

in ver. 13 the sense of "temptation" is almost exclusively dominant.

It is a contribution to the exegesis of Matthew vi. 1 to prove that in the LXX *δικαιοσύνη* and *ἐλεημοσύνη* are often used as interchangeable. But it is surely rash to say that "this meaning of *δικαιοσύνη* is clear," *l.c.* : it is a quite possible reading of the passage, that we first are warned against making display of "righteousness," good works in general; and that afterwards the principle is applied in detail to the special good works of alms, fasting, and prayer.

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*THE COMPOSITION OF THE SYNOPTICAL
GOSPELS: A REPLY.*

LIKE all the readers of THE EXPOSITOR—possibly, indeed, more than any of them—I have read with keen interest Mr. Plummer's article published in the July number of this year, in which that scholar attempts to throw light on the obscure question of the origin of the synoptic gospels from the mode of composition and the mutual relationship of certain mediæval documents.

The object of the writer in drawing this comparison has been to refute certain objections raised by me to the way in which most critics in our day explain the striking relations of harmony and of discrepancy which exist between the writings of the different evangelists.

I had maintained¹ that the conduct of the evangelists, as represented by those critics who consider that two of them copied the third, or that one copied the other two, sometimes literally, sometimes more freely, and with greater or slighter modification of the narrative of their predecessors, was in accordance neither with the good sense

¹ *Commentary on S. Luke.* 3rd edition, 1888, 1889.

nor the good faith which one must take for granted in such men. Like Mr. Plummer himself, I left entirely out of sight the question of inspiration. But Mr. Plummer shows that there existed between the narratives of the ancient mediæval chronicles relations exactly analogous to those which present-day criticism supposes to have existed between the synoptists, while at the same time it is impossible to accuse the authors of these chronicles either of want of good sense or of good faith. Thus my argument against the theory of the mutual dependence of the synoptists falls to the ground.

Nothing, indeed, could be more interesting than the comparison which this writer draws between the four narratives (1) of Salisbury, (2) of the anonymous author of the work entitled the *Passion* (two independent sources); (3) of Benedict, (4) of Hoveden (both of which are taken from these sources),—the subject being the return of Archbishop Thomas Becket and the penance of Henry II. during his visit to Becket's tomb. The two former (Salisbury and the *Passion*), on the authority of which Benedict wrote, correspond to the two sources of our canonical Gospel of St. Matthew; the fourth, Hoveden, who evidently made use of the work both of Benedict and of the *Passion*, corresponds to Luke, who edited his gospel from the second source of Matthew and from Matthew himself.

Mr. Plummer quotes also the account which Hoveden gives of the Constitutions of William the Conqueror. We do not indeed possess a second copy of this official document, with which to compare the other. But Mr. Plummer believes he can prove by internal evidence that Hoveden did not hesitate to modify in various respects the authentic text of this public act; by substituting, for instance, the direct mode of address for the indirect, or by introducing instead of the simple "I" the regal plural "we," which was certainly not in use at the time of the Conquest.

“Changes,” says Mr. Plummer, “may be made more or less unconsciously by a perfectly honest and scrupulous writer.” Why then should a similar mode of procedure be considered as contrary to good faith or to good sense in the evangelists, if we should chance to find it employed by them?

I recognise the accuracy of the facts brought forward by Mr. Plummer; but what I am disposed to question is, whether the analogy which these facts present to those which we find in the relations between the synoptists is sufficiently complete to authorize us in drawing conclusions founded on the mode of composition employed by the latter.

I would, first of all, direct the attention of the readers of *THE EXPOSITOR* to the fundamental difference between the matters treated of in the two classes of writing which we are comparing. The narratives contained in the mediæval chronicles deal with facts which are interesting, no doubt, but which have no direct bearing on the vital questions of human existence. We can thus readily understand that a later writer, while remaining faithful in the main to the account of his predecessor, may have felt no scruple in altering the form of the earlier narrative in passages where it appeared to him that a clearer or more picturesque expression would be more likely to strike the attention of the reader. The case is somewhat different when a narrative bears, as that of the evangelists does, on the most serious of all questions for men, the question of salvation.

The narrative of the gospel deals with the acts and words of the Son of God, who appeared here on earth to accomplish a work of unique grandeur, sanctity, and importance. The chronicler who recounts the acts of a guilty and penitent king before the tomb of his victim may, if he will, describe them according to ideas of his own, may even put into the king's mouth words somewhat different from those which his authority furnishes. That is a matter of no

importance to any one. But when the mission of a writer is to relate the speeches and actions of the Lord of glory during His sojourn on earth, he has undertaken a task which imposes a stricter obligation. No interest, whether external or literary, can in that case lessen his duty of observing the strictest fidelity. The only changes which we could admit to be possible would be those which the narrator might introduce on the authority of another document in his possession, which he considers more trustworthy than the writing which he elsewhere reproduces. But a purely arbitrary modification in dealing with such a subject appears to me impossible.

Let us take an instance. Is it credible that Matthew, borrowing from the narrative of Mark the parable of the sower, should have said to himself on reading these words (Mark iv. 8), "Some thirty, and some sixty, and some a hundred-fold," "I prefer to invert the order, and to say, 'some a hundred-fold, some sixty-fold, and some thirty-fold'" (Matt. xiii. 8)? Or again, is it probable that Luke, reproducing the same parable from the account either of Matthew or of Mark, or perhaps from both, should have thought: "I do not care either for the ascending or the descending scale; I shall mention only the highest figure, and write 'a hundred-fold'" (Luke viii. 8)? Again, is it likely that a little farther on he should have voluntarily suppressed altogether this last feature in the explanation given by Jesus, while the two other evangelists reproduce it in its entirety (ver. 15)?

The more trifling these alterations are, the more do they appear to be the result of a caprice which we cannot admit as possible in a serious writer, anxious to preserve the exact words of the Lord.

This example, as every one knows, is but one among a thousand. There is not a page of the synoptists which does not present similar instances. The perfect insignificance

of such alterations, which makes them readily admissible in a chronicle intended only for amusement, gives them a puerile, a ridiculous, almost a profane character in connexion with so grave a subject as the life and sayings of Christ.

On the other hand, when the discrepancies affect facts, or even the meaning of words, it is still less possible to regard them as voluntarily made; for the simple reason that in that case they would contradict the good faith, or rather the faith itself, of the writer. "Blessed are the poor," says Luke (vi. 20), and the antithesis which follows ("the rich," ver. 24), shows clearly that he understands the word "poor" in a literal sense. "Blessed are the poor in heart," says Matthew, quoting the same words (v. 3). "Take nothing for your journey, save a staff only," we read in Mark (vi. 8). Take nothing, "neither two coats, neither sandals, nor yet staves," is the rendering of Matthew (x. 10) and Luke (x. 4). In Matthew (xxiii. 27) Jesus thus applies the image of whited sepulchres, to which He compares the Pharisees: We admire their beautiful exterior; but when we think of the inward character of these men, we are filled with loathing. In Luke (xi. 44) the application is made in this sense: Beholding how beautiful they are outwardly, we are not on our guard against a stain which threatens us, till we are all at once infected with the pride and hypocrisy which fill these men. Did one of the evangelists mean to correct the other? did he even presume to correct our Lord? Compare again the form of the Lord's prayer (Luke xi. 2-4) in the Revised Version, with the form which we have in Matthew vi. 9-13. The first evangelist represents our Lord as saying, "Pray after this manner," and his copyist would have us to pray differently!

These, again, are only a few examples chosen out from many. Similar modifications are to be found in the narration of facts. Matthew represents the centurion of Capernaum

as coming in person (viii. 5) to beseech our Lord to heal his servant ; according to Luke he sends a deputation, making the excuse that he did not dare to come himself (vii. 6, 7). Where Matthew mentions two demoniacs, two blind men, Mark and Luke speak of one only. An event which Matthew places on the same day as that which preceded it (xii. 9) is distinctly alluded to by Luke as having taken place *on another Sabbath* (vi. 6). The expulsion of the sellers from the Temple, placed by Matthew and Luke on Palm Sunday, is represented by Mark as taking place on the following day, etc., etc.

If one of the evangelists copies the other, how then, in these instances and in many others, does he regard the narrative of his predecessor? If he alters it according to his own ideas, that speaks badly for his good faith. If he follows another document rather than that of his predecessor, this seems to suggest that his own belief in the latter was wavering. In any case, we are here confronted with phenomena absolutely different from those presented by the ancient chronicles quoted by Mr. Plummer. I, at least, have been able to discover nothing in the discrepancies mentioned by him which resembles those I have just brought forward.

It will be asked, how, if the scrupulous respect which I have supposed for the exact reproduction of the words and acts of the Lord really existed at the epoch of the primitive Church, such discrepancies have found their way into the gospel narratives. It is, one might say, under the domination of our false ideas of inspiration that our present habit of minute verbal accuracy has arisen.

But let us leave the question of inspiration out of sight altogether. From my point of view, it has as little to do with my argument as with that of Mr. Plummer. The essential point is, that we should remember the wide dif-

ference which exists between transmission by means of oral tradition and that which has been derived from a written document. The changes which take place in the former method are slow, involuntary, unconscious; while the writer who alters a definite written text which he has before his eyes must do so deliberately and knowingly. Either (1) he possesses another text which he considers preferable; or (2) he has some interest in altering the narrative, and wilfully deceives the reader; or (3) he considers the changes introduced by him into the text he employs as a mere matter of form. The alterations which Mr. Plummer supposes to have been introduced by Hoveden into the text of the Constitutions of William the Conqueror are of the third description. But not one of these suppositions is admissible in the case of the synoptists. The first, although possible, is exceedingly improbable; the second is clearly inadmissible; the third does not correspond with the facts before us as regards the discrepancies, much more serious than mere shades of style, which are found in the synoptic narratives.

We must therefore conclude that these striking differences are modifications introduced naturally and involuntarily in oral transmission; we must renounce the theory that the evangelists wrote in dependence on each other. Analogies borrowed from mediæval chronicles either bear upon subjects too remote from those of the gospels, or are themselves of too superficial a character to weaken in any degree our critical conclusions as regards the synoptists.

I conclude with these words of Reuss, a scholar whose principles are not opposed to the idea of a mutual dependence of the synoptists. After considering the relations between Matthew and Luke, he concludes as follows:¹ "Our first gospel was not one of the works which Luke says he had at his disposal in composing his own." Agreed. But as the same phenomena re-appear in the relations

¹ "The Bible": *Evangelical History*, p. 48.

between the account of Mark and those of Matthew and Luke, consistency required that Reuss should have gone on to admit, as I feel constrained to do, that the three synop-
tists wrote in perfect independence of one another.

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*RECENT LITERATURE ON THE OLD
TESTAMENT.*

A SINGLE phrase sums up the tendency of most of the recent German literature on the Old Testament—in the wake of Wellhausen. The drift, even of very conservative scholars, towards the position to which he carried the conclusions of Graf with so brilliant a sweep is unmistakable, and is all the more significant, that it has continued to be so strong since he himself, forsaking Hebrew for Arabic, ceased to contribute to it. The displacement he caused was large, and how real has been proved by its power to disturb even such critics as might have been thought to have taken up their final moorings. Though there may be none of these who will follow Wellhausen all his way, there are also none who have not been carried considerably nearer to him, and are now reconsidering from the new standpoint their former statements of the history and religion of Israel. It is too late in the day to review Delitzsch's changes in this respect, the second volume of whose commentary on *Genesis*, translated by Sophia Taylor, forms part of the first issue for 1889 of Messrs. Clark's Foreign Theological Library. But we may give some account of two volumes just published, which are interesting above all for the attitude of their writers to Wellhausen's principles. These are Baudissin's *Geschichte des Alttestamentlichen Priesterthums*, and the fourth edition of Schultz's *Alttestamentliche Theologie*.

Count Baudissin's researches into the history of the Old