to which he finally accedes, and cites for this other passages of Polybius; but none I think which, if we were to have recourse to the same for interpreting St. Luke, could make him a mere reviser and corrector of the Egyptian and other spurious gospels, as our Author, chap. vi. § 8. Jones (Canon of Scriptures) with much more probability supposes him to have written in order to supersede and confute many such then extant.

C 2 degree
degree of personal knowledge in St. Luke. Even, if not one of the Seventy, he might have been present at some of the miracles of Jesus, or might have seen and conversed with others who were; and when writing his history might have had an opportunity of obtaining and comparing the accounts of many who had been present at the transactions. We know, indeed, that both St. Mark and St. Luke had not only access to the Apostles themselves, but were in their confidence. The companions and fellow-labourers of St. Peter and St. Paul could not want the best information, even though we do not suppose them to have written under the immediate direction of their superiors. They were at least in the next rank to eye-witnesses; apostolici if not apostoli.

But our Author will not allow inspiration to have been granted to any other than an Apostle. This is an arbitrary assumption. For our Saviour, in promising the Holy Spirit to the Apostles, does not exclude others: and we know that some of the miraculous gifts were communicated farther.

* Lardner adds, after giving his sense of the above passage: "After all this, to say that he transcribed many things from one historian, and more from another, so far as I am able to judge, is no less than a contradiction of the Evangelist himself." Hist. of the Apostles and Evangelists, chap. x.
† Tertul. L. iv. adv. Marc.
than to the Apostles themselves only. St. Paul himself was not one of those to whom our Saviour's promise was personally given. Besides that it is not improbable that St. Peter and St. Paul should have lent their aid and sanction to the writing these Gospels. But most certain it is, that the Church did constantly put them on a level with the other two Gospels. Out of these Tatian composed his Diatefaron. These are they which fall under the strong testimony of Origen, for which he appeals to the rule of the Church. But let any one turn to the host of writers who have quoted St. Luke, as stated by Jones in his Canon of Scripture; (a book which seems not to have been known to our Author, and is not quoted so much by his Commentator, as from its excellence it deserves;) and let him judge for himself, whether this Gospel has not the fullest testimony in its favour. The several writers there cited, some of whom were not far distant from the age of the Apostles, and the transactions themselves, saw no such contradictions in the accounts of the different Evangelists, as should weaken their testimony, or render them unworthy of becoming concurrently the oracles of God. They saw probably such as were to be seen; for they seem to have viewed with extreme jealousy any thing offered to them with such pretensions; but judged that they were of no account when weighed
against the strong evidence in the opposite scale. Neither did the adversaries of their religion, or the many captious heretics who arose in successive times, raise any such doubts. The authority of the books was acknowledged.

I ask then, upon what ground do we of this age separate that which Christians of the earliest times, both in private testimony and for public use, have studiously put together? And on what ground, either of external authority or internal evidence, can we reduce the Gospels of St. Mark and St. Luke to the rank of mere common histories, which does not operate equally against those of St Matthew and St. John. Amongst the numerous MSS. and Versions, which we have of the New Testament, these four, and these only, are invariably found in the sacred volume: which is the undoubted testimony of the Church for many ages past, and by fair construction from the beginning. Their internal character concurs. There is the same artless simplicity, the same divine spirit, I had almost said, in the Gospels of St. Luke and St. Mark, as in those of St. Matthew and St. John. The plain conclusion is, that, in reducing the former from the rank hitherto assigned to them, we weaken the pretensions of the whole to divine inspiration; without which a Christian cannot have the same security for his faith, nor the same assurance for his hope. We pluck
pluck out one of the eyes of Christianity. And what do we gain, but the solution of a few insignificant difficulties, which, even if they were unanswerable, as I believe few, if any, are, when put in the balance against the strong weight of evidence on the other side, external as well as internal, are trifles light as air?

**OF THE ORIGIN OF THE THREE GOSPELS OF ST. MATTHEW, ST. MARK, AND ST. LUKE.**

Our Commentator adds to the work of his Author a very learned dissertation on this subject. He has certainly in this given an example of extreme affiduity and diligence of research; but I wish I could think that the conclusion to which it has led him was equally to be commended. As the former hypothesis tended to degrade one or two of the Evangelists, this tends to degrade all three. The Author seems to value himself upon it, as a new discovery; and maintains, that since this hypothesis alone can solve all the phenomena in the three Gospels, (as he expresses himself*) that it is therefore the true one.

From a minute analysis of any work it is not

* End of the book,
difficult to frame an hypothesis which shall suit all the particulars. It is like framing a prophecy after the event. But this is not sufficient. It is also necessary, that the hypothesis should be probable and unexceptionable in itself; that it should be consistent throughout; and, if it lead to the calling to light any written work unknown before, that there be some evidence in fact of the work's having once existed. Especially in a case, where it is extremely improbable that it should be totally lost, and unknown for ages, if it had once actually existed. The Author himself maintains that his hypothesis is a very simple one; which assertion seems unaccountable, except from the fondness of the parent to the child. He supposes, 1st, That there existed a common Hebrew document. 2dly, That this original document, before it had received any additions, was translated into Greek. 3dly, That the original afterwards received additions of two several kinds; so as to form two copies, each having additional circumstances, and additional transactions, differing from those of the other. 4thly, That farther additions were made, and involved with the former, so as to form three different copies, the originals of the three Gospels of St. Matthew, St. Luke, and St. Mark. I abbreviate this, according to the Author's own table of the genealogy of these transcripts, as he calls it, (being in truth a long and difficult pedigree,) for the reader.
reader must see that it might be drawn out into many more articles, if every step of the process were to be stated separately. But we have not yet done: for, 5thly, Another supplemental Hebrew document (Γιωμολογία) must be supposed, which was common to two of the Evangelists, but was first divided into two different copies. 6thly, and lastly, The Gospel of St. Matthew, which we now have, was a translation from the original, with insertions from those of St. Mark and St. Luke; at the distance, if I reckon right, of six steps from the original document *. I leave the reader after this recital, which I trust is not in the least exaggerated, to his own judgment of the simplicity of the hypothesis.

Meanwhile under what character are our divine Evangelists now represented? They are become the mere copiers of copyists, the compilers from former compilations, from a sarrago of gospels, or parts of gospels, of unknown authority every one of them. Where are now the four Gospels of Origen, ἄ καὶ μένα ἀπαντήρητα ἐστίν ἐν τῇ ὑπὸ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ εἰκότις τῷ Θεῷ. To which most certainly the Christian church has set its seal from the beginning, as original authentick documents, the charter of its foundation. The Author maintains

* Six in the least in the direct line: five others are collaterally necessary, or on account of the other Gospels, eleven in all at the least.
that his hypothesis is perfectly consistent with divine inspiration*. How this can be, he afterwards attempts to explain: not satisfactorily in my judgment. It must indeed be a very low degree of inspiration. The Holy Spirit is reduced to a very servile task in superintending the labours of such copiers and compilers. It can scarcely be said, as our Saviour promised, to teach them all things, and bring all things to their remembrance, when all is copied and transcribed. I grant, that it might not always supersede the use of their faculties as original writers, but he has not now left it where to set its foot. He adds, that it is no ground of objection† "that positive testimony cannot be alleged in favour of every part, and that it is sufficient that no part is contradicted by positive testimony." I deny the position, that testimony can be alleged for any part‡; and it cannot be expected that the existence of that, no part of which was ever known or suspected to exist before the present day, should be contradicted by positive testimony.

But, in fact, the silence of the Christian church, and of the whole series of Christian writers, amounts

The only part which he wishes to assign is, that St. Matthew wrote his gospel in Hebrew; which is no proper part of this hypothesis.
to a direct contradiction. Origen's words above are exclusive of any such documents. The Christian writers invariably quote the same four Gospels as those now in use, and these alone, as original and authentick. If they had known or heard of any documents, prior to them in antiquity, and consequently in value, they could not one and all have been silent about them. They would not all have taken up with the copy, when an original was at hand. St. Matthew and St. Mark themselves may be said to contradict it. If they did make use of the labours of others, they have not had the honesty, if I may be allowed the expression, to quote the original, or give the smallest intimation of it. Nor can the words of St. Luke in his preface, without torturing them, be brought to such an acknowledgment *. And here we might ask, what need could St. Matthew, (to pass over the rest) an undoubted Apostle, have of any foreign assistance? What better document for writing a Gospel, than his own personal knowledge, accompanied by the promise of his Lord? In a common case, he who has seen transactions himself, is not wont to have recourse to the accounts of others, unless for the refreshing his memory, which is here out of the question. Then the antient Christians were manifestly studious of preserving any genuine remains, and

* Origin of the three Gospels. See p. 198.
jealous in the extreme of intermixing others with them. Eusebius, at the distance of two or three centuries, making use of the aid of other writers before him, has collected every thing of this kind with the utmost industry. But not a trace is to be found of any one of those supposed documents.

Our Author, aware of this defect in the total want of testimony in his favour, and in the counter-evidence to be derived from the silence of all antiquity on the subject, has endeavoured to fabricate to himself some little matter of confirmation of his hypothesis. But here I am concerned to say, that, on examining his authorities, I found a want of sincerity, or correctness, which I should not have expected in so learned and respectable a writer. He quotes first, the τῶν δώδεκα ἐυαγγελίων, or secundum apostolos, as mentioned by Origen, St. Jerom, and Theophylact: but he neglects to acquaint the reader, that they all quote it as a spurious work, and attribute no authority to it. And, if we may judge from the fragments now preserved, it appears to have been both spurious and fabulous: not therefore "a work of good authority," nor "worthy of furnishing materials to any one of the Apostles." He quotes next, a supposed work, called, ἀπομημονευματα τῶν Αποστόλων; and adds

* See Jones on the Canon, p. 2. ch. 29.  † See P. 197.
‡ Note, p. 197.

that
that by this name Justin Martyr calls the work from which he cites passages relative to Christ's history; saying also expressly of it ὑπὸ τῶν Ἀποστόλων καὶ τῶν ἔκεινος παρακολουθησάντων συντετάχθη. Here it is that there is chief cause of complaint. The reader will be surprizcd when I tell him that by this title Justin Martyr means the four Gospels now extant, and that he has expressly explained himself to that purpose †. I will give his words—Ὁ γὰρ Ἀπὸ-σόλοι ἐν τοῖς γενομένοις ὑπ᾽ αὐτῶν ἀπομνημονεύμασιν, ἐν καλύπται ἑναγγέλια, ὡς παρέδωκαν. And he proceeds to quote the words of Christ in instituting the Sacrament, as we have them now ‡. Again, he quotes the same work as giving Christ the title of Son of God. Again, from the same, Τίν Θεός ἐκατὸν ἐλεγε, καταβας περιπατῶν, συστάτω αὐτῶν ὁ Θεός, plainly giving the substance of the words of St. Matthew and St. Luke, as quoting from memory §. Again, the silence of Christ, and his refusing to answer before Pilate, is quoted from the same ‖. And Matt. v. 20. is quoted verbatim under the same title ‖. As also, Matt. xii. 39. there being only a slight difference in the preceding question **. Again, at once Luke xxii. 44. Matthew xxvi. 39 ††. In another


place
place he speaks of the public reading of these ἀπομνημονεύματα τῶν Ἀποστόλων, together with τὰ συγγράμματα τῶν προφητῶν, (the Old and New Testament) in the publick worship of Christians. In short there can be no doubt but that he means the four Gospels of the New Testament. In which case the argument turns against our Author; for it also follows that Justin Martyr knew of no other work of that title, nor even of the same description. And we are now speaking, let it be remembered, of an author of the second century, who was likely to receive, through very few steps, any thing known to the first Christians *. There arises therefore from hence a very strong presumption, that they had no suspicion of the existence of any authentick document concerning Christ, prior to those which had then taken the name they now bear, εὐαγγελία. It is not therefore, I think, too much to say, that the hypothesis is contradictory to all history; as well as derogatory from the authority attributed to the Evangelists, in all ages, as original writers.

But our Author finds difficulties in admitting them to be such. First, those of the same kind

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* Irenæus concurs, and has a chapter on this very subject, Lib. iii. Cont. Har. C. 11. " Neque autem plura numero " quam hæc sunt, neque ruribus pauciora capit eis Evangelia."
Et infra, " Vani omnes et indoceli et insuper audaces, qui " frustrantur speciem Evangelii, et vel plures quam diēs sunt " vel etiam pauciores inferunt personas Evangelii."
as have been mentioned before; that the manner of telling the same story, the attendant circumstances, and the place, and time, do not perfectly agree; and in some cases cannot easily be reconciled. On this subject enough has been said already for the present purpose. His hypothesis seems more particularly contrived to solve another difficulty, arising from the verbal agreement or disagreement of the three Evangelists, or any two of them among themselves. If this difficulty does subsist, it is not of sufficient weight to justify so violent an hypothesis: especially in a case where we know not what extraordinary communications the Apostles had, nor even what ordinary communications by intercourse with each other. But the question seems to me to be mistaken, and the difficulty misrepresented, or at least much exaggerated.

Our Author has with great pains collected and exhibited tables of the passages in which there is in part, or in the whole, a verbal agreement of the three, or of any two: and in his notes upon them he often observes that they agree in singular expressions, or in expressions unusual to themselves in other parallel instances, or in such as may be accounted for by supposing them derived from the Hebrew. With regard to all these circumstances of agreement, I would observe that it is now very difficult for us to pronounce what expressions were singular, and what common in that
that time and country; having so few authors exactly of the same, with which to compare them. That they should vary their expressions at different times is common to all authors, especially to those who are not very curious and choice in their expressions: and that there should be hebraisms in their writings was unavoidable, their sacred books being in Hebrew, and the vernacular language of the country a dialect derived from the Hebrew, and nearly related to it.

But the verbal agreement itself he holds to be inexplicable, except upon some such supposition as his own. I would observe here, that all, or almost all, the instances of verbal agreement which he alleges, are taken from the speeches or discourses of our Lord: scarcely any belong to those parts which are purely narrative. This circumstance seems to me to offer a much more reasonable solution of the difficulty. We are no longer concerned with the case of eye-witnesses, who do not relate "facts in the same manner, "and still less in the same words": much less with the instance of painters (a case not parallel to that of eye-witnesses), who making use of the greater facts only, represent the rest from fancy. Our historians are of another description; they are those who are labouring to report accu-

* P. 2.
ately the speeches and discourses of another; in which case even common historians would endeavour to preserve the exact sense, or, as far as their memory would serve them, the same words. In seeking to do this, it is not to be wondered at that two or three writers should often fall upon a verbal agreement; nor, on the contrary, if they write independently, that they should often miss of it; because their memory would often fail them. With regard to the sacred writers, it is natural to suppose them studious of this very circumstance; and we have also reason to think that they had assistance from above to the same effect: and yet it is not necessary to suppose that either their natural faculty, or the extraordinary assistance vouchsafed them, or both, should have brought them to a perfect identity throughout: because it was not necessary for the purposes of Providence, and because it would have affected their character of original independent witnesses. Let me add, that these discourses, before they were committed to writing by the Evangelists, must have been often repeated amongst the Apostles in teaching others, and in calling them to remembrance amongst themselves. St. Matthew had probably often heard, and known, how his other fellow-labourers recollected the same discourses which he selected for his own preaching and writing. We know not how much inter-
course they had with each other, but probably a
great deal before they finally dispersed themselves.
St. Mark and St. Luke had the same opportu-
nities, even if they were not original eye-wit-
tnesses. I admit, then, of a common document;
but that document was no other than the preach-
ing of our blessed Lord himself. He was the
great Prototype. In looking up to him, the
author of their faith and mission; and to the
very words in which he was wont to dictate to
them, (which not only yet sounded in their ears,
but were also recalled by the aid of his holy
Spirit promised for that purpose), they have given
us three Gospels, often agreeing in words, though
not without much diversification, and always in
sense. A small objection may be made here,
that Christ did not speak in the same tongue in
which they wrote—true; but, as above, for the
sake of teaching others, and in conversing with
one another, his discourses might often have
been repeated in the Greek, before they were
committed to writing. I submit with deference
this solution to the better judgment of the
reader, and, if approved of, for his greater satis-
faction; but I do not hold it necessary for my
present argument to offer any. My object is to
prove, that any hypothesis which affects the
whole credit of the Gospels, established for ages
on so firm a basis, ought to be received with ex-

(34)
treme caution; and that the present draws after it so many improbabilities, and is so destitute of any positive testimony, and irreconcilable with the evidence of history, that it ought not to stand for a moment against the received opinion.

Thus then was accomplished the purpose of God, in giving the most pleasing and satisfactory evidence of the Gospel preached in four pure and uncontaminated sources. It does not indeed become us to pronounce concerning the purposes of the providence of God; but, judging from history and from fact, the particular provision which God made for the security of his Church's faith seems to have been that of four original, authentic, and independent Gospels: a provision certainly most wise, and most ample. Let us therefore take heed how we suffer any inferior doubts or difficulties, which have been suffered perhaps to subsist for our trial, to shake our reliance on the divine authority of these books, which, next to the preaching of Christ and his Apostles, were the first origin, as they are the present foundation, of the faith and hopes of a Christian.

Lardner thought it a great disparagement to the Evangelists, to say that they "abridged and "transcribed each other," and that "it dimi-"nished the importance and value of their tes-"timony." How much greater lengths have we now
now gone? I will add the concluding words of the same diligent and judicious author; much more applicable to this subject than to his own. "I have all my days read and admired the first three Evangelists, as independent and harmonious witnesses. And I know not how to forbear ranking the other opinion among those bold, as well as groundless assertions, in which critics too often indulge themselves, without considering the consequences."

I forbear to enlarge farther upon the subject; or to enter into other particulars. The careful Reader will perceive that there are many to which exception may be taken, or for which no solution has been given. If we were to come to a close application I believe the hypothesis would be found defective throughout. From whence, for instance, has St. Luke derived those many parts of the Gospel peculiar to himself, which this hypothesis of compilation leave unaccounted for? They are numerous and important. As the whole story of Zachariah, and the birth of John, the mean circumstances of our Lord's nativity, the purification accompanied with the prophecies of Simeon and Anna, Christ's going to Jerusalem at twelve years of age, his genealogy in apparent contradiction with St. Matthew; several important miracles; many of the most interesting and instructive parables, as that of the good
good Samaritan, the prodigal son, the Pharisee
and publican, Dives and Lazarus; the accounts
of Zaccheus, our Lord's agony, the penitent
thief, and our Lord's meeting with the two Disci-
ciples in the way to Emmaus.

If these were contained in the common, docu-
ments, how came St. Matthew and St. Mark to
pass them over? if not, whence did St. Luke,
without any personal knowledge, derive them?
Other documents must I think still be sought for.
Our author speaks of all these things as easily
accounted for, in a manner which seems likely
to induce his reader to think them few and in-
cidental * . They are certainly of the highest
consequence, and to me they seem inconsistent
with his hypothesis.

CONCLUSION OF THIS "INTRODUCTION."

I have also confined myself hitherto to the
Gospels: yet other parts require to be read with
equal caution. The laboured argument concern-
ing the Apocalypse has, to say the least, so much
tendency to raise doubts respecting the authen-
ticity of that book, that I cannot forbear making
some slight animadversions upon it. Our Author
so states the ancient testimony, as to seem to raise

* P, 243.
D 3 up
up to himself from thence an argument against this book *. Yet is there no positive testimony, among the more ancient writers of any respectability, on this side. The silence of Ignatius is all; which proves nothing, unless we make it incumbent on the author of a few Epistles to quote every authentick book known to the churches to which he writes. But he builds another argument on Eusebius’s account of Papias †; who is said to “represent him as ground-ing his doctrine of the Millennium, not on “ the Bible, but on certain expressions of Christ “ and his Apostles handed down by oral tradi-“ tion.” I am utterly unable to discover on what authority this assertion is made; Eusebius saw no such conclusion; for he speaks of the Apocalypse in the very same chapter without questioning its authenticity. But the words in question are ‡, ἡ ἡγήσαι, τὰς ἀποστολικὰς παρεξεξέχειν διηγήσεις, ὑπολαβεῖν, τὰ εὖ ὑποδείγμασι πρὸς αὐτῶν μυθικῶς εἰρημένα μὲ συνεργάσια. —τὰς ἀποστολικὰς διηγήσεις means in general accounts of the Apostles, not excluding the Bible, or any part of it, as the Apocalypse; which indeed seems particularly pointed out in the words which follow—τὰ ἐὖ ὑποδείγμασι πρὸς αὐτῶν μυθικῶς εἰρημένα. Eusebius uses the general

* Ch. xxxiii. sect. 3. † Ch. xxxiii. sect. 2. ‡ Ecclef. Hist. Euseb. l. iii. c. 25. expression,
expression, because Papias affected to have learnt as much by word of mouth as from books. Andrew of Caesarea therefore had good reason to consider Papias as giving testimony to the Apocalypse.

Dionysius also of Alexandria is supposed not to have believed in his heart the Apocalypse to be a divine book, though in argument he grants it to be such. Dionysius's own words are, ἐγὼ μὲν γὰρ ἴσως τινος ἢ Ἰουδαιοῦ συναντῶν, and I will not suppose him to have been so disingenuous as to have said this positively, thinking otherwise in his heart. On the other hand, this book has the positive testimony of Justin Martyr, Irenæus, Theophilus of Antioch, Tertullian, and Origen. But the old Syriac version has not rendered it; perhaps as not fit for common and public use: for which reason in all probability Cyril of Jerusalem, and the council of Laodicea have it not in their catalogues: the latter of which prescribes only what shall be read for common and public use; and omits this book as the Church of England leaves it out of the calen-

* P. 481, 3.
‡ Our Author sets aside this testimony as proved to be spurious by a late writer in Germany; which work has not I believe yet found its way into this country: till it has, and has been approved of, we may be allowed to suspend our judgment; the canon carrying with it no suspicious marks.
That so mysterious a book, especially after the abuse of it, in the controversy concerning the millennium, should have raised doubts in the minds of some, ought not to surprise us. The Church at large certainly decided for it.

That the prophecies have not yet been fulfilled is another argument against it; and that the commentators differ in their interpretations of it; which can have no weight with those who think that the explanation of the parable yet remains to be given, when all shall have been completed. I see as little in the difference of the language of this book from that of St. John's Gospels and Epistles; in its abounding in hebraisms, or in unusual and ungrammatical Greek; all which circumstances seem to be much exaggerated. Its character is totally different from that of St. John's other writings: he assumes the person and with it the rapturous and figurative style of the prophet speaking from immediate inspiration. Isaiah has a few chapters of plain history, totally different in style from the rest which are prophetical. In common profane matters, no man writes a lyrick ode in the same style as he would a familiar epistle: he totally changes it. The difference of subject is as great in this case. Yet are there not wanting some striking resemblances both in doctrine and expression, between this and the other writings of St.
St. John. Our Author acknowledges the language of the Apocalypse to be "both beautiful and sublime, affecting and animating *," and pronounces a very just encomium upon it. Has this ever been the case with forged prophecies? Have any such ever made the smallest approach to this in character? The doctrine also is most sound, and the tone of the writer such as nothing but inspiration could justify. He not only personates St. John the divine, but presumes to speak as from the very voice of God, concerning the future destiny of the church in all ages. The consequence is, that if this were done without authority, the author must have been a most daring impostor, and the ancient Christians who received it, extremely negligent or credulous; an imputation which we are not warranted to entertain concerning them.

But I have proceeded farther than I first intended: my plan being only to suggest, that the book, on which I have undertaken thus briefly to animadvert, ought to be used with caution; and to assign sufficient reasons why such caution was necessary, in order to check the spirit of scepticism, which the embarking too hastily in such inquiries, or pursuing them too far, might excite.

* Ch. xxxiii. sect. 10.
Let not any one think that it is my wish to
detract from the labours, or to depreciate the
character either of the Author, or his Commenta-
tor. I acknowledge them to be most learned and
respectable. And it is for that very reason, be-
cause they are learned and respectable, because
their opinions and example carry great weight
with them, that I have been induced to put to-
gether these remarks. If the authors had been of
a common stamp, and their opinions unsupported
by talents and learning, I should have left them
to take their chance unnoticed by me. But the
greater the authority of the work, the more need
is there for salutary caution; if it have indeed a
tendency to mislead any one, especially those
who are entering upon sacred studies with ear-
nestness, and who wish to give them a thorough
investigation. They are those into whose hands
this book will fall: it is necessary for them to
learn, at an early stage of their progress, what
questions are primary, what secondary; and not
to proceed to a minute consideration of the lat-
ter, till they are well established in the first prin-
ciples, and leading truths of the former; and
have acquired the habit of duly appreciating
the various discussions which may be thrown in
their way, lest otherwise they be untimely in-
volved in numberless difficulties, and finish in
endless doubts.

I trust,
I trust, therefore, that justice will be done to my motives, and that I may be believed even by the parties concerned, when I assure them that I have written these things merely from a sincere admiration of the holy scriptures; a thorough conviction of their divine origin; and a wish that all may hear and receive them with "meek heart and due reverence."

THE END.

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