as he is born again"; and he will accordingly not always regard the object of the contradiction of the world as the word of God itself, but also the imperfect manner in which he knows how to understand and express it. The general principle stated here must be supplemented by the other, that in so far as we are not yet of God we are not known and heard even by those who have a mind for God and are drawn to Him. Our frequent experience of opposition, even on the part of those whom we presume to have susceptibility to our message, should humble us; and we must earnestly examine ourselves in order to see whether the admixture of the old man does not corrupt our proclamation, and in what respect it does so. We must not without more ado apply that test for the distinguishing between the spirit of truth and the spirit of error to our own proclamation of the Divine word. Still it is true, at all times, of the original apostolic proclamation of the Divine word. He who does not hear the writings of the apostles is assuredly not of God. Wherever in a human mind there is lacking an appreciation of sacred Scripture, and of the grace and truth which stand written on its front, we have every reason to assume a total lack of feeling for the Divine. In proclaiming the Divine word we must continually fall back upon the Scriptures. Only by doing so can we really effect a separation of the spirits by the proclamation of the gospel. We must also occupy ourselves daily with sacred Scripture, because all the experiences which we have as regards the attitude of our own heart towards it are of a thoroughly unambiguous nature. And we must put confidence in the judgment which we have found in Scripture regarding ourselves.

The Gospels and Modern Criticism.

By the Rev. Arthur Wright, M.A., Fellow and Tutor of Queens' College, Cambridge.

III.

Mr. Halcombe claims to have settled the Gospel difficulties by putting St. John first, retaining the other Gospels in the common order, but dissecting and reconstructing St. Luke. He is satisfied that he has succeeded, and points out in proof that any one, after mastering his "constructive principles," could tell at sight from which Gospel any particular section came, without any previous knowledge of the Gospels.

So of old the Ptolemaic astronomers insisted that they must be right in making the earth the centre of the universe, and the sun a satellite revolving round the earth, because they could account on this supposition for all the motions of the heavenly bodies. Their system of cycles and epicycles, processions and recessions, was beautifully complete. Were they not able to predict an eclipse? Moreover the circle was a perfect figure, worthy of the divine perfection of the Creator, incomparably superior to the battered and distorted ellipse.

It is easy to construct a system. If you carefully analyse and arrange the facts, leaving nothing out of consideration and exaggerating nothing, it will be impossible to refute you. The question is, whether your system is natural, self-evident, and capable of asserting its own truth, or a mass of improbabilities, strung together in defiance of law and habit and ascertained fact.

Copernicus maintained that the sun was the centre of the solar system. Galileo supported him. Kepler discovered the laws of the motions in an ellipse. Newton hit upon the idea of gravity. Gradually an easy and natural explanation of the movements of the heavenly bodies was produced, and the result is that no one now believes in the Ptolemaic system, or if any one occasionally advocates a return to it, he gets no hearing from scientific men.

Mr. Halcombe himself seems to be astonished at the "constructive principles" on which the Evangelists, according to his theory, worked. He admits that no other books were ever composed on such literary rules. To my mind it is a sufficient refutation of his scheme that it would be just as easy and far more natural to adopt Tertullian's order in reality, and put St. Mark last instead of third. Then, at least, we should secure symmetry. We should say that St. John came first and gathered the choicest fruit, St. Matthew reaped

the second crop, and St. Luke the third; but St. Mark was too late for the harvest, and was compelled to be content with the gleanings.

My advice to the student is, Try a simpler plan. Give up the idea that inspiration sets aside the laws of human thought. Look at a parallel case. Inspiration was promised by Christ Himself to the apostles for their speeches. "Do not premeditate . . . it shall be given you at the moment what ye shall speak. It is not you that speak, but the Holy Spirit." That I fully accept and believe. Nevertheless, on examining those speeches of the apostles which have been preserved, and which may therefore be assumed to be in a special manner inspired, I do not find them faultless. Take St. Paul's speech before Ananias and the Sanhedrim (Acts xxiii.). The commencement, "Brethren, I have lived with a perfectly good conscience before God until this day," appears to me to be singularly deficient in the meekness and gentleness of Christ. The abusive epithet, "You whitewashed wall," seems too insulting for a Christian to use towards any man; it gave the bystanders an opportunity of retort, of which they made full and effective use. The appeal to party rancour, "I am a Pharisee, the pupil of a Pharisee; I am on my trial for the hope of the resurrection of the dead," was—I allude to the last clause—untrue in fact and unjustifiable in intent. The apostle himself admitted this when the excitement was over (xxiv. 21). "Compassed with infirmity" is our verdict on him in his speeches. Human nature is there with its faults as well as its virtues.

The same human nature may be perceived when he took his pen in hand. That it was a noble nature, towering high above ordinary men, I strongly maintain. But it was not perfect. Inspiration quickened St. Paul's perception of truth, but it did not protect him from faults of temper, nor from using bad grammar, broken sentences, questionable logic, and inexact quotations.

And if this cannot be gainsaid, why should we think with Mr. Halcombe that "the Gospels, as first given to men, exhibited a perfect unity of design and execution"? Why should we believe that "their parts may be as nicely adjusted to each other as the machinery of the Nasmyth hammer"? Was not human agency employed in their production? And where men are employed, will there not always be an element of imperfection? Or what did St. Paul mean when he wrote, "We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the exceeding greatness of its power may be of God"?

If Mr. Halcombe's "constructive principles" require St. Luke to have written certain parts of his Gospel in a way in which no man ever wrote before or since, the conclusion which I should draw is that the constructive principles are wrong.

Put the sun into the centre of the solar system. Put St. Mark first among the Evangelists. All will then become plain. St. Mark will be restored to his real post of honour. Instead of being a miserable epitomiser of St. Matthew, afraid to copy anything which possessed high spiritual value, he is St. Peter's faithful interpreter, the pioneer in producing the noblest works with which God has been pleased to enrich the Church. St. Matthew and St. Luke are beholden to him for the historical framework of their Gospels. It was their task to collect new matter, and incorporate it with the old.

The first principle which I lay down is this, that the original telling of a story will be the fullest and most picturesque. Later repetitions will give the essential points of the story in less rugged diction, but will curtail and confuse the circumstantial details.

That this principle is true in ordinary life needs no proof. But in the Gospels the case is not quite the same. The story was not merely told, but learned by heart and frequently repeated. The habits of the time made this compulsory. We shall never understand the growth of the Gospels unless we realise the pains taken to give every Christian child (and every adult, as far as he was capable of receiving it) an education in the faith, according to the ordinary methods of the day, by making him commit long passages to memory.

Still, though the process of reducing the bulk of material would be carried on at a slower rate under these safeguards, it would be in constant operation. The catechist would unconsciously yield to the pressure of circumstances. Why should he burden his pupil's memory with details, to the exclusion of important matters? Why give names of persons and places in which the learner could take no interest, rather than great principles which would guide him through life? In the course of forty years the shrinkage in narrative would be great; all the greater because newly-added parables and discourses were always swelling the lessons, and compelling the catechist to find space for them by abbreviating the original records.

Now the process of Gospel formation was carried on simultaneously in two districts, which were jealous of each other, and seldom held intercommunications. The Eastern catechists, centred round Jerusalem, produced, as I hold, in oral form, St. Matthew's Gospel, under his guidance and with his contributions; the Western catechists, under St. Paul, produced the third Gospel, of which one of them, St. Luke, became ultimately the writer. Both sets of catechists started with St. Mark's version of St. Peter's memoirs (except that St. Luke received about two-thirds of it only), and grafted into it such additional records as they from time to time obtained from St. Matthew or other sources.

Both of them unconsciously and gradually altered St. Mark's teaching, not only by reducing its bulk, but by modifying its statements. But they did this differently, according to their national proclivities. The Jews were strict in adhering to the facts, but contemptuous of picturesque ornament. The Gentiles loved the picturesque, but were not so careful of the facts.

If, then, we strike out of St. Matthew and St. Luke all the verses which have no parallel in St. Mark, and then compare what is left of them with St. Mark and with each other, we shall find, if I am right, that St. Mark is always the fullest, and that of the others St. Matthew's is shortest, but seldom contradicts St. Mark; St. Luke's is of medium length, but more frequently contradicts St. Mark. Above all, whenever St. Matthew and St. Luke support one another, St. Mark must agree with them; when they contradict one another, St. Mark will usually agree with one of them against the other, or give something from which both the diverging statements have been derived.

This would be true absolutely if St. Mark had written his Gospel at the first, and if the East and West held no communications with each other. Instead of that, St. Mark did not write for about forty years. During that time the records were dwelling in his mind, and were continually produced in his catechetical teaching. They were therefore reduced in bulk and altered in form like the rest, only this process was very much slower than with the other Gospels, because one man's memory does not make so many changes as are made if a story passes through the minds and memories of from six to twelve.

It is not denied that all this has been done. Only Mr. Halcombe gives a different and (as I think) impossible account of how it was done. Instead of following the natural and self-evident plan which I have sketched, he proposes another. He holds that St. Matthew wrote first of the three; that St. Mark took his Gospel, struck out of it all those passages which he thought too good for himself to touch, or for his readers to know, and then proceeded to amplify the residuum. Where St. Matthew had used six words he expanded them to ten or twelve. Such a process in ordinary literature produces prosy and insipid narratives. But here the effect was the opposite. Not a word is unnecessary or out of place. The dry bones of St. Matthew's jejune chronicles have been clothed with flesh.

In the next place, St. Luke, Mr. Halcombe teaches, took both the Gospels, but, having a less humble estimate of himself than St. Mark had shown, retained a number of the more valuable sections. For the rest, he picked one word from St. Matthew, the next from St. Mark, the third was his own. Yet, instead of producing a patchwork, the result was homogeneous. The world has decided that his Greek is more classical than that of the others. Not a sentence is out of place, not a word is superfluous. "Dovetailing" does not usually turn out so well. If any one doubts this, let him read Tatian's *Dia tessarôn*. But then Tatian had some respect for his authorities, and could not bring himself to alter or omit a sentence from any one of them. St. Luke, according to the documentary hypothesis, had no such scruples. Though he was not an eyewitness, but derived his information second-hand, he capriciously altered it without misgiving. Witness his account (in the Revised Version) of the new cloth and the old garment (Luke v. 36 = Mark ii. 21 = Matt. ix. 16). Such wanton levity I cannot attribute to St. Luke, and therefore I cling to the oral hypothesis, which preserves the Evangelists' character, by denying that any of them had had the advantage of seeing the Gospel of his fellows.

St. Luke's chief object in writing was, Mr. Halcombe teaches, to correct St. Matthew's chronology, which is confessedly wrong, and is supposed to have been causing doubt in the Church. Now St. Luke corrects it by following almost invariably St. Mark. If he had told his pupils that in matters of chronology St. Mark, when he contradicts St. Matthew, is always right, would not that have

sufficed? It would seem so, for observe the final issue of his labours. No sooner was his perfect adjustment of chronology published, than some enemy, according to Mr. Halcombe, spoilt it all. A malicious, or well-meaning but ill-informed, person secured St. Luke's manuscript, and transposed about a couple of chapters, with the result that Gospel difficulties have troubled the Church ever since, until Mr. Halcombe discovered the fraud.

Papias tells us that St. Mark's chronology is wrong. If so, St. Matthew and St. Luke, also, who, I maintain, follow it as almost their only guide, must be wrong also.[1] This is, I believe, the true account of the matter. The question is fundamental. If I am right, Mr. Halcombe and the harmonists have spent years of exhausting labour to very little purpose. The Gospels, I say, were put together originally for convenience of church lessons, with only slight regard for chronological sequence. St. Mark arranged the sections in their present order, and not St. Peter. St. Mark had not the knowledge, even if he had the desire, to secure the correct sequence.

Whether St. Luke, when he promised in his preface to "write in order," meant chronological order or not, we cannot decide. The words in themselves are ambiguous. A hundred beads lying on a table at random are not arranged in order. Put them on a string and they become so. If you arrange them carefully with regard to colour, you have a better claim to have put them in order. But if you prefer to arrange them according to size, who will deny that you have kept your promise? So if St. Luke strung together the sections of the Gospels with suitable prefaces and conclusions, as he has done, he wrote "in order." The Greek word which he uses (καθεξῆς) merely means "strung in a row." If he put them into chronological order, he did better still. But if he put them in the most convenient order for church services, he has surely done well enough. Even if he intended to write in chronological order (which is very far from certain), we have no reason to suppose that inspiration would prove an infallible guide in such a matter, or that it was possible at that date for a man in his position to arrive at the real sequence of events. If true chronology was necessary for the Church, would not God's providence have prevented such a perversion of it, as Mr. Halcombe supposes? It is a poor thing to say that the Gospels once were perfect, if we can only do so by maintaining that they were corrupted immediately.

(*To be continued.*)

[1] See *Composition of the Four Gospels*, pp. 21–24, 146.

Contributions and Comments.

The Literature of the Minor Prophets.

In the summary of recent literature on the Minor Prophets, by Professor A. S. Peake of Manchester, in your last number, no reference is made to the excellent little handbook by Mr. Buchanan Blake, B.D., entitled *How to Read the Prophets*, Part I. (T. & T. Clark). May I take the liberty of calling the attention of your readers to this most useful work? It is the first of a series, three volumes of which have been already published, and which, I understand, will embrace all the prophetical books. Each book contains a new translation from the Hebrew, followed by historical remarks on the times of the prophet, the aim of which is to enable the student to read the various addresses in their chronological order, and in the light of the special circumstances which called them forth. For ordinary readers or teachers, who have not time to consult larger and more elaborate works, and who wish to have in brief compass the results of the best recent scholarship, I know nothing better than these manuals.

Alex. H. Reid.

Dundee, Nov. 2, 1893.

The Art of Public Speaking.

W. T. may find *The Arts of Writing, Reading, and Speaking: Letters to a Law Student*, by Edward W. Cox (London: *Law Times* Office), a valuable book. It is the most instructive work on the subject that has ever come under my notice.

John A. Hamilton.

Saltaire.