

**THE GOSPEL HISTORY AND ITS
TRANSMISSION**

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Wipf and Stock Publishers

150 West Broadway • Eugene OR 97401

2001

The Gospel History and its Transmission

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ISBN: 1-57910-759-1

Reprinted by *Wipf and Stock Publishers*
150 West Broadway • Eugene OR 97401

Previously published by T & T Clark, 1925.

PREFACE

THE ten Lectures contained in this volume were delivered in the spring of this year at the Passmore Edwards Settlement in London as the Jowett Lectures for 1906. I repeated them with very little change for my inaugural course at Cambridge as Norrisian Professor of Divinity, so that it seemed advisable to keep them in lecture form when they came to be printed.

It is sometimes supposed that the result of modern historical criticism is to diminish the historical value of the Gospels. My own researches have made me believe that there is a much larger element of genuine history in the Canonical Gospels, than a general view of the tendencies which influenced Christendom during the first century and a half of its existence might have led one to anticipate. The general aim, therefore, of the last three Lectures, those on the Gospel Canon, on Marcion, and on the Apocryphal Gospels, is to elucidate this to me somewhat remarkable fact, to examine the reasons why the tradition by which the Catholic Church

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came to hold fast is on the whole so much truer to the actual course of events than the theories of the Heretics.

While the volume was passing through the press, I read Professor Harnack's new book *Lukas der Arzt*. After some consideration I thought it best to leave my Lectures as they were, without attempting to review this brilliant vindication of the Lucan authorship of the Third Gospel and the Acts. With the greater part of Harnack's thesis I find myself in thorough agreement, though I still hold that S. Luke had read Josephus (or at least part of the *Antiquities*), and that both Gospel and Acts were the work of the author's old age. But whatever view may be taken, there can be no doubt that Harnack has said in this monograph the true and necessary word on many a vexed question connected with the subject; especially I must here single out the admirable remarks on the 'Paulinism' of S. Luke. 'Wo ist denn der Paulinismus, ausser bei Marcion, geblieben?' asks Harnack (p. 101). He himself says something in answer to this pregnant question, but the fact that he asks it at all may serve to shew that my Lecture on Marcion was not out of place in this book.

F. C. BURKITT.

CAMBRIDGE, October 1906.

PREFACE TO SECOND EDITION

THIS new Edition of my Lectures is an almost unchanged reprint of the former Edition. I have added a Note on de Bruyne's discovery of the Marcionite Prologues to the Pauline Epistles, and I have corrected a few minor errors. But I cannot say that the criticism, to which parts of my book has been subjected, has caused me to regret the line I took. The criticism has been exceedingly kindly; but in a good many cases it has seemed to me that the writers have not quite understood what I was aiming at, or what were the rocks ahead which I had perceived. To judge by most of the criticisms one would suppose that I had been the first person to deny the historical value of the Fourth Gospel for determining the course of events in the public life of our Lord, or the first to have rejected the historicity of the Raising of Lazarus! As a rule the critics limit themselves to bringing forward reasons why the Synoptic Gospels are silent about the Raising of Lazarus: what they have not done is to explain how and where the tale as told in the Fourth

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Gospel can possibly be inserted into the framework given by S. Mark. The 'argument from silence' in this case is not merely that the Raising of Lazarus is ignored by S. Mark, but that his narrative appears to leave no room to fit it in.

What I have had in view in writing these Lectures on the Gospel History and its transmission to us is something very different from an attack upon the much assaulted Fourth Gospel. I was not anxious to prove that the narrative books of the New Testament are not all historical : that was a conclusion only too likely to be arrived at in the case of the Sacred Writings of an obscure Jewish sect that was destined in the end to dominate the Roman world. If there is one thing more than another that clearly issues from A. Schweitzer's admirable history of the attempts to write a Life of Jesus (*Von Reimarus zu Wrede*, 1906) it is this, that the complete historical scepticism of Bruno Bauer was not a mere individual eccentricity, but the expression of serious difficulties in an excessively complicated historical problem. The rise of Christianity is such an extraordinary event, that we must be prepared to find again and again that those who study it find themselves bewildered, and that then they begin to doubt whether the traditional accounts of the process have any historical foundation at all.

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The more we investigate the early history of the Christian Church with open and unprejudiced eyes, the more we find ourselves in a strange world, dominated by fixed ideas that are not our fixed ideas and permeated by an intellectual atmosphere quite different from ours. We come to ourselves, and we rub our eyes and wonder if what we have been gazing upon ever had any reality. It was for the student in this state of mind that my book was written. What I have attempted to shew is, that at least the Gospel according to S. Mark is in touch with the actual condition of Palestine in the times of the Herods ; and, further, that the course of events in the second century enables us to understand some of the reasons which led the Church to cherish on the whole a historical, as distinct from an ideal, account of the foundation of Christianity.

F. C. BURKITT.

CAMBRIDGE, *May*, 1907.

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IN the interval between the second and the third editions of this book, English readers have been effectively introduced to what is called the Eschatological view of the Gospel History, most prominently associated with the name of Dr. Schweitzer, of Strassburg, and the question arises how far modifications should be introduced dealing directly with the problems now under discussion. After consideration it seems to me better not to make any great changes in the text as originally written. I have altered a phrase here and there, and rewritten a paragraph in order to bring Chapter IV. more definitely into line with the conclusions so eloquently set forth by Dr. Verrall in his *Christ before Herod*.¹ But even Dr. Verrall's Essay raises some objections to the point of view from which the public career of Jesus Christ is looked at in part of Chapter III., and certainly if this part of the book be left unchanged some indications of its relation to Dr. Schweitzer's view will not be out of place.

¹ See p. 138.

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Put in a single phrase, the question is whether I ought to retain the Map facing p. 92. One of the most curious features of the Gospel History as told in S. Mark is the long absence from Galilee indicated in Mk vii 24, 31. The small amount of tradition connected with this period, which very likely took up more than half the time included in the Ministry, is easily explicable, for we are expressly told in vii 24 that Jesus had sought retirement; but the question remains why He sought it.

The object of the Map is to point out the fact that, according to Mark, during this period of retirement Jesus had avoided the dominions of Herod Antipas. But Dr. Schweitzer does not connect this retirement with Herod at all: Jesus, he says (*Quest*, p. 362), 'really does flee; not, however, from hostile Scribes, but from the people, who dog His footsteps in order to await in His company the appearing of the Kingdom of God and of the Son of Man—to await it in vain.' And while Dr. Schweitzer seems to exclude Herod from one point of view, Dr. Verrall from another reminds us that 'the "hostility of Antipas," "the designs of Antipas," "the danger from Antipas," are phrases easily found, as one may say, anywhere except in the Evangelists.' Perhaps this is a little over-stated, unless we are

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careful to understand it exclusively of the personal attitude of the Tetrarch ; but it may serve to warn a reconstructor of the Gospel history against unduly magnifying the political prominence of our Lord and His disciples, or of the danger in which they stood from the government of Galilee.

Nevertheless I retain the Map, and with it most of the theory which the Map is intended to illustrate. In the first place, it really does exhibit the places named in our only source, and the order in which they are named. Gennesaret, Tyre, Sidon, Decapolis, 'Dalmanutha' - Tiberias, Bethsaida, Cæsarea Philippi, a journey through Galilee, 'the borders of Judæa,' Jericho, Jerusalem,—these are the stations named in Mark ; and even if it be no true itinerary, it is well that we should clearly realise what kind of route our document puts before us. On an uncoloured sheet of paper the route is indeed odd ; with the territory of Antipas indicated it becomes, I venture to think, more intelligible, and I have suggested in the Note to p. 92 that the enduring physical features of Palestine supply some reasons for the most northerly angle of it.

Very possibly I may have exaggerated 'the danger from Antipas' ; in any case the parts avoided are the Tetrarch's territories and also (till the last journey) the land of Judæa. Possibly

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if I were to plan the whole section over again I might lay more stress on the idea of retirement, of waiting for the Kingdom of God, rather than that of exile; but whatever may have been the cause the long cessation of public work still remains—*αὐτομάτῃ ἢ γῇ καρποφορεῖ*, and the Sower was letting the wheat and tares grow unchecked to the Harvest. Absence from Herod's territory was also absence from the districts where Jewish life and religion were predominant; it involved a cessation of most of the features which we commonly associate with our Lord's Ministry. We do not even know how many of the Disciples followed Jesus to the borders of Tyre.

It still seems to me that the idea of retirement and passive waiting for the Kingdom is not quite enough to explain all the data given by S. Mark. Especially, it is not enough to explain the passage through Galilee *incognito* (Mk ix 30); this, if nothing else does, points to the avoidance of definite political dangers, or rather the definite choice of one danger rather than another. Jesus goes to Jerusalem to die, because a Prophet must perish at Jerusalem—there and not elsewhere. The Gospels show us Jesus not only going forward to His Death, but also choosing the time of it and the place: it is one of the special merits of the Gospel according to Mark that it gives us

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some indications of the means whereby Jesus preserved His freedom until the time for the Passion arrived.

I have attempted elsewhere to set forth my reasons for regarding the picture of the Gospel History given in Mark as being in its main features historical.¹ The scope of this book never included a discussion of this fundamental question. What I specially have had in view has been a consideration of the reasons that led the Church to preserve so historical a tradition of its origins, and to contrast the Church's theory with a non-historical theory like Marcion's. It might have been thought in England a few years ago that such a consideration was unnecessary. Now we are confronted with the movement in which Professor Arthur Drews, of Karlsruhe, is the chief figure, the movement which preaches in the name of modern Comparative Religion that Jesus is not a historical personage at all, but the rendering into history of a primitive religious myth. In words notably orthodox in sound, Professor Drews declares that 'the Jesus of the Gospels is to be understood only as a God made man' (*The Christ Myth*, Eng. tr., p. 265), while his book ends by

¹ Besides what I have said in the little book called *The Earliest Sources for the Life of Jesus*, I have attempted to give my reasons for dissent from the historical scepticism of Wrede in the *American Journal of Theology* for the current year (1911).

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saying that the 'chief obstacle to a monistic religion and attitude is the belief, irreconcilable with reason or history, in the historical reality of a "unique," ideal, and unsurpassable Redeemer' (p. 300). This book has reached a third edition in Germany. It is, in my opinion, as unsatisfactory as Marcion's Gospel; but the whole movement shows that the question of the existence of the merely historical, nationalistic, Jewish element in Christianity is still as living a question as it was in Marcion's day. It is the question whether human ideas or the one non-recurring Course of Events constitute the true reality. I cannot but believe that the Church was right when it included the Course of Events in the Christian Creed.

F. C. BURKITT.

CAMBRIDGE, *February*, 1911.

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THE GOSPEL HISTORY AND ITS TRANSMISSION

I.

INTRODUCTORY.

Lo, in Four Volumes hath our Sun shone forth.

S. EPHRAIM, *Lamy* iv 659.

THE Gospel History and its transmission is a wide subject, and it is not to be supposed that any one could exhaust it in ten Lectures. At the same time, it is impossible to talk profitably for ten hours on a single subject, however wide, without going into details; and details are apt to be dry and tiresome. I am very glad, therefore, that my subject is one of such importance and interest to every thoughtful man who is born in a Christian land, that I can appeal to its general importance and interest when I claim your attention in the discussion of dry and tiresome details.

We are all agreed, I suppose, as to the import-

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ance of the Gospel History, whatever our religious views may be. The brief and tragic career of Jesus of Nazareth, put to a shameful death by the rulers of Jerusalem though He taught love to God and kindness to men, would in any case have been a moving and pathetic incident. But when we remember that this tragic incident was the immediate starting-point and source of all the varied manifestations of Christianity, we are compelled, whether we be orthodox or unorthodox, believers or agnostics, to acknowledge that the study of it has a transcendent interest, and we shall be prepared to admit beforehand that no pains and no attention can be too great to bestow on its investigation.

Nevertheless it is easy, nay inevitable, that we should sometimes lose sight of the greatness of the subject—inevitable, that is, if we give the several parts of our task the attention which they need. Indeed, the parts and the details are so interesting and absorbing to the investigator, that it is often easy for him to forget the whole. I shall therefore ask your pardon beforehand if I sometimes seem to be shewing you the trees, when you want a view of the wood. Before, then, we enter the wood together let us look at some of the reasons which make detailed examination of the trees necessary; or, to drop the

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metaphor, let us explain why we need to attack critical and literary questions about the Gospels, before busying ourselves with the real problems of the Gospel History.

The first thing that an unsophisticated little child asks about a story is, 'Is it true?' It is indeed the most vital and important question to ask, but the answer cannot generally be contained in a simple 'yes' or 'no.' And the child gradually learns, as he grows up, that 'Is it true?' must often be the last and not the first question to be asked. Undoubtedly this is the case in the study of the Gospel History. There is no dispute as to the object of our study. We want a true portrait of our Lord and of His work among men. But there is more than one kind of truth in portraiture. There is the truth of the photographer and the truth of the impressionist artist. A complete set of working drawings for S. Paul's might very well fail to reveal the true architectural relation of the Cathedral to the great City, which can be suggested by a picture, faulty and inaccurate as it may be in many a detail. It is not fair to blame the architectural drawing for failing to give the general impression, or to blame the picture which aims at giving a certain impression for being unreliable in details. And one of the problems before us is whether our Gospels are to

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be classed with architectural drawings or with impressionist pictures, or with some other kind of portraiture.

Besides this, we have to a great extent to reconstruct the Portrait for ourselves. As I have said, it is not fair to blame our documents for not giving us more than they profess to give; but at the same time we may legitimately try to learn from them more than the writers directly aimed to tell us. We have to learn not only to hear our witnesses, but also to cross-examine them.

To reconstruct the Portrait of Jesus Christ for ourselves—this is a task which is incumbent not only upon all Christians, but also upon all those who are concerned with religion and the aspirations of the human race. And to make this reconstruction we must study the Gospels. It will be one of the conclusions which I shall bring before you, that the study of all Four Canonical Gospels, even the Fourth Gospel, is necessary. Neither of them is entirely superseded by the others. Each one of them contains an exceedingly valuable element which is not represented in the others. I am not saying, I am very far from saying, that each of our Gospels is equal to the others in historical value or in philosophical value. The contrary is the case. But each of

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them does singly preserve portions and aspects of the Gospel History which we cannot afford to lose.

I have spoken of 'reconstructing the Portrait of Jesus Christ for ourselves.' Some of you may perhaps reply that this is not a work for everybody, and that it is not to be expected that the ordinary Christian, who has his own work and his own studies to attend to, should go through the critical investigations that occupy learned men. You will expect me, perhaps, to tell you of this brilliant Monograph, or that epoch-making Article, which will really explain the origin of Christianity, or the relations of the Gospels to one another and to history. This is, of course, part of my business, but it is the least important part. Naturally there are some branches of Gospel study which must be left in the hands of specialists, and in regard to these branches our chief duty is loyally to accept the specialists' matured conclusions. To begin with, there are questions of language. The Gospels are written in Greek, and they deal for the most part with the sayings and doings of persons who spoke a language akin to Hebrew, known to modern scholars as Jewish Aramaic. Now it is eminently desirable that those who make a study of the Gospels should know Greek and Aramaic. You have only to

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read Professor Wellhausen's short commentaries on the Synoptic Gospels to see how many things are immediately clear to one who has a thorough command of Aramaic, which are only half-perceived by less fully equipped scholars. And it is obvious that minute investigation of the style of the several Gospels, of the use the Evangelists made of their sources and of the Old Testament, can only be satisfactorily carried out in the original Greek.

Yet the fact remains that an intelligent use of the English Bible brings us face to face with the most important Gospel problems, and even suggests their solution. It is one of the great attractions of Biblical study that the chief document is in everybody's hands in an available form, so that all the main results and many of the processes of learned critical study can be at once made plain to those who will read the English Bible carefully for themselves. Far be it from me to undervalue the help that erudition gives, or to seem to assert even for one moment that the investigator can do without it. Again and again the amateur in Biblical study, as in other subjects, falls into errors and pitfalls from which a little more solid learning might have saved him. But if the ordinary Bible reader—I will not say 'the man in the street,' for that phrase has a certain

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connotation of heedlessness, which disqualifies the class to whom it is applied from the right to sit in judgement—but if the ordinary Bible reader must be shy of trying to blaze out a path for others to follow, he has every right to demand that the steps which others cut for him shall be made quite plain. There is nothing in the nature of the subject to prevent him from understanding every step of the way that his guide is taking him, and sometimes he may claim the right of refusing to follow any further in a new path, at least till cause be shewn that it is the right one.

What I have said about questions of language is true also of textual criticism. The scholar really familiar with the ancient manuscripts and versions of the New Testament has a great critical instrument at his command. He sees before his eyes the process by which many a characteristic phrase has become obliterated in the course of the transmission of the Gospels down to modern times. He can read the Gospels in a form appreciably nearer the originals than it was possible for Erasmus or Bentley to do. But after all, the problems raised by the MSS only touch the fringe of the subject; the great difficulties are not obliterated in the purest text, or in the most corrupt.

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The only things of quite capital importance that the textual criticism of the Gospels tells the ordinary, non-specialist student is—(i) that the paragraph known as the last twelve verses of S. Mark [xvi 9–20] is a later addition, made to complete a work which (as we have it) is mutilated and incomplete at the end; and (ii) that there was circulated in the West of Europe, about the middle of the second century, an edition of the Four Gospels which contained a number of noteworthy interpolations, some of which present claims to be regarded as materials for history intrinsically as strong as can be urged for much of what is found in the genuine and authentic text of the Gospels. The story of the woman taken in adultery is certainly not a genuine portion of the Fourth Gospel, and the story of the man working on the Sabbath, found in Codex Bezae, is certainly not a genuine portion of the Third Gospel (see p. 9). We cannot trace back the literary history of these tales with any assurance, but they do not read like the invention of an annotator.

But—and this is the point which I wish to emphasise here—suppose that a student had no knowledge of MSS and versions beyond what he finds in the margin of the Authorized and the Revised English versions. In this case he will

MATT xii 3-8.

. . . he said unto them,
Have ye not read
what David did, when
he was
an hungred, and
they that were with him ;
how he entered
into the house of God,

and did eat
the shewbread,
which it was not lawful
for him to eat, neither
for them that were with him,
but only for the priests ?
Or have ye not read
in the law, how that on
the sabbath day
the priests in the temple
profane the sabbath,
and are guiltless ?
But I say unto you,
that something greater
than the temple is here.
But if ye had known
what this meaneth,
'I desire mercy, and not
sacrifice,' ye would not
have condemned the guiltless.
For the Son of Man is
lord of the sabbath.

MK ii 25-28.

. . . he said unto them,
Did ye never read
what David did, when
he had need, and was
an hungred, he, and
they that were with him ;
how he entered
into the house of God
when Abiathar was high priest,
and did eat
the shewbread,
which it is not lawful
to eat save for the priests,
and gave also to them
that were with him ?

And he said
unto them,
The sabbath
was made
for man,
and not man
for the sabbath :
so that
the Son of Man is
lord also of the sabbath.

LK vi 3-5.

. . . Jesus answering them said,
Have ye not read even this,
what David did, when
he was
an hungred, he, and
they that were with him ;
how he entered
into the house of God ;

and did take and eat
the shewbread,
and gave also to them
that were with him ;
which it is not lawful to
eat save for the priests alone ?
[On the same day
seeing a certain man
working on the sabbath,
he said to him,
Man, if indeed thou know
what thou doest,
thou art blessed ;
but if thou know not,
thou art cursed
and a transgressor
of the law.]

So Codex Bezae (D).

All other authorities have

And he said unto them,
The Son of Man is
lord also of the sabbath.

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not have heard of the story of the man working on the Sabbath, for there is no note about it in the margin of Lk vi 5. Consequently he will not be troubled to explain how the story was transmitted if it be genuine, or how it came to be invented if it be altogether unhistorical. Such a student will merely observe that in this whole section of stories about Sabbath observance S. Luke is content to follow S. Mark, as he does elsewhere. But when our student comes to investigate the corresponding section of S. Matthew he will find, even if he confines himself to the Authorized Version, that he has to face very much the same problem that he left in S. Luke to the professed textual critic. He will find that the First Evangelist bases his narrative on S. Mark, just as S. Luke did, but that he adds to the words of our Lord about David and the shewbread, 'Have ye not read in the law, how that on the sabbath day the priests in the temple profane the sabbath, and are guiltless? I say unto you, that something greater than the temple is here, but if ye had known what is meant by "I desire mercy, and not sacrifice," ye would not have condemned the guiltless.' Whence did our Evangelist get these words? Have they the same claim on our acceptance as those narratives which are related by all three Synoptic Evangel-

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ists? Have they any better claim on our acceptance than the precisely similar story of the man working on the Sabbath, found only in a single ancient MS?

Thus the attentive reader of the Gospels in English has forced upon him the same problems that occupy the technically learned textual critic. Moreover, the textual critic brings but little towards the direct solution of the problems, except what is afforded by the very existence of these important variants and interpolations. I mean, that the mere fact of their occurrence is enough to shew us that the text of the Gospels, the actual wording, and even to some extent the contents, were not treated during the second century with particular scrupulosity by the Christians who preserved and canonized them. There is nothing in the way which Christians treated the books of the New Testament during the first four centuries that corresponds with the care bestowed by the Jews upon the Hebrew Scriptures from the time of Aqiba onwards.

All this, of course, is sufficiently well known, and I am not bringing it forward now to discredit antiquated theories of verbal inspiration, or to justify us in making extensive and drastic changes in the transmitted text. What I have rather in mind is the danger of applying to the criticism of

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the Gospels a method which has been found suitable enough in the case of the Pentateuch, but is far too mechanical for the free and unofficial literary habits of the early Christian writers. We all know something about the 'higher criticism' of the Pentateuch. We know that the general structure of that venerable compilation has been divined, and the several documents of which it is composed marked off. The separation of these documents has been effected by internal evidence only, but there is such a general consensus of agreement in the final results that the outsider, the non-specialist, cannot but acquiesce in the verdict. I should be the last person in the world to say anything to disturb the assured results of Pentateuchal criticism. I firmly believe in the three main strata of legislation, viz. the books of Prophetic story (JE), the Deuteronomic literature (D), the Priestly Code (P). I believe that these three documents, or rather literatures, came into existence separately one after the other, and that they have been combined together to make our Pentateuch, as the critics say. But I have my private doubts whether we can trust some of the minor and minuter pieces of analysis, an analysis which descends to the confident assignment of every single fragment of the Massoretic Text to

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its proper source. I am pretty sure that we cannot reconstruct the earlier documents with anything like completeness, except perhaps the Priestly Code, which as a literary whole is the latest of them all. And I am absolutely certain that the analogy of the Pentateuch will not help us much when we try to investigate the sources of our Gospels.¹

It is one thing to demonstrate that the Gospels were compiled from previously existing sources ; it is quite another thing to attempt to reconstruct these sources. In the case of the Pentateuch there is some justification for the reconstructors. To begin with, the Pentateuch is essentially a codifying of legislation, and a code to be useful must in some respects be complete. Moreover, the compiler of the Pentateuch was dealing with an ancient and venerable literature. The later stratum (P) was already statute law ; the earlier portion (JE, D) was a legacy from the old times, from the pre-exilic state. The main business of the compiler was incorporation ; earlier documents and codes were to be superseded by the new Pandect. Something, of course, is left out in such a procedure, but most of what is important

¹ 'In den Erzählungsbüchern des Alten Testaments liegt die Sache ganz anders [als bei den Synoptikern], und auch dort kann die literarische Analyse zum Kinderspiel ausarten' (Wellhausen, *Einl. in die drei ersten Evangelien*, p. 57).

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is retained. Indeed, one of the really striking features about the narrative in Genesis, to take the obvious instance, is the number of Doublets, *i.e.* stories told twice over. We have two stories of Creation, two stories of the Flood, two stories about the destruction of Sodom, two stories about the Patriarch's wife and the heathen monarch. The critical explanation, no doubt correct, is that in all cases these Doublets are parallel stories taken from the separate documents or literatures out of which the Pentateuch is compiled.

Now in the Gospels we do occasionally meet with the same sort of thing, but far less frequently, and the same explanation does not always seem to apply. The true analogy to the criticism of the Pentateuch in New Testament literature would have been afforded by the Diatessaron, if unfortunately the Gospels were no longer extant and we were reduced to extracting the Gospel history from Tatian's famous Harmony. The Diatessaron, like the Pentateuch, is a compilation. If we had only the Diatessaron to go upon, I think it very likely that critics might have identified the Fourth Gospel, and reconstructed it almost entire: this would correspond to the Priestly Code in the Pentateuch. It would further have been recognised that there were

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other earlier documents of superior historical value besides the Johannine Gospel, and some of the characteristics of some of these documents might have been discovered. We should probably also have distinguished the two Nativity stories of Matthew and Luke, and recognised the Jewish-Palestinian character of some sections of Matthew. But I do not think the Synoptic Gospels as wholes would have been successfully reconstructed; we should have had to remain content with passing historical judgement on single narratives and sayings.

Now, if we should fail when we attempt to reconstruct the Gospels out of the Diatessaron, supposing we had no independent knowledge of the Gospels themselves, how much more shall we fail if we attempt to reconstruct the sources of the Gospels out of the Gospels? Such an attempt assumes what may be called literary piety on the part of the surviving writer whose works we try to use as a quarry, and literary piety is a quality—I will not go so far as to call it an absolute virtue—which hardly makes its appearance in Christendom before 150 A.D. Indeed, there is not much of it to be found even then. I am not quite sure if I have made my meaning clear. What I mean can be illustrated by considering the same passage to which reference has already been

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made. I hope subsequently to shew you that our first Gospel, the Gospel according to Matthew, was directly based on our Gospel according to Mark; and, further, that this is the case with respect to the passage Matt xii 3-8, which has been already quoted. On this view, Matt xii 3-8 is simply rewritten from Mk ii 25-28, with another saying of our Lord, drawn from another source, worked into the narrative. As I say, I hope to give you some reasons for believing this in a subsequent Lecture; I must ask you now to take it more or less upon trust, merely premising that it is a generally accepted conclusion, not a private fad of my own. But the reason why it has been possible to formulate this conclusion is that the Gospel of Mark is actually before us. I venture to assert that if we had only had Matt xii 3-8 and Lk vi 3-5, we could never have reconstructed Mk ii 25-28, their common source. We should never have known that the common source contained a curious, and chronologically a rather inaccurate, reference to Abiathar, nor should we have guessed of the existence of the characteristic saying, 'The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath.' Being, as we are, in possession of the common source, we can give a fairly intelligible account of the manner in which the later Evangelists treated it, when adapting it for

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their own narratives ; but we could not reconstruct the source from these later narratives alone.

The Gospel according to S. Mark is not the only source used by Matthew and Luke, but it is the only source which has survived. We see, clearly enough, that we could not have reconstructed the Gospel according to S. Mark out of the other two Synoptic Gospels, although between them nearly all Mark has been incorporated by Matthew and Luke. How futile, therefore, it is to attempt to reconstruct those other literary sources which seem to have been used by Matthew and Luke, but have not been independently preserved.

Another instance of the literary procedure of an Evangelist has been well characterised by my predecessor in the Norrisian Chair. He is writing of what he calls the 'moulding influence of the editor's hand,' and goes on to say : 'S. Mark's record of the opening words of the dialogue between our Lord and the rich young man is as follows (x 17 f) :—"Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life? . . . Why callest thou me good? None is good save one, even God." With this S. Luke's account (xviii 18 f) coincides. But in S. Matthew (xix 16 f) a significant variation confronts us. The word "good" reappears indeed, but its reference is wholly changed—"Master, what *good thing* shall I do

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that I may have eternal life? . . . Why askest thou me *concerning that which is good?* . . . One there is who is *good*." Here it is clear that the wording of the dialogue has been altered to avoid the appearance of our Lord's calling in question His own goodness, and of His refusing to accept the attribution to Himself of what is Divine.¹

So far Dr. Chase. It is quite evident that if we only had had the narrative of S. Matthew we should never have guessed how the dialogue stood in his source. We might have said that something was wrong in the report, and that our Lord was not generally accustomed to discuss the Meaning of Good, but we should have been unable to reconstruct the original form of the conversation. The chances would be that the most ingenious restoration would have been rather further from historical truth than the narrative as told in S. Matthew.

It may perhaps seem a melancholy doctrine, to teach that the Evangelists whose works we possess altered freely the earlier sources which they used as the basis of their narratives, and yet that we can do little towards reconstructing these earlier sources. Of course, it would be indeed unsatisfactory if we had reason to believe that the accounts of Jesus Christ on which we rely were

¹ *Cambridge Theological Essays*, p. 387.

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misleading. If, for instance, it should be proved that the Gospel according to Mark, or according to John, gave a thoroughly false notion of the life or personality of our Lord, even when we looked at these documents from the proper point of view, then indeed we should be in a melancholy position. But as a matter of fact, this is far from being the case. Every picture demands that we shall look at it from the proper point of view, whether our object be to learn from the picture, or to pass judgement upon it. And when we come to examine the Fourth Gospel, the Gospel according to John, we shall find that it is necessary to look at it from a quite peculiar point of view. This we might expect beforehand to be the case with any work of exceptional character. But this does not prove it to be valueless, or that we could do better without it.

Let us admit at the outset that there are many things in the Gospel History, about which we most of us feel much excusable curiosity, which nevertheless we must be content to leave undefined. When a great man leaves this earth, we have begun to feel that all is not satisfactory unless we have the 'Life and Letters of Mr. Z.' in two volumes, written by one of his nearest friends, to be followed at an appropriate interval by 'The real Mr. Z.,' a work compiled by a more

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or less discriminating critic. If there be any dark or mysterious episodes in Mr. Z.'s career, we want the searchlight turned on to explain the matter from all points, and from the standpoint, if possible, of all the actors in the drama.

We cannot get that out of our materials for the Life of our Lord. On the very shortest estimate the length of the Ministry must have extended to about 400 days, and I doubt if our Gospels contain stories from 40 separate days. So that nine-tenths at least of the public life of Jesus remains to us a blank, even if we were to take every recorded incident as historical and accurately reported. And all the recorded sayings of Christ, how long would they take to pronounce? With due gravity and emphasis they might take six hours,—hardly, perhaps, so much. In other words, they would take no more than two great political speeches, and a considerably less time than this present course of Lectures.

Even apart from the results of the 'higher criticism,' we do not possess enough information to enable us to write a biography of our Lord after the modern pattern. But this is not all loss. The real question is not whether we have as much as we should like, but whether we have as much as we need. The craving for elaboration is really a kind of covetousness; and a man's life, as our

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Lord Himself tells us, does not consist in the abundance and superfluity of things connected with him. How often it is one story, one letter, one illuminative saying or judgement of the subject of a bulky modern biography, which tells us more than all the rest what the real meaning of the life was. The part of Lady Macbeth is just 250 lines long; how many a biography in two large volumes tells us less of what is really essential about its hero!

To come back to the Evangelists, we have quite enough in mere bulk to obtain an intelligible picture of the Gospel History, if our materials are fairly trustworthy. We have admitted that it is to some extent and from some points of view regrettable that our sources are not more extensive. But I should like here to say a few words in passing upon another side of the question. I have said that our Evangelists altered freely the earlier sources which they used. They changed, added, omitted. This sounds, no doubt, very terrible and dangerous. Let us put the statement, then, in another form, a form quite as legitimate, but less shocking. Let us say that the Evangelists were historians, and not chroniclers. This does not assert that they were trustworthy or even truthful. There are plenty of people who do not agree with Macaulay or with