

But let us glance, in conclusion, at the bearing of the above principle on Christ's relations to science and criticism.

Christ says of God, "He maketh His sun to rise." The question will be asked, "Are we to accept this statement as scientifically accurate?" An answer is not difficult. If it were of practical benefit at that moment that Christ should understand how false were the popular views of astronomy, then, doubtless, he would exercise His power of divine insight and understanding. Few, however, will suppose that there was any occasion for Christ to take a deeper view of the laws of Nature than did the Jews around Him.

"But how," some one will ask, "how was Christ to tell that any subject deserved or demanded the exercise of His divine consciousness without first viewing it with His divine powers? On what principle did Christ determine whether it was worth His while to bring His divine powers to bear upon any given subject of thought?"

To that question an answer might most justly be declined. To find, as a fact, that Christ acted upon the principle mentioned above is one thing, but to explain how a person who was divine as well as human could so act is quite a different sort of problem. This, however, we may suggest. As a man, our Lord may have been able to subdivide

beforehand the subjects of His meditations and inquiries so as to settle in a manner satisfactory to Himself which subjects solely concerned Himself and which subjects would affect others. In addition to this suggestion, we need to bear in mind that Christ's divine foreknowledge may have forewarned Him against thinking too deeply on certain subjects—those subjects, namely, that were to be veiled from Him during His earthly mediatorship.

But there is another question that has often been asked. When Christ speaks of David writing a psalm, are we to accept this statement as authorising the tradition, or as a mere accommodation to popular views that had but little spiritual importance?

When Christ uses Old Testament quotations conveying great spiritual truths, the importance to all concerned is so vast that we cannot understand Him to speak with merely human wisdom as far as the lessons taught are concerned. But as far as authorship and readings are concerned, it seems likely that Christ would consider these questions of so scholastic a character and so utterly out of touch with the moral and spiritual interests of those around Him, that He would scarcely concern Himself with the accuracy or inaccuracy of the traditions involved.

The Gospels and Modern Criticism.

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IF Mr. Halcombe will do me the justice to read again the opening sentences of my third article, he will see that the strong expressions in the third paragraph to which he takes exception were not directed against him, but against an imaginary case put forth to illustrate the direction which the argument would take, and to excite the interest of the reader upon whose attention considerable demands would be made.

Secondly, if he will notice the presence of the definite article in one sentence and its absence from another, he will see that my logic is not so absurd that he need stoop to ridicule it. The context also makes the meaning clear. A man may, I declare, take into account *all the facts* relating to the subject which he is studying, and yet construct

his system in defiance of other *facts* external to it, but belonging to the universal order of things, and not to be neglected with impunity.

Thirdly, I cannot admit that I have damaged my cause by allowing that such a man's system may be wrong, and yet incapable of refutation. To show this, I will take an example from the present controversy. The four Gospels declare that our Lord predicted on *one* occasion that St. Peter should deny Him *thrice*. They then describe how this prediction was fulfilled to the letter. But Mr. Halcombe's principles lead him to maintain that our Lord twice foretold St. Peter's denials, and that St. Peter denied Him six times. It is impossible for me to refute this. For anything that I know to the contrary, St. Peter may have denied Christ nine

times as some harmonists have held, or twelve times, or any number not less than three. Some able expositors have thought that though there were only three denials, yet the second and perhaps the third may have been twofold or manifold, several persons speaking at once, and St. Peter replying to them all. As an historical critic, I should say that the presumption is very strong that there were only three denials; but as we have three (not four, for St. Matthew only reproduces St. Mark) separate accounts of these from three different witnesses, whose recollections were imperfect, the details do not exactly agree, and cannot be accurately pieced together. For historical truth is seldom the same thing as absolute truth.

In proof of this last contention, I would point (1) to the fact that we have two editions of the Lord's Prayer differing (like the two editions of the Ten Commandments) not inconsiderably (according to the true text) from each other. (2) We have four accounts of the origin of the Lord's Supper so widely divergent that it is impossible to recover the exact words of institution.¹ (3) St. Matthew's Gospel contains the command to baptize in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, but St. Luke in the Acts of the Apostles, and St. Paul in his Epistles, always describe baptism as administered in the name of Jesus. If therefore in these matters of the highest moment verbal accuracy is set at nought in Holy Scripture, we are not likely to arrive at truth by becoming slaves to the latter in smaller matters. But as Mr. Halcombe has challenged me to examine in detail any one of ten fourfold narratives, I will take St. Peter's denials for the purpose.

According to Mr. Halcombe's view, St. John was the first to write an account of what happened. He did so within a few weeks of the events, when everything was fresh in his memory. He knew that our Lord had twice predicted St. Peter's fall, that St. Peter had been guilty of six denials, and that the cock crew twice. Instead, however, of giving us the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, he has recorded the first prediction, the first, third, and fourth denials, and the first cock crowing. What reason can be given for his suppressing one half of the incidents? We know of none that will bear examination.

Shortly afterwards St. Matthew, knowing the

¹See an article on Professor Gardner's pamphlet in the *Churchman* for March (London: Elliot Stock. 6d.).

whole truth, and having St. John's Gospel before him, deliberately suppressed one half of the truth, and gave us only what his brother apostle had omitted. Again we ask, Why should he have done this? and we are referred to the principles on which he is held to have constructed his Gospel, which principles we do not admit.

Soon afterwards St. Mark, with the two Gospels before him, wrote an account in which he followed St. Matthew in selecting the prediction and the denials, but recorded both the cock-crowings (there are great textual difficulties here, of which Mr. Halcombe takes no account), and altered St. Matthew's simple expression "wept bitterly" into a word the meaning of which has never been cleared up. Some translate, "He buried his face in his mantle and wept"; others, "He wept profusely"; others, "He began to weep"; others, "When he thought thereon, he wept." Is it not more probable that St. Matthew altered St. Mark's obscure word into a simple one than that St. Mark altered St. Matthew's lucid phrase into an incomprehensible one? I should say that the priority of St. Mark is much supported by this one case.

And whence did St. Mark learn about the "twice"? Did our Lord really speak the word, St. Peter recollect it, and St. Mark record it, though other catechists let it drop, as I hold? Or did St. Mark infer from the context that He must have spoken it? And if St. Mark was indeed so anxious to put the narrative right on the smaller matter, why did he not correct "thrice" into "six times," and give us the six denials? Or did he not perceive that there were six?

St. Luke comes next, and having the three Gospels will surely at last give us the whole truth. Not so. He picks and chooses in a bewildering way, following St. John in recording the first prediction and the third denial, but in other particulars preferring St. Matthew.

And why is this improbable doubling of incidents, which not even Tatian allows, forced upon us? Because "standing and sitting are not the same thing"; because one narrative has "Woman, I know Him not"; another, "Man, I am not." For the sake of these, and a few other minute differences, the fourfold "twice" is disregarded, the fourfold narratives are declared to be half the truth. Historical probability yields to verbal precision. Yet such a protest against the worship of verbal accuracy do inspired writers

make, that the *Shemá*, which every pious Jew in our Lord's time is believed to have repeated daily, is given in a different form by three evangelists, but not once correctly (Mark xii. 30; Matt. xxii. 37; Luke x. 27). It may be expected that every Jew would know the names of the twelve tribes of his nation, yet a list of them is given in the Apocalypse in which Joseph and Manasseh are put instead of Ephraim and Manasseh, Levi is inserted though he had no lot with his brethren, Dan is excluded (Rev. vii. 5-8). Facts like these meet us everywhere when we undertake a careful study of the New Testament, and they warn us against believing in verbal inspiration. If we do, our faith will receive a shock every time it encounters a difficulty, a shock from which I would fain rescue the devout reader. Verbal inspiration has been generally surrendered, not because it is impossible, for of that we do not profess to judge, but because it is not supported by the evidence.

Mr. Halcombe asks whether an investigator is one who grovels amongst facts. The offensive word is not one which I should have chosen, but, as he will have it, I must reply that the example which I gave of the Ptolemaic astronomers abundantly shows that it is possible for the most patient and conscientious analyst to grovel amongst facts when he has no clue to their orderly arrangement. The history of misdirected effort all the world over only too firmly establishes the truth of this sad assertion.

In his second objection, Mr. Halcombe seems to have forgotten that in 1886 he published, and in or about 1892 republished, a volume, entitled *Gospel Difficulties; or, The Displaced Section of St. Luke*, in which he declared that the displacement "must have been done either by a copyist or by revisers, inasmuch as, for reasons which will be stated, it could not by any possibility have been done by St. Luke himself." This is my authority for accusing him of dissecting and reconstructing St. Luke. If he wishes to repudiate the book and its teaching, no one will rejoice more than myself. My other statement is based on pages 121, 122 of *The Historic Relation of the Gospels*.

Mr. Halcombe seems to think that he has refuted my assertion that the Synoptists contradict each other in the matter of chronological arrangement by admitting that they do so throughout one long period, and in one other case. I leave my readers to judge what his indignant jury would say

to this. The assertion that I wholly ignore and misrepresent the facts would not be lightly passed over before such a tribunal. But God forbid that controversies like these should be settled so.

Mr. Halcombe complains that I have not assaulted his main citadel, as if an adversary had not the liberty to direct his fire against important outposts, the loss of which would leave the citadel at his mercy. How much of Mr. Halcombe's system would be left if it were established, as I have endeavoured to prove, that St. Mark wrote first, St. John last; that the records of our Lord's life are not complete; and that what is recorded cannot always be adjusted with certainty?

I am glad that Mr. Halcombe no longer brings against me the charges of bitterness and personal discourtesy which disfigure his latest book. The time may come when he will regard me as a friend. It was my duty to hit hard, but I cannot accuse myself of hitting below the belt. If his system is true, it must be helped forward by the examination to which I have subjected it; if false, who can be so anxious to have it set aside as its author? I am simply crediting him with my own feelings when I say so. He has acknowledged one obligation to me. When he has calmly considered my objections, he may perhaps discover more. At any rate, I have endeavoured to write as a judge, not as an advocate. Edie Ochiltree, Alice in Wonderland, the Tichborne claimant, mere midsummer madness, and the like amenities, have no terror for me. Until my objections have been seriously met, I am likely to continue to feel them and to press them.

It has been said that instead of replying to Mr. Halcombe, I have wasted the space at my disposal in setting forth my own opinions. I am no destructive critic, but recognise the obligation of building up where I feel bound to throw down. Nor can I protest too strongly against the fatal mistake of including all historical critics in one class, and branding them as workers against the authority of the Gospels. On the contrary, I look to some of them as the ablest defenders of the Gospels, the great hope for the future.

The Rev. Dr. Grosart criticises one of my paragraphs: I trust that a little explanation will remove his difficulty. I had not forgotten, even for a moment, the strength of our Lord's language in condemning the Pharisees. On the contrary, I accept it with gratitude and adoration.

But surely it is one thing to attack a class of men for false teaching, another to attack an individual for his treatment of yourself. Our Lord, when He stood before Annas, Caiaphas, and Pilate, set us a different example. If St. Paul, instead of quoting Scripture, had replied, "For my Master said, Bless them that curse you, and pray for them that despitefully use you," it seems to me that he would have made good use of a great opportunity. He was not at that time on his trial touching the resurrection of the dead, but on the far different charge of profaning the temple. The deliberate attempt, as St. Luke describes it, to set his judges by the ears through an appeal to their religious animosities, does not commend itself to our Christian judgment. St. Paul, when he stood before Felix, confessed that the Jews had a right to complain of that one cry.

It is usual to attribute to St. Paul all the good

qualities which we should wish him to have possessed. But his quarrels with SS. Peter, Barnabas, and Mark may make us hesitate. The blame is not likely always to have entirely lain on the other side. To my ear there is a ring of personal regret in the words, "Let not the sun go down upon *your* wrath, neither give place by so doing to the devil." The writer of the Second Epistle to the Corinthians had not such an entire command over his temper as is commonly supposed.

The day is gone by for approving every act of Abraham or David, every word of Job or Jeremiah; and I do not think that we are detracting from the greatness of one of the noblest men who ever lived, if we refuse to admire all his actions and speeches. Rather by admitting some of his infirmities, we make him more human, more real—a greater comfort and encouragement to ourselves.

The Great Text Commentary.

THE GREAT TEXTS OF THE FIRST EPISTLE OF ST. JOHN.

"Beloved, now are we children of God, and it is not yet made manifest what we shall be. We know that, if He shall be manifested, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him even as He is."
—I John iii. 2 (R.V.).

EXPOSITION.

"*Now are we children.*"—St. John takes up the words which he has just used ("and we are"); "Yes, now are we children, children with the promise of mature development."—WESTCOTT.

"Children," not "sons" here. "Child" implies a future development, "son" does not.—PLUMMER.

"*It is not yet made manifest.*"—The Authorised Version does not quite correctly represent the Greek original. It is not (*οὐπω φαίνεται*), "it doth not yet appear," as a result of human inference or speculation; but (*οὐπω ἐφανερώθη*), "it has not yet been manifested or revealed." God Himself still wraps our destiny among His "hidden things."—BISHOP FRASER.

"*If He shall be manifested.*"—It is not easy to

determine between "if *it* shall be manifested" and "if *He* shall be manifested"; "it," meaning what we shall be hereafter, and "He," meaning Christ. No nominative is expressed in the Greek, and it is rather violent to supply a new nominative, differing from that of the very same verb in the previous sentence. Therefore "it" seems preferable. "We know that if our future state is made manifest, we, who are children of God, shall be found like our Father." On the other hand, ii. 28 favours "if *He* shall be manifested."—PLUMMER.

"*Like Him.*"—Like God in Christ. The image in which we were made will then be consummated in the likeness to which it was the Divine purpose that we should attain.—WESTCOTT.

"*For we shall see Him.*"—The likeness to God may be either (1) the necessary condition, or (2) the actual consequence of the Divine vision. The argument may be: We shall see God, and since this is possible, we must be like Him; or, We shall see God, and in that Presence we shall reflect His glory and be transformed into His likeness. Both thoughts are scriptural; and perhaps the two thoughts are not very sharply distinguished here.—WESTCOTT.