

1 Pet. i. 25); whereas "being righteous" is conformity to the demands of the law in virtue of one's conduct corresponding to it. The main stress lies upon the clause, "even as He is pure." Every one, says John, who has such a hope, purifies himself, and, that too, not merely superficially, but in the same absolute manner as Christ is pure. The cogency of this assertion depends upon the premiss, which is here taken for granted, that conformity in respect of moral condition is the necessary presupposition of conformity in respect of state of existence (Matt. v. 8; Heb. xii. 14). John apprehends this demand more strictly than is usually done. He admits as really Christian only that which aims at the absolute perfection of purity, and which is satisfied with no

other purity than that which is like the purity of the Redeemer Himself. From the nature of the case, any moral strictness that is more indulgent is incompatible with Christian sanctification. The latter proceeds entirely from our being laid hold of by the ethical image of the Redeemer. That in this image, which makes such a peculiarly strong impression upon us, is just this stainless purity. Elsewhere we meet ethical phenomena which command our reverence; but there is always some shadow or other along with their light. In none of them do we discover perfect human virtue; and only *perfect* virtue can lay hold of and inspire a noble human heart. The Christian, accordingly, in working out his sanctification can only set before himself that perfect goal.

The Gospels and Modern Criticism.

BY THE REV. J. J. HALCOMBE, M.A., BALSAM RECTORY, CAMBRIDGE.

II.

MR. BUSSELL, going straight to the root of the matter, points out that the views which I have ventured to put forward with regard to the structure and interrelation of the Gospels, really resolve themselves into the question of the correctness or incorrectness of a definition. After quoting the following definition: "Documents I. and II. (John and Matthew) represent a complete history in two volumes. Document III. (Mark) is a fresh and expanded edition of selected portions of Document II. (Matthew). Document IV. cannot be better described than in terms suggested by the preface of the writer (Luke), as a supplemental and explanatory treatise" (*Historic Relation of the Gospels*, p. 54). Mr. Bussell says: "Such is, briefly and clearly expressed, the whole sum and substance of Mr. Halcombe's several treatises on this subject, the result of his twelve years' labours, and of his patient analysis. Nothing can be added to the statement save by way of comment, explanation, or illustration" (THE EXPOSITORY TIMES, April 1892, p. 352).

This definition, then, is what I have to establish.

Of the numerous proofs of its correctness which might be adduced, I will deal with the three which

are at once the most comprehensive, the most easily stated in a few words, and the most easily verified.

I.

This definition applies with equal exactness (a) to the Gospels considered in their entirety; (b) to as many component fourfold sections (or periods common to four writers) as the Gospels can be divided into; (c) to every one of the fourfold narratives; (d) to every fourfold statement. Thus, whereas the construction indicated by the definition is so remarkable that no reasonable person would expect that it could occur twice by accident, it does, as a matter of fact, occur in every one of forty available instances. (See Table annexed.)

Between all these areas of observation there is virtually no difference save from one cause. Where subject-matter suitable to St. John's avowed object in writing predominates, there his record is the longest. Where more distinctly historical matter predominates, there the Synoptic records are the longest. It is to this latter cause that the section embracing the Galilean ministry mainly owes its exceptional character. But the actual

construction of this section is in principle identical with that of every other section. It is true it exhibits a wholly exceptional amount of threefold repetition, but this is merely a matter of detail, turning upon the purposes for which repetition is used.

Parenthetically I may point out that it is to the intensely abnormal Synoptic half of this section that modern criticism has virtually limited its investigations. Yet, in no one particular has this section, even in its entirety, the smallest claim to be regarded as more authoritative than any one of the other thirteen sections.

The late Archbishop Thomson thought that all attempts to solve the problem presented by the Gospels ought to be abandoned. His chief reason for this opinion was, that every successive writer was able to prove every preceding writer wrong. (Introduction to *Speaker's Com. on the Gospels*, p. lii.) May not the reason for the remarkable fact here stated be, that each successive theorist has based his theory on the one abnormal section of the Gospel history, and left his critics thirteen normal sections out of which to refute it?

It is observable that our definition is simply a definition of the nature of the quadriformity of Gospel construction, on the recognition of which Irenæus insists so strongly. As the quadriformity so defined is conspicuous in every possible area of observation which the Gospels can be made to supply, it follows that Irenæus knew perfectly well what he was about when he used such exceptionally strong language on the subject.

II.

Our definition may be tested in every one of the above forty areas of observation by verbal analyses. In every case these analyses represent a sort of photographic negative of Gospel construction, of which negative the definition supplies the development.

From the annexed summary of analyses it will be seen that in every case, without the faintest suspicion of exception, St. John and St. Matthew divide the historical area, be it large or small, between them; whilst St. Mark and St. Luke always deal with the same side of the subject as St. Matthew. As 97 per cent. of St. John's Gospel is not found in either of the other evangelists, while 97 per cent. of St. Matthew's narrative

is fresh so far as St. John is concerned, they are both essentially original documents. At the same time, there is an occasional concentration of verbal identity between them, amply sufficient to establish their connexion. In St. Mark's edition of St. Matthew there is 51 per cent. of identity accompanied by 49 per cent. of expansion, and a constantly varying amount of abbreviation. In St. Luke the supplemental matter is 80 per cent. in the whole history, and 62 per cent. in an exceptional section. Thus the accuracy of our definition of each Gospel could not well be more completely confirmed.

III.

It will be found that every portion of the Gospel record, even down to its separate clauses and words, is dominated by a principle which may be formulated as follows: "Save for a purpose, there shall be no repetition. But where a later writer requires to deal with a subject already treated by a former, he shall, so far as his purpose of repetition admits, use the *ipsissima verba* of the earlier writer."

It must be borne in mind that, *if the Gospels were composed as successive creeds rather than successive histories* (and a good deal might be said in favour of this view), no principle of construction could well be more simple and natural than that embodied in this formula.

"The confessed *crux criticorum* of the subject," to use Mr. Gwilliam's expression, is the obvious difficulty of explaining, by the same theory, both the agreements and differences of the Gospels. But the above formula not only explains both the agreements and differences, it necessarily requires them. It cannot, in fact, be adopted without producing just the very phenomena which distinguish the Gospels from all other documents which the literature of the world has ever known, viz., The sustained and often rapid interchange of dependence and independence; of agreement and variation; of omissions and additions; of abbreviations and expansions. Nor, if used by four modern writers, could the effect of the formula be materially different from what it is in the Gospels. The first two documents would be as nearly as possible original, whilst the character of the other two would be largely influenced by the varying purposes for which repetition might be resorted to, and

would exhibit in a marked form all the necessary phenomena of repetition.

The phenomena of the abnormal section, spoken of above, would seem at first sight to make the rule against repetition an absurd paradox. But to suppose that it really does so, is to confuse an exceptional frequency of repetition with the manner of repetition. The abnormal frequency of repetition is regulated by the number of events which St. Matthew and St. Mark record in a different order, and as to which in his preface St. Luke virtually promises to give the correct order. But in every one of the repeated narratives, without a shadow of exception, the rule of the formula, remarkable as it is, is regularly adhered to. Thus in reality, so far from this abnormal section telling against the correctness of the formula, it is, at least in the manner of repetition, the one part of the Gospel history in which its action is most conspicuously observable.

We have seen that the action of the one principle which dominates all the constructive facts of the Gospels must, whenever and by whomsoever applied, necessarily produce two documents similar to the first and second of our definition, and two others of at least a closely analogous character to the third and fourth of our definition. Thus, for the third time, the accuracy of our definition receives the strongest possible support.

In conclusion, I submit that the teaching of the authorities quoted in my former paper ought to be regarded as an inalienable heritage of the Church; that the correctness of this teaching is demonstrable; and that by no means so well as by establishing its truth can we ever show that the attacks upon the Gospels, which have of late years made such havoc of the faith, are based, not upon evidence, but upon an entire misapprehension of evidence.

I cannot be too grateful to Mr. Gwilliam, Mr. Bussell, and the Editor of this Journal for their large-minded and generous appreciation of views at once so apparently revolutionary and so opposed to their own. But time runs on, and it is now eight months since Mr. Gwilliam concluded a strong appeal for the examination of this subject with the words: "Mr. Halcombe has taken a position which he has made exceedingly strong. To turn aside from his arguments and treat them as of no account, would evince blind prejudice rather than critical acumen" (THE EXPOSITORY TIMES, April 1892, p. 316). So far, of all those who command the ear of the public, the only person who has even expressed an intention of responding to this appeal is—not one of those professionally responsible for the Church's teaching, whether Bishop, Divinity Professor, or leading Theologian, but—the busiest man in the Empire, Mr. Gladstone.

SUMMARY OF VERBAL ANALYSES OF THE FOUR GOSPELS.

	JOHN.			MATTHEW.			MARK.			LUKE.		
	Total of Words.	Total of Words found only in John.	Percentage of Words only in John.	Total of Words.	Total of fresh Words.	Percentage of fresh Words.	Total of Words.	Total of fresh Words.	Percentage of fresh Words.	Total of Words.	Total of fresh Words.	Percentage of fresh Words.
Thirteen Sections, . . .	12,355	11,996	97	11,353	11,073	97	7,772	3,829	49	13,092	10,572	80
Third Section, . . .	3,547	3,487	98	7,325	7,276	99	3,971	2,399	60	6,861	4,271	62
Ten Fourfold Narratives, .	2,903	2,626	90	1,745	1,545	88	1,593	817	51	2,050	1,534	74
Sixteen Fourfold Statements,	614	506	82	552	400	72	549	205	37	582	310	53