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THE

BIBLIOTHECA SACRA.

ARTICLE I.

THE ORIGIN OF THE FIRST THREE GOSPELS.

(Continued from page 37.)

THE data for discovering the origin of the first three Gospels, as these data lie in the books themselves, are points of agreement coexisting with points of difference. For this reason it is often said that no hypothesis can establish itself which does not account for the twofold relation, and show why they differ as well as why they agree. But this statement, if not made with the proper limitations, is very apt to lead to error. For it is plain that when three persons sketch the same life, the strong presumption is, they *will* differ; and the variation will extend, it is very likely, to the general aspect of the character which they present, while it will without doubt affect the cycle of illustrative incident which each author makes up for himself by selecting some events out of many, and the turn of expression employed by each to convey his facts. The difference in personality, involving as it necessarily does a difference in the range of knowledge and the shape reflection takes, is a sufficient general reason for all such variations. But with respect to coincidences the case is utterly unlike. For, a single example of marked verbal coincidence between two writers, awakens at once the

suspicion of a special cause. When this sort of agreement occurs repeatedly, and combines with a general coincidence in the whole aspect given to the subject set forth, especially if the similarity extend so far that the same rare words occupy the same position in each, some very unusual cause must be assumed for so unusual an effect. The hypotheses which suppose that the writers made use of each other or drew from common written sources are not to be discredited merely because no satisfactory reason can be given in each case why the evangelist should omit one miracle or parable and retain another; should arrange the common material differently, or, after verbal coincidence up to a certain point, should then begin to vary. Nor can it fairly be required that these omissions and alterations should be accounted for on any one general principle.¹ Why are we to suppose that only one motive operated upon the writers in the use of each other or the common source? If all the subjective influences under which the evangelists laid the whole plan of their work, and executed each detail, were fully known, it might then be required that some one principle to explain all differences, or a separate reason for each one, should be given. Each writer may, however, have omitted here for one reason, and condensed there for a second, and expanded in another place for a third, managing his material in such manner that we may conjecture his motive in many cases with tolerable certainty, but in other cases with manifest uncertainty. As for the verbal differences, whoever demands a special reason for them has forgotten that the evangelists were men with free-will and powers of reflection who, as real authors, chose words for themselves. Here we are dealing with what is most inexplicable, with the most secret springs of action. What it is that leads one person to follow the words of another up to a certain point and then abandon them, to change the order or the construction of the sentence, to shade the thought so delicately unlike the original, is something concerning which fallible conjectures may be made; but to tell infallibly would

¹ Vid. Alford's Prolegomena.

involve such a knowledge of the mind's most hidden working as is more than human. The main demand, then, upon any hypothesis is that it account for the agreement. When this is fully accomplished, though in certain cases the phenomena of difference require a special cause, a large part of them find their common reason in the personality of the authors. These remarks, if true, throw suspicion upon a hypothesis which offers its best solution for the differences, and, while thinking to account for them by the variety in the forms which oral tradition took, refuses to consider in detail the very difficult problem offered by such wonderful coincidences. It may be remarked further, that the objection which is made against the so-called supplementary hypothesis, namely, that it forces us to think the evangelists have corrected and supplemented each other in a way hard to reconcile with any theory of inspiration, holds with equal force against the hypothesis of oral tradition. For the same principles of interpretation would, if the hypothesis of oral tradition were true, compel us to believe that the evangelists have accepted certain errors in fact and temporal sequence from oral tradition. There is, however, in either case the prior question about the truth of these principles of interpretation. If, then, the phenomena justify the conclusion that all three writers of the synoptic Gospels are authors, and not mere compilers, the main part of the entire question, as has been said, would seem to be: How shall we account for these coincidences? The hypothesis which best answers this question, while at the same time it does not oppose the general reason for all differences that derives from the personality of the authors, will be best. The inquiry whether any one of the writers would thus omit, change, or supplement another's material, is certainly a fair one, and in certain cases the answer may have considerable weight; but to exalt it into the only or most important test of a hypothesis is not permissible.

Before we classify and discuss some of the various suppositions which these phenomena of internal relation between the synoptic Gospels have called forth, the question presents

itself whether there is anything decisive, for or against any of the conflicting opinions, in the only passage contained in these Gospels, which gives direct testimony upon the subject of our inquiry. This passage, the preface of Luke (i. 1-4), has been forced into the service of contrary views. Oftentimes far too much has been derived from it. The proem of Luke appears to establish the following statements:

1. That certain written accounts of Christ's utterances and actions were in existence before the composition of the third Gospel. This statement is proved by the words, ἀνατάξασθαι διήγησιν, by the fact that his purpose to differ from his predecessors is set forth in the phrase καθεξῆς γράψαι (not merely γράψαι), and by the κάμοι, which ranks him as a writer with them as writers (vid. deWette, Meyer, and Holtzmann, page 244).

2. These written accounts were several in number, certainly more than two; but it is impossible to decide how many, or whether Matthew and Mark were among them. Since the πολλοί of Luke is so indefinite, the question whether any of our present Gospels are included, will be decided according to that hypothesis of origin which shall have been adopted on other grounds. Meyer includes both Matthew and Mark. He also decides that the former of these, in its present form, could not have been regarded as the writing of an apostle, because of the contrast which is made between the πολλοί and those who were eye-witness (αὐτόπται). Holtzmann would exclude the two main sources, which he distinguishes from the synoptic Gospels, from the πολλοί, though Luke certainly used these sources, but would include the present Gospels of Matthew and Mark. DeWette would include the Gospel of the Hebrews, the Mark of which Papias speaks, and the present Matthew.

3. These written accounts were no mere fragments, but were of tolerable completeness, and compiled from the same sources which Luke himself intended to use. In proof of this statement, notice the words διήγησιν, καθὼς ... οἱ ἀπ' ἀρχῆς, and κάμοι. In the word ἐπεχείρησαν there is no wish to

depreciate former efforts, but only a feeling of the "height and difficulty of the problem" (Meyer, so deWette and Holtzmann). Nor is his purpose to call in question the *ἀσφάλεια* furnished by the accounts of others, so far as they went, but only to intimate that for his purpose they might be improved in completeness (*πᾶσιν*), accuracy (*ἀκριβῶς*), and arrangement (*καθεξῆς*) (Holtzmann).

4. As to the character of the original sources which are mentioned in verse second, Luke does not furnish us ground for deciding whether they were altogether oral or in part written. He distinguishes the subject of *παρέδοσαν* and the *πολλοί* from each other, not under the categories of the oral and the written, but under those of the primary and the secondary authority (Holtzmann, whom Meyer follows). Under this *παράδοσις* may be included written sources, although the presumption is perhaps that they were sources chiefly oral. According to Meyer the *λόγια* of Matthew, mentioned by Papias, are to be included. DeWette, however, is of contrary opinion, and refers *παρέδοσαν* exclusively to the spoken gospel, quoting 1 Cor. xi. 2 in support (see, however, Acts vi. 14); while Hug contends for a limitation of the word to written sources (Einl. § 32 and p. 387 sq. of Fosdick's trans.).

5. Luke does not give any sure intimation as to whether he intended to use, besides these primary sources, the writings of those whom he designates by the term *πολλοί*.

This preface, then, does not furnish a decisive test for the different hypotheses. That test is found alone in the phenomena of variation and agreement.

In order to an examination of the various attempts to solve this problem, it is indispensable that some classification of them be given. But nearly all writers upon the subject have blended with what is the distinctive principle of their method of solution some things which, though subordinated in their view, have been made prominent in other hypotheses. A complete classification of the opinions, as they have been really held, is thus made very difficult by their complex and

manifold nature ; not to speak of their number, which is so great that merely to mention all of them would be tedious. It is easy, however, to classify those principles of explanation that distinguish the more important views, and to present with each principle the hypotheses which, if not completely, at least more thoroughly than any other, represent the principle. We shall then classify and discuss the possible principles of explanation, rather than the actual hypotheses as they have been built upon these principles by a varied combination of them. Of such explanatory principles there are two : that which finds in the unity of the spoken gospel an adequate reason for the coincidences of the written Gospels, and in the divergences of the former an explanation for the discrepancies of the latter ; and that which attributes this difference and agreement to the fact that the evangelic narrative had formed itself in written records. The hypothesis which corresponds to the first principle is that of oral tradition. If held in pure form, it claims that the story of Jesus's actions and words, being a main part of the preaching of the apostles and early evangelists, and through other causes, had become so fixed in form that all the phenomena of the synoptic Gospels can be accounted for by reference to this oral form. The other principle divides into two, according as it is assumed that the writers of the synoptic Gospels used a common written source or sources distinct from any of the present Gospels ; or that they made use of each other, — the view of all those who hold any form of the so-called supplementary hypotheses. We have thus three principles of explanation. If an effort is made to give more than one of these principles a considerable place in the solution of the problem, the result is some form or other of opinion, which may be called a combination hypothesis. In strictness, there are few opinions which do not deserve this name by some attempt at combination. Certain hypotheses, however, have an especial claim to be thus styled, because they combine in more equal proportions.

It does not fall in with our purpose to make particular

mention of the opinions of Strauss, or of Baur and his followers. The former has contributed little towards the solution of our problem. And as for the latter, before examining their peculiar views, it is scarcely more than fair to call upon them to prove beyond doubt the existence of such parties as, in their opinion, must be assumed to account for the origin of our Gospels. If they rely largely upon the books themselves for their proof, they ought, at least, to be tolerably well agreed what is the distinctive party-spirit which each book exhibits. But the truth is, that while Baur thinks Matthew the distinctively Jewish Gospel, though with elements of universality intermixed by the hand of him who formed it over from its original, and Luke the distinctively Pauline Gospel, but with Jewish elements due also to some redactor, and Mark the Gospel written in the interests of neutrality, Hilgenfeld detects a mild Petrine spirit in Mark, and a decidedly Pauline spirit in Luke, and Köstlin decides that the spirit of Matthew is quite catholic, and Volkmar completes the circle by pointing out the Pauline spirit of Mark.

We inquire in the first place: What are the arguments urged in favor of oral tradition as an explanatory principle, and what objections are there to the opinion that it alone meets all the demands of the phenomena? ¹ In its favor, such considerations as the following are urged:

1. Those derived from the character and habits of the Jewish people at the time when the gospel was first promulgated. When Christ came, though literature flourished in Greece and Rome, and though the Alexandrine Jews had caught much of this book-making spirit, among the Palestinian Jews the case was far otherwise. Hundreds of years before, with loss of their nationality, the bloom of their literature had fallen away, and the spirit of composition had

¹ The views here given are to be found for the most part in the work of Gieseler "Die Entstehung," etc. Vid. also Westcott's Introd. p. 174 sq.; Davidson's Introd. Vol. i. p. 404 sq., and Norton's Genuineness of the Gospels, Vol. i. note D. iv.

perished. Though after the times of Ezra and Nehemiah some writers had arisen, what they left to the world could only reach posterity through Greek translations made by the Jews in Egypt. So fixed had this opposition to literature become, that the sacred traditions, highly exalted as they were in the esteem of the people, were handed down for the most part orally, generation after generation ; and nothing but the risk which they ran of being utterly lost, could at length force the learned to break over the habits and rules of the schools, and commit them to writing. Indeed, "commit nothing to writing," was a Rabbinical maxim. This was, however, by no means because they had no taste for the old, nor desire to preserve it. Far from it. It was rather because they believed that what had been already written would suffice for scripture, while they themselves had found out another way to preserve all outside of the Old Testament which was most interesting to them—the way of oral tradition. Thus the sacred books which had been written of old became with them all needed literature. The search into the mysteries of the law and the prophets, the mastery of what their fathers had discovered to throw light into such awful depths, these employments engrossed all their time and mental powers, leaving no inclination and little ability for independent composition. At the same time, they had cultivated very highly that verbal precision and retentive memory, which were the indispensable conditions for the formation of such a well-defined oral gospel as the evangelists found in waiting for them. To these national characteristics Josephus bears witness, when he assigns to himself a condition superior to that of the other learned Jews for the composition of history, on account of his Greek education ; as well as when he states that his countrymen esteem those alone wise, who are wise in a knowledge of the law, and skilful in the interpretation of the holy scriptures (Ant. xx.).

2. The apostles were by their education and habits particularly unfitted for composition ; while their views of the gospel were such as tended to hinder them from the task

rather than induce them to undertake it. If we are led to believe that even the learned Jews would not readily commence the composition of written Gospels, much less are we to expect the same from Galilean peasants. Whatever motives we might suppose educated Jews to have from the tendencies of their culture, especially if it should happen to be of that more liberal sort which the school of Gamaliel allowed, would be quite wanting with the apostles. Rude, unlettered men among the Palestinean Jews of the first century would never have dreamed of transgressing the maxim of their rabbins, but would rather have resorted to that mode of transmission which was common among their people. We have also to consider how inconvenient were all the appliances for writing.

But such difficulties might have been overcome if the early Christians had had any inducement to the composition of books by the thought of the very important part which these books would take in the advance of Christ's kingdom. There is reason to believe, however, that they placed all their hopes in a preached gospel. Indeed, deliberate plans to provide for the promulgation of the glad tidings in far remote times, either by the spoken word or the written record, were not formed by them. The second coming of the Lord was so vividly before their mind that immediate preparation for this — the speedy proclamation of his salvation to as many as possible — was the work of all-absorbing interest. But, in order to convince the world of the claims of Jesus, no books save those of the Old Testament were judged necessary. To interpret these books so as to illustrate and enforce his claims, to prove that "the law and the prophets" bore witness to his Messiahship, was their work, so far as it stood connected with any writings (vid. Acts ii. 16; iii. 18, etc.). "The Jews expected at the entrance of the Messianic age nothing less than new sacred books."¹ Besides the intensity with which the idea of the *παρουσία* had taken hold of their minds, and the sufficiency which they found in Old Testa-

¹ Vid. Gieseler, "Die Entstehung," etc. p. 71.

ment scripture, the views which the apostles entertained of their mission offered an additional obstacle. The Master had bidden them at parting, "Journey and teach" (Matt. xxviii. 19), and their whole history shows that nothing could turn them aside from the effort to do his bidding. With them the gospel needed no Gospels. They were "ministers of the new testament — not of the letter, but of the spirit" (2 Cor. iii. 6). The Comforter, who was to teach them all things, and bring all things to their remembrance (John xiv. 26), was to bear witness with them, wherever they spoke of Christ (John xv. 26).

3. All the words which throw light upon the character of the activity of the early evangelists lead us to the same conclusion of an oral gospel. The word for gospel (*εὐαγγέλιον*) had then only reached the second stage in its threefold progress toward the meaning afterward common, and uniformly stood for the "glad tidings" themselves, rather than the written record of their contents; thus pointing to the living preacher who proclaimed them. Not until Justin's time, at least, do we find the later use of the word (Meyer, on the superscription of Matthew). The gospel is *λόγος* (Acts ii. 41), *κήρυγμα* (Rom. xvi. 25), *λόγος ἀκοῆς* (1 Thess. ii. 13); to publish it is *κηρύσσειν, παραδίδοναι εὐαγγέλιον, εὐαγγελίζειν*; to receive it is *ἀκούειν*, is to become *ἀκροατής* (Jas. i. 22). So thoroughly is it true that the gospel reaches men only *διὰ λόγου* that Paul seems to know but the one way of oral proclamation for spreading the knowledge of it (Rom. x. 14 sq.).

4. The testimony of early writers is to the effect that the first gospel was only an oral gospel. "The elders were not wont to write; since they were neither willing to hinder the care taken in oral instruction by the other care of composition, nor yet did they consume in writing the time which belonged to painstaking preparation of their addresses."¹ "For we have learned the ordering of our salvation through

¹ Clem. Alex. Eclog. Proph. 27.

none others than those by whom the gospel reached us, which, to be sure, they heralded at the first, but afterwards by God's favor delivered to us in writing."¹ It was the plea of the heretics, when they would justify their refusal to accept the books of the New Testament canon, that the original tradition was not "per literas," but "per vivam vocem."²

5. Bearing these truths and testimonies in mind, we may conclude that the gospel narrative received its first form as follows. After the death and ascension of Jesus, the apostles remained together for some time at Jerusalem in the closest daily communion. Even if their love for Christ had not continued after his departure, and if the desire for the growth of his kingdom had not induced them to preach unceasingly his salvation, they could scarcely have failed to tell over often the wonderful scenes through which they had so recently passed. But in the love they yet bore toward Jesus and the mission he had left them, they found the strongest inducements to repeat the incidents of his life. How joyfully and with what frequency must they have reverted to all the sayings and actions of their absent Lord, since these memories were the field in which their affections found most satisfying food. In those times, to speak of Jesus and recall each several occurrence connected with him,—each word, look, and gesture of his,—must have been no small part of their employment. Such a spirit of glad return in memory to the scenes of their intercourse with Christ, an early writer has well set forth, when he makes Peter say: "After midnight has once passed I now of my own accord awake, and sleep no longer comes to me; which hath happened to me on this account, because it was my habit to call back to memory the words of my Lord that I had heard from him."³ The calling of the apostles furnished them additional motive to rehearse often the evangelic narrative. To preach, to teach the converts, and pre-

¹ Iren. adv. haeret. 3, 1.² Iren. adv. haeret. 3, 2.³ Recog. Clem. 2, 1.

pare others to be in turn teachers and preachers was their great business. And for all this work the recital of Jesus's miracles and discourse, the concrete gospel, was alone adapted. By the way, in the market-place, and in the synagogue they told over and over their story, witnessing to the resurrection (Acts i. 21 sq.), speaking the things which they had seen and heard. Philip at Samaria, Peter with Cornelius, Paul at Rome teaching "two whole years in his own hired house," are examples of this activity. To the teaching of the apostles the converts resorted (Acts ii. 42), and the gospel was proclaimed "publicly and from house to house" (Acts xx. 20). In these circumstances the memory of one would supplement and correct that of another, and each one would receive and treasure what every other one had contributed. The bare fact of such frequent and careful repetition could not fail to do much toward fixing the form of the gospel narrative. But special reasons for uniformity are to be found in the nature of the contents of these narratives and in the minds and language of those who recited them. What the apostles recounted was the word or act of Jesus, who spake "as the Father said" unto him (John xii. 50), and whose words were spirit and life (John vi. 63). His acts, too, were of the highest significance; especially since in them Old Testament prophecy was fulfilled. How little, then, would the early teachers feel like making even verbal changes in the narrative. Having been all of similar education, "alike enthusiastic for their Teacher, with like attention to his words and deeds," the apostles would all have a similar conception of his life. Their language did not admit of "fine shading," and even when the tradition passed over into the far richer Greek, only a small part of the wealth furnished was employed. They had little opportunity for variety of expression, while they were not acquainted with the taste which among us requires manifold form for similar thought. The risk they ran of being contradicted by their enemies would induce yet more care and agreement. The tendency to uniformity in narration is seen in the various

accounts of Paul's conversion (Acts ix. 2-8; xxii. 5-11; xxvi. 12-18), and the visions of Cornelius and Peter (Acts x.-xi.). We may conclude, then, that repetition of such narrative, in such circumstances, by such men, and in such a language, would occasion very great agreement in the mode of narration. But since some things would be better adapted to the design of preaching than others, selections would naturally be made, and a definite cycle of incidents formed.

This oral tradition, originally in the Aramean language, passed over into Greek. Even in the early church at Jerusalem the many Hellenists must have contributed to this transition. When they began to outnumber their Aramean-speaking brothers, and the gospel was proclaimed outside of Judea, the oral tradition in Greek, formed under similar influences, largely a translation of the other, though with a new selection of the events most apt to its purpose, became prominent.

6. In this way, then, can the agreement in the synoptic Gospels be accounted for; while the differences are due to the very nature of oral tradition. The sections common to all are accounted for by the strong bond with which custom held together the selected narratives; sections are found only in two or one of the Gospels, because the bond was not indissoluble. The similarity and difference of order are explained in the same way. The oral tradition accounts also for the verbal coincidences which, as we should expect, are most frequent and marked in the words of Jesus. Rare words would be apt to be remembered and repeated. An unusual form given to an Old Testament citation would be transmitted.

In the belief that the considerations which this principle of explanation presents contain much that is indisputably true, they have been presented at such length. The question is, however, whether they alone are adequate to account for all the phenomena. That they are, only a few even of those who have carried this principle furthest have thought

best to claim. Herder, who was the originator of the hypothesis of oral tradition, — rather, however, because he excited thought in the direction of the result than because he arrived at the result himself, — mentions “a private writing in the hands of the evangelists”; Eckermann assumed in his earlier work “a written plan of the life of Jesus, as the common basis for the three evangelists”; Paulus helped out oral tradition with “fragmentary sketches”; Schleiermacher solved the problem in somewhat the same way; and in more recent times Dr. Davidson, after carrying the hypothesis quite far, confesses that the considerations it presents are “not sufficient of themselves to account for the remarkable coincidences,”¹ and supposes that “the Greek translator of Matthew used the Gospels of Mark and Luke,” — a view in which Mr. Norton coincides with him.² But it is hard to see how, if we admit the inadequacy of oral tradition to explain all the phenomena, we can stop where these writers do in assuming written helps, since objections to the hypothesis of oral tradition, generically the same, are in force with regard to the whole of each Gospel.

We inquire now what are the objections to oral tradition as an adequate explanatory principle.

1. The hypothesis which fully carries out the principle is certainly very unnatural. It is true that we are not to judge its possibilities without true impressions of the peculiarities of the age and people. But we can scarcely conceive how men who were using the same cycle of narrative year after year could be content to preserve such features of agreement as have been noticed, while to suppose that the agreement was deliberately planned in its details is simply absurd. The apostles and early evangelists were not the men to confine themselves in public proclamation and private teaching to the same words in the same order, the same tense and number, the same rare combination of clauses. “Such mechanism is opposed to the lively spirit of the

¹ *Introd. to N. T.*, Vol. i. p. 411. ² *Genuineness, etc.*, Vol. i. note D. iv.

apostolic time and activity" (Meyer). We may well ask here Dr. Gieseler's own question: "Did the lively remembrance of the life of Jesus let the apostles fear the possibility of contradiction?" The force of the foregoing objection, though increased when we consider the minuteness of the agreement of the Gospels, is not founded solely upon this harmony in details, but upon general considerations of the character of the apostolic age which are opposed to the tendencies relied upon by the hypothesis of oral tradition.

2. Even if we admit that such considerations as are urged account for the formation of a uniform tradition in Aramean among the Palestinean Jews, they would not apply with sufficient force to the oral tradition in Greek. Among the Hellenistic Jews and the heathen different habits and methods of transmitting thought prevailed. How can we suppose that the recital of incidents in Jesus's life, given in lands remote from Judea, and by men who for the most part had not this sympathy with rabbinical ways, could have preserved that precise formal and verbal agreement which would appear agreeable and necessary only to persons of different birth and culture? But the wonderful coincidence in the Greek tradition is the very thing to be accounted for. At present all are agreed that the relation between our Gospels cannot be explained by supposing that they are independent translations of Syro-Chaldaic sources, whether oral or written. For where the Gospels written in Greek differ, the various texts cannot be translated so as to form one text in any other language; nor could such coincidences in rare words and arrangement of the sentence be preserved in the transfer from another language. The so frequent agreement in the choice of the same one among the past tenses in Greek to translate the Hebrew perfect would seem of itself decisive.¹ It is hardly satisfactory, after having drawn out at length the influences which must have conspired to give great uniformity to the tradition in Palestine,

¹ Vid. Holtzmann, p. 44.

to make a tacit transfer of them in a body to other lands, where considerations, somewhat like, no doubt, but having far less force, are in place.

3. It is a great objection to the hypothesis that we find little or no trace of such a uniform tradition where we should most expect it, in the Acts and the Epistles. So far as we have the means of judging, it does not seem to have been the habit of the apostles to introduce lengthy recital of the incidents of Jesus's life into their discourse. They appealed rather in brief manner to facts well-known, and laid most stress upon proving from the Old Testament the Messiahship of their Master (Acts xiii. 16-41; x. 34-43; 1 Cor. xi. 23-26; xv. 1-8). It does not appear credible that there was prevalent a well-defined cycle of incidents, selected from the whole number possible, and fixed even to verbal uniformity, to which apostles and evangelists were wont to refer, when no sure trace of such a habit, no fragment of such a tradition, has been preserved in other New Testament books than the Gospels.¹

4. It is an objection to the hypothesis of oral tradition that there is so little close agreement in the narratives of the death and resurrection of Jesus, of the facts of which the early teachers made most frequent mention. It has been replied to this objection that these facts, having taken place at Jerusalem, were well known there, and on this account there was less reason to detail them.² But the reply is not satisfactory. For preaching at Jerusalem formed the most important part of early Christian activity only for a time, so that long before the tradition had formed itself in Greek as the Gospels have preserved it, the recital of these facts, if any, would have been everywhere outside of that city most frequently and minutely given.

5. The hypothesis of oral tradition does not satisfactorily account for the agreement of the Gospels in their general

¹ De Wette, Einl. § 87; Meyer on Matt. Einl. § 4; Davidson's *Introd.* Vol. i. p. 411 sq.; Holtzmann, p. 52.

² Davidson's *Introd.* Vol. i. p. 410.

plan and in some details of arrangement. For we cannot well suppose that the whole series of narratives was given in any fixed order or in any one discourse. The agreement in general plan might perhaps be attributed to the writers themselves on the supposition that they wrote independently, but not so readily such phenomena as were mentioned above (No. 4).¹ "Only of the Apostle Peter does the church tradition announce that he made reports to the Romans concerning the evangelic history, but even of him it is expressly said *οὐ μέντοι τάξει.*"²

6. But it is a decisive objection to this principle of oral tradition as adequate, that by it we cannot account for such verbal coincidences as are long and precise, or for such as consist in minutiae too delicate to be preserved in the rough process of transmission by mere word of mouth. Let each one test the hypothesis by the facts given in concrete examples (Nos. 5, 6, p. 21). To suppose that, after years of repetition, day by day, in every variety of place and by a variety of speakers, a number of words exactly the same should maintain themselves in exactly the same order, — especially if the language in which those words are uttered admit of such variety in arrangement as the Greek, — or that a word found nowhere else, an infrequent form or combination, should be selected and retained amid such changing circumstances, seems so improbable a supposition that we may pronounce the acceptance of it impossible. The full force of this objection can be felt only by recurring to the phenomena which the hypothesis professes to explain.

Add to the foregoing objections those derived from the intimations of Luke's proem and from the structure of John's Gospel, and the counter-argument seems complete. And further, those who incline to judge the question of origin upon dogmatic grounds must find a strong objection to this hypothesis in the readiness with which destructive criticism

¹ Vid. De Wette, Einl. § 87 d. and Davidson's Introd. Vol. i. p. 414.

² Holtzmann, p. 52.

has accepted it. That the principle of oral tradition, though inadequate to solve the whole problem, must form the basis of and largely pervade any hypothesis at all satisfactory, has been already stated.

The second explanatory principle is that which attributes the phenomena to the common use, by the writers of the synoptic Gospels, of a written source or sources. Under this head also, only such hypotheses will be spoken of as conform most rigidly to the principle. These are the older and very intricate hypotheses of Eichhorn, Marsh, and Gratz, and the more recent but scarcely less intricate view of Ewald. The opinion first adopted by Eichhorn was the following: About the time of the martyrdom of Stephen a Syro-Chaldaic Gospel was composed which contained the sections common to the three synoptic Gospels in tolerably close connection. This protevangel passed through many hands and received from time to time additions from oral tradition. Thus various Aramean recensions arose, four of which, A for Matthew, B for Luke, C out of A and B for Mark, and D for Matthew and Luke, were used by the writers of our present Gospels. Matthew in composition changed the order in the first half of A and interpolated from D, Luke also interpolated from D into B, using besides a writing unknown to both the others, while Mark translated C with slight additions.¹ Marsh easily showed that agreement in Aramean protevangel would not account for agreement in our Gospels, and proposed the following hypothesis: (1) \aleph , Hebrew document. (2) $\bar{\aleph}$, Greek translation of the first. (3) Copies of \aleph with additions. These copies were three in number, and are designated $\aleph + a + A$, $\aleph + \beta + B$, and $\aleph + \gamma + \Gamma$. (4) \beth , Hebrew document which contained a gnomology. (5) Matthew's Gospel in Hebrew; $\aleph + \beth + a + A + \gamma + \Gamma$. (6) Luke's Gospel; $\aleph + \beth + \beta + B + \gamma + \Gamma + \bar{\aleph}$. (7) Mark's Gospel; $\aleph + a + A + \beta + B + \bar{\aleph}$. (8) Greek translation of the Hebrew Matthew, with appropriations from Mark, Luke and $\bar{\aleph}$.² The

¹ Bibliothek der bibl. Lib. 1794, Vol. v. p. 759 sq.

² Michaelis, *Introd.* Vol. v. p. 331 sq.

German was not to be surpassed by his English critic, but accepted the corrective principle, and drew up a yet more elaborate plan in which he distinguishes the twelve Gospels and parts of Gospels before alluded to in a way that need not be detailed here. Gratz simplified this later hypothesis of Eichhorn, and proposed, (1) an Aramean protevangel; (2) a Greek translation of the first, made for the Christians of Antioch, with many additions; (3) certain shorter documents; (4) Mark and Luke made from No. 2 with use of No. 3; (5) Hebrew Matthew from No. 1, and a gnomology agreeing in part with one used by Luke; (6) our present Matthew, a Greek translation of No. 5 made by using Mark; and, finally, (7) reciprocal interpolations in Matthew and Luke.¹

Some hesitation is felt about mentioning the opinion of so distinguished a scholar as Ewald in connection with views now generally abandoned; but the plan of our inquiry does not furnish a more appropriate place for stating this opinion. It includes, (1) a Greek protevangel, composed perhaps by the evangelist Philip and used by Paul, which depicted the most important occurrences of Jesus's life; (2) the Hebrew *λόγια* of Matthew; (3) the Gospel of Mark, composed with the help of Nos. 1 and 2; (4) "the book of the higher history;" (5) the present Gospel of Matthew written in Greek with the help of the four documents mentioned above, and probably also a fifth document for the first two chapters; (6, 7, and 8) three smaller sources used by Luke; and (9) the Gospel of Luke, in which all the other writings with the exception of Matthew are employed.²

The support for many hypotheses of this class is gained only by a mechanical division of the Gospels into "writings which owe their purely subjective existence to a blind groping in the darkness." Witness the process of Marsh, which consists largely in separating the sections and passages com-

¹ Neuer Versuch, 1812.

² His views are to be found stated in several of his writings, particularly, "Die drei ersten Evangelien," etc.

mon to all three from those common to two or peculiar to each, with the assumption that each division thus made gives proof of a new written source. While the arguments by which these hypotheses are supported are found only in this artificial and subtle dissection, the objections to such an application of the second principle of explanation are manifest. But these objections need not be presented in detail since the demand for them has ceased, the hypotheses being now generally abandoned. Two or three of the more manifest incompetences are the following :

1. These hypotheses show themselves unsound by the slight grounds upon which they assume such manifold and complex causes for the phenomena, while a method of composition so artificial as they attribute to the evangelists is unsuited. No one can fail to feel the force of Schleiermacher's sarcasm : " I cannot imagine our good evangelists surrounded with four, five, or six rolls and books in different languages, glancing by turn from one into another, and compiling very much after the fashion of a German book-maker of the eighteenth or nineteenth century." And even if we grant that this was the final work of compilation, the detection of each particular source and the assumption of Greek and Hebrew protevangels without stint, can never reach such a degree of certainty as will beget confidence. Nor are the discrepancies of the synoptic Gospels helped by thrusting in many intermediate unknown sources, in order to accomplish by easy transition much which the individuality of the writers accounts for at once.

2. But these hypotheses are even opposed to the phenomena which establish this individuality : they not only do not explain, but they contradict, the phenomena of verbal characteristic, than which none are better established.

3. These hypotheses do not acknowledge the force of the considerations which the hypothesis of oral tradition presents.

The above and other objections are decisive as to the more complex applications of the second principle, but do not hold against all use of it. The principle may be employed

with moderation and combined with the truths which other explanatory principles offer. It is indeed objected to all assumption of a *protevangel* that no trace of such a document, which must have been in high esteem, is anywhere found, and that the testimonies of Luke (i. 1-4) and Papias (Kirchh. Quellens., p. 29 sq.) seem opposed to the fact of its existence.¹ But it may be said in reply that it would be nothing surprising if no trace of this *protevangel*, which was not necessarily in high esteem at a time when oral tradition was in full vigor, were found outside of the Gospels; nor is it certain that Luke does not refer to some such document, while the witness of Papias, with perhaps equal show of reason, may be interpreted in favor of the application of this principle.

The attempts to explain the phenomena by the third principle of explanation, that the evangelists made use of each other's writings, have given rise to many hypotheses, all of which account for the coincidences in the synoptic Gospels by supposing that the writers who followed were acquainted with and made use of the work of those by whom they had been preceded. Every possible order of arrangement has found advocates, as the following statement of opinion, taken for the most part from Meyer, will show.²

1. Matthew, Mark, Luke. So Grotius, Mill, Wetstein, Bengel, Townson, Seiler, Hug, Credner, Hengstenberg, Hilgenfeld, and others. 2. Matthew, Luke, Mark. So Owen, Stroth, Griesbach, Ammon, Saunier, Theile, Sieffert, Fritzsche, De Wette, Strauss, Bleek, Schweigler, Baur, Köstlin, and others. 3. Mark, Matthew, Luke. So Storr. This order of origin, though not in connection with the supplementary hypothesis, has been advocated by Ewald, Ritschl, Reuss, Weiss, Holtzmann, and others. Meyer's view will be spoken of below. 4. Mark, Luke, Matthew. So Wilke, B. Bauer, Hitzig, and Volkmar. 5. Luke, Matthew, Mark. So Busching and Evanson. 6. Luke, Mark, Matthew. So Vogel.

¹ Vid. Davidson's *Introd.* Vol. i. p. 384, and Meyer on Matthew, p. 27.

² For a list of the works of these writers, vid. Meyer on Matthew, p. 30 sq., and Davidson's *Introd.* Vol. i. p. 387.

Against this principle of explanation in all its forms one general objection is urged with more or less force, namely, that the differences in extent of narrative arising from omissions and additions, the differences in form of narration, especially where one writer seems irreconcilable with the other, and the differences in arrangement where the temporal sequence is close, remain unaccounted for. It has already been observed that the difficulty is greatly diminished when we remember that the evangelists have put the stamp of their individuality upon all their material, from whatever source derived. And the reply remains in force, though the motives for the changes appear various and are not now always easy to discover. In certain cases this class of objections must have considerable weight. It will be observed however, that an hypothesis, which, like that of Meyer, places Mark first and attributes to Luke only a partial use of the others, escapes most objections of this class. Whether we make any use of this third principle of explanation or not, order No. 3 has many arguments in its favor.

There is little need to examine all the forms of the supplementary hypothesis by bringing forward special instances of the general objection. Other classes of argument, which will occur to any one upon thought of the character of the phenomena to be explained by any hypothesis, are in most cases decisive. We shall consider especially only those views (1 and 2) which have found most able and numerous advocates, and shall consider them but briefly :

1. Did Mark make use of Matthew, and Luke make use of both? Against this view all the arguments for Mark's originality, which are drawn from those passages where he seems to present the narrative in clearer light than Matthew, are urged, though always with doubtful force. Thus the *ὁψίως δὲ γενομένης* of Mark i. 32, referring back to *τοῖς σάββασι* (v. 21) gives a clearness to the whole account, which Matthew has lost by introducing the passage in another connection, and thus rendering the designation of time pointless. If Mark had Matthew before him why has he omitted all

history of the birth of Jesus, and why has he failed to mention the Sermon on the Mount? Why further does he (iii. 20) omit the miracle recorded by Matthew, which gave rise to the conversation following.¹

Again, if Mark had Matthew before him why does he obscure the narrative of the latter by making certain changes in it? Thus (x. 2, Matt. xix. 3) by dropping out the words *κατὰ πᾶσαν αἰτίαν*, which show the question to concern a teaching of the school of Hillel, he has omitted "the very element of the temptation" (Meyer). See also the *συνηγμένων δὲ τῶν Φαρισαίων* (Mark xii. 35; Matt. xxii. 41). The arrangement of Mark is oftentimes unfavorable to this view. How shall we account for the fact that he, having passed over the narratives of the journey to Gadara and the healing of Jairus's daughter as given in Matthew's connection, turns back to them (chap. v.), and weaves them in so skilfully that one could not suspect this was not the original connection?

If Luke had Matthew before him why did he give a different genealogy, especially if the view be correct that Matthew traces the descent through the royal line? Why give a different account of the birth of Jesus, not to speak of the difficulties which are found in reconciling Matthew and Luke in these sections (as, for instance, by interpolating chap. ii. of Matthew between vs. 38 and 39 of Luke ii.)? Why, if Luke made use of both Matthew and Mark, did he omit the series spoken of in No. 14 of the concrete examples (p. 23)?² Why, again, has he in several places so arbitrarily broken up the well-compacted structure of Matthew, and scattered the material here and there throughout his own Gospel (comp. Matt. v.-vii. with Luke vi. 20 sq., xiv. 34 sq., xi. 33 sq., xvi. 16 sq., xii. 58 sq., xi. 2 sq., xii. 22, xii. 33, xi. 9 sq., xiii. 24 sq., and see the phenomena spoken of in Nos. 15 and 17, (pp. 24, 26). Objections like the foregoing might be very greatly multiplied; but enough has been said to show the force of this class of argu-

¹ Alford, however, carries this objection altogether too far, *vid.* Vol. i. p. 327.

² These and similar difficulties have forced some into the opinion that Luke employed a shorter redaction of Matthew. De Wette, *Einl.* § 93 c.

ments against the first form of the supplementary hypothesis. This form can be shown improbable on other grounds. It contradicts that order which the entire phenomena seem to establish.

2. The celebrated hypothesis of Griesbach (form No. 2) also deserves special notice. The opinion that Mark followed and epitomized the other two synoptic Gospels, rests upon such grounds as follow: It is urged, in the first place, in support of this view, that the entire material of Mark is to be found in Matthew and Luke, and for the most part in more extended form. But this fact may be accounted for equally well by supposing that Matthew and Luke drew their material from Mark and expanded it; or that all three employed the same written source; or, if the other phenomena permitted it, that all three found their common material in the same oral tradition.

There are, however, quite remarkable exceptions to this sameness of material; among others the two miracles (vii. 32-37; viii. 22-26), related to each other, but differing somewhat from those elsewhere recorded, the peculiarity of which shows what we might expect from Mark when he departed widely from his customary sources. But whence did he derive this material? Such a reply as the following has been given by one who favors the view that Mark depended on Matthew. In the first instance (vii. 32-37) Mark, in his peculiar character of epitomizer, has compressed into one the many acts of healing recorded Matt. xv. 30 sq.; while the second instance (viii. 22-26) is intended, since the disciples might be expected by this time to have grown more intelligent, "to exhibit the gradual passage from non-seeing into seeing in the case of one physically blind."¹

But we find in the second Gospel many small additions of great value, which bear evident marks of originality. These are all easily disposed of by the advocates of this hypothesis. Verses 49 and 50, chap. ix., were added by Mark, because he had quite too long merely transcribed,

¹ Hilgenfeld, *Evangel.* p. 137.

and wished to make “a so much more energetic effort for an independent termination, but gave by this means new proof of how little he could accomplish from his own resources.” To the same critic iv. 39 and v. 8, 41 are mere rhetorical adornment. The whiteness of Jesus’s raiment (*οἰα γραφεὺς ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς*, etc., ix. 3), the number four (ii. 3), the number of the demoniac swine after the analogy of the Roman legion (v. 13), the *προσκεφάλαιον* (iv. 38), the repeated cock-crowing, the names Alphaeus (ii. 14), Bartimaeus (x. 46), Alexander and Rufus (xv. 21),—all these are but fancies of Mark in Baur’s opinion. Who gives most proof of fancy we leave the candid to judge. In much the same way does DeWette treat the second Gospel in his endeavor to establish the hypothesis of Griesbach: i. 13, iii. 6, xv. 39, 44, etc., are “suspicious additions.” (Einl. § 94 sq.) So unwilling are the advocates of this hypothesis to admit that Mark has any claim to originality, that even *τοῖς ἔξω* (iv. 11) is referred to 1 Cor. v. 12.

It is claimed, in the second place, as an argument for this view, that the relation between Matthew and Luke in entire form of narrative and detailed expression is less than between either of them and Mark; so that, while they appear more independent of each other, the text of the latter is often made up by weaving together the texts of the two former. In this manner are explained such passages as *ὄψις δὲ γενομένης, ὅτε ἔδυν ὁ ἥλιος* (i. 32); *ἄπηλθεν ἀπ’ αὐτοῦ ἡ λέπρα, καὶ ἐκαθαρίσθη* (i. 42), i. 44, ii. 3, iv. 41, x. 29 sq., xiii. 3 sq. But cases like some of the above are equally well referred to the verbal characteristic of Mark or of the common source, Matthew and Luke having omitted one of the equivalent clauses. As for Mark i. 32, the connection in this Gospel and Luke (iv. 40) requires mention of the setting sun; but in Matthew it does not. If Mark made up his text in the way alleged, he failed to improve other equally tempting occasions for such combination (Mark xiv. 17; comp. Matt. xxvi. 20 and Luke xxii. 14). See, however, his habit in such passages as i. 35; xvi. 2. And what shall be said

of φοβηθέντες δὲ ἐθαύμασαν, Luke viii. 25, compared with Mark iv. 41 and Matth. viii. 27? Further proofs of this dependence of the text of Mark upon the texts of Matthew and Luke are deduced from certain supposed inaccuracies of expression, due to the fact that Mark, while changing the connection, has followed his sources too closely in other respects. Such inaccuracies are ὄχλος of viii. 34, already spoken of; the ἔκφοβοι γὰρ ἐγένοντο of ix. 6, said to be inapplicable here, but drawn from Matthew and Luke; the καὶ οὐδεὶς οὐκέτι ἐτόλμα of xii. 34, inappropriate here, but appropriate Luke xx. 40. This method of explaining the text of our second Gospel is found throughout the Commentary of such a scholar as De Wette, but is very far indeed from satisfactory. For instance, in the section v. 1-20 (=Matt. viii. 28-34; Luke viii. 26-39), according to DeWette, Mark is following the text of Luke; but it must be in such manner that he can (v. 12) agree with Matthew in retaining the *oratio directa*, though in the same verse he agrees with Luke in omitting ἀγέλη. And again (viii. 28), when following Matthew, he agrees with Luke in leaving out words so remarkable as Ἰερεμίαν and ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ζῶντος. Mark xvi. 9-20 was formerly a stronghold of this hypothesis; but this passage, now generally acknowledged not to be genuine,¹ and that largely on internal grounds, becomes a weighty argument against the hypothesis. For it can be shown that these verses, which are probably to a considerable extent compiled from Matthew and Luke, stand in such decided contrast with the rest of the Gospel as to form a strong proof that the Gospel itself is not thus compiled. (Zeller enumerates twenty-six expressions in these few verses, which are not to be found elsewhere in Mark; πορεύεσθαι, shunned in the whole Gospel, occurs three times; so θεᾶσθαι, vs. 11, 14.)

It is claimed, in the third place, that the whole composition of Mark, in the sequence and interweaving of its narratives, can be explained only by reference to Matthew and

¹ Vid. Tisch. ed. sep., and Meyer on Matthew for the evidence.

Luke.¹ This principle of composition occasions a most remarkable game of battledore and shuttlecock, which is recorded by an advocate of the hypothesis of Griesbach nearly as follows: Mark, it is said, through the section i. 14–20 follows Matthew (iv. 12–22), but striking against the long Sermon on the Mount, abandons him and passes over to Luke, omitting, however, Luke iv. 16–30, because it was “opposed to the prevailing tradition.” Henceforward he follows Luke in arrangement, and in text sometimes both his sources, though Luke principally (i. 22 is an “echo” of Matthew vii. 28, and iii. 18 of Matt. x. 3), until iii. 20; where, striking again against the Sermon on the Mount, as given by Luke, he leaves Luke and proposes to follow Matthew. Taking up Matthew at xii. 24, he shortens his account by dropping out xii. 32–46, and continues to follow this source until iv. 35; not failing, however, to incorporate the appropriate addition from Luke viii. 16–18. From this point onward until v. 43 he follows Luke chiefly, then goes over to Matthew for vi. 1–6, and afterwards returns to Luke, whom he follows as far as vi. 45. From this point onward he follows Matthew with considerable persistency until the narrative of the transfiguration (ix. 2–13), and henceforward the sequence is in general the same in all three. But to derive the arrangement of the second Gospel from the other Gospels is as unsatisfactory as a similar treatment of the text. For the sequence of Mark is so much firmer than that of the other two that there is even more reason for the reverse process. And besides this, Mark gives the plainest indications of independence by arranging his material in such manner as can be explained only by reference to his own work (vid. iii. 20 sq.; xxxi. 35; xi. 11–14, 20 sq.). Why, further, has he (vi. 1–6) interpolated from Matt. xiii. 54–58 between two sections taken from Luke? And how shall we explain the fact that Mark, while transcribing from one source, has woven in other material taken from the same source, but given it in a different connection?

¹ Vid. De Wette, Einl. § 94 d.

This hypothesis, failing as it does to satisfy those very phenomena upon which it most relies, is disproved by them as well as by other phenomena; but especially by those of verbal characteristic. Could Mark, if he had written his Gospel in the way supposed, by any possibility have avoided all the distinctive expressions of the two sources which he is made to follow so carefully, so well nigh slavishly? We are almost persuaded to agree with the judgment of Lachmann when he decides that the hypothesis of Griesbach, as it has been carried out in detail, makes the evangelist Mark "a most unskilful vaulter, who, now through sloth, and now through passion, this time through negligence, and again through a foolish zeal, is borne between the Gospels of Matthew and Luke, always insecure of his footing."

It was remarked above, that the history of the inquiry into the origin of the first three Gospels makes evident the necessity for such an hypothesis as shall gather and unite, in due proportions, and into one system of truth, all the truths presented by the various opinions. In other words, the best hypothesis must be a combination hypothesis. It was also remarked, that most of the hypotheses have complied in some degree with this necessity, and have drawn more or less upon all three of the principles of explanation. But, at the same time, the views maintained have been, in nearly all instances, too one-sided or too intricate to be satisfactory. There are, however, two hypotheses which recommend themselves by their simplicity, while they offer comparatively unobjectionable solutions of the phenomena. We shall only state these opinions, leaving every person to test them as rigorously as possible.

One of these opinions is held by Holtzmann, and, as developed and vindicated in his elaborate work, *Die synoptischen Evangelien*, etc. (Leipzig, 1863), it must be regarded as the most happy combination of the first two principles which has yet been devised. This hypothesis is as follows:

1. One source (*A*) lies at the foundation of all three Gospels, and furnishes them all with their principal material.

Mark has employed this source only, and has employed it more thoroughly than the other writers, while Luke has followed the common source least exactly.

2. A second written source (the *λόγια* spoken of by Papias, designated *A*) was employed in the same Greek form by both Matthew and Luke; but more extensively by the latter. The two evangelists have woven the material taken from this source into their Gospels in the manner mentioned above (No. 17 of the concrete examples, p. 26).

3. Matthew and Luke have also drawn from several smaller written sources, the number of which cannot now be definitely determined; and have interpolated here and there into the connection of the first and main source (*A*) slight additions, dicta of Jesus, and sometimes entire narratives, taken from oral tradition. Many details of this opinion will be found scattered throughout our examination, wherever the author's name is mentioned. As principal objections to the hypothesis it may be noticed, that the reasons for making the source *A* differ at all from our second Gospel are not always sufficiently plain; that the omission of the series of incidents, recorded Matt. xiv. 22-xvi. 12 = Mark vi. 45-viii. 21, from Luke is arbitrarily accounted for (see No. 14, p. 23), and that the "establishment" of his sources in their details is oftentimes too subtle, and therefore not convincing.

The other hypothesis is that of Meyer, stated in the introduction to his Commentary on Matthew, and justified throughout his comments on the first three Gospels. Says Meyer¹: "The view, according to which one evangelist has made use of another, in which, however, the evangelic tradition, as it was active long before the written record, as well as old documents, composed before our Gospels, have an essential part, is alone adapted to a comprehension of the synoptic relation, in a manner natural and corresponding to history." This remark acknowledges fully the necessity for a combination hypothesis. In Meyer's opinion, the internal relation of the synoptic Gospels is to be explained in brief, as

¹ On Matthew, p. 30.

follows: The Gospel of Mark is certainly the oldest, and most intimate to the oral tradition, and to the earliest written sources; this is true of this Gospel even in its present form; for to assume a protevangel different from Mark, but closely allied to it, is not called for on historical grounds, and renders all the results of investigation uncertain. Formed under the influence of the apostle Peter with use of only one written source, the *λόγια* of Matthew, it exercised a great influence (both before the translation and at the final redaction of Matthew) upon the first Gospel, which is itself to be considered rather as a gradual development from the *λόγια* of the apostle Matthew. Luke, coming still later, also made use of Mark. Both Matthew and Luke have employed other smaller written sources, and have also drawn from oral tradition. The principal objections to this hypothesis which are derived from the internal relation of the synoptic Gospels, are such as may be urged against all forms of the supplementary hypothesis. But, as we have already observed, these objections are more harmless against this, than against any other, form of that hypothesis.

Having examined at considerable length those curious phenomena which give so much interest to an inquiry into the origin of the first three Gospels, and looked more briefly at some of the hypotheses proposed to account for these phenomena, it remains only to gather into a few words such truth as the phenomena themselves, the attempted solutions, and the whole history of the question seem to reveal. Thus shall we leave the investigation with more satisfaction. The following conclusions are won, as fruits of this inquiry, from the field over which we have been ranging:

1. Nothing better than a probable solution, at least for the minutiae of the problem, can, in these remote times, be hoped for. The principal ingredients of the compound we may be pretty sure of; but the exact proportion of each element analysis cannot now detect. Historic testimony, reaching anything like completeness, is out of the question.

Very probably, if we had full information, we should find that it bore witness to more complicated processes in the formation of the whole result reached than any hypothesis has yet ventured to assert. But to discover these recondite processes in the absence of testimony, is impossible. An hypothesis, then, and such an hypothesis as shall offer the best general explanation, while it plainly contradicts none of the phenomena, is an ultimatum. It is quite doubtful, however, whether, after all the painstaking research which the inquiry has called forth, a further sifting out of errors, and test of possible solutions, and developement in the history of the discussion, be not necessary in order to this best hypothesis.

2. The synoptic Gospels in their present form do not give evidence of single force acting suddenly and alone; they are the resultant of many forces. They are not the manufacture of a day; they are rather a growth. This growth, like any other, took place in such length of time as was needed for the thing which grew, and to this growth contributions were made from a number of sources. With their roots interlaced in the same soil of oral tradition, helping, perhaps, to shape each other by their proximity, or shaped, all of them, by leaning upon the same support, expanding in the free air of the apostolic age, and in the light which yet shone bright upon them from the recently finished life of Jesus, these goodly plants arose wonderfully alike, and yet each with a claim to individuality, with trunk and branches very similar, and yet here and there one shooting out further or showing itself stronger than the others. Doubtless, at first, and for some time, the gospel was an oral gospel. As has been shown, the habits and training of the apostles and early evangelists, their lively impression of Christ's advent, and the nature of their work, would lead them to an oral rather than a written promulgation and transmission of the "glad tidings." Just how early the present cycle of narrative began to be clearly defined, and the verbal expression fixed, so far as oral tradition could do this, it

is impossible to say. Whether the processes of preaching and teaching, without the aid of written records, operated at any time to produce these effects to a great extent, may well be doubted. The way in which the facts of Jesus's life are alluded to in the Acts and the Epistles indicates that in Palestine at the first, and for a considerable period among Greek-speaking Christians, there was no uniform shaping of the gospel narrative. But while in Jerusalem those influences appealed to in support of the hypothesis of oral tradition operated sooner and more powerfully, abroad, it is difficult to see how this unifying process could ever have made much progress by means of oral tradition alone. Without doubt, both in Palestine and abroad, this process was hastened and carried further by an early resort to writing. Not that any of these first attempts gained such high esteem in the early church as to be universally accepted, much less win a place beside Old Testament scripture, or even come into competition with the oral gospel. But, as the proem of Luke informs us, "many" had, from one motive or another, set their hands to the task, and, as this same proem implies, these attempts had derived their material from those accounts which eye-witnesses had delivered, and had reached the dignity of tolerably complete and orderly narratives. Such attempts varied, no doubt, in completeness, arrangement, and verbal expression; but the progress, on account of the careful appeal to competent witnesses only, and the anxiety to narrate precisely, would be always towards uniformity. It will not excite much surprise that no special knowledge of any one of these early attempts has reached us, when we consider how much less important they must have seemed to the early church than they now seem to us; and how soon, at the very time when written Gospels of any sort were growing in importance, our present Gospels displaced them.

3. Whatever use the first three evangelists made of these, or other written sources, however much they drew from oral tradition, or from each other's writings, they have received nothing in crude state; they have worked over all

in accordance with plans of their own. This must be regarded as one of the truths most indisputably established by a study of our problem. The day for hypotheses which undertake to discover the sources of the synoptic Gospels by a mechanical division, and thereby arrive at any number of supposed Aramean or Greek protevangels, and for hypotheses which look upon the Gospels as mere compilations, in any sense of the word, has gone by. The evangelists, though influenced in their form of expression by the form which oral tradition had taken, or by each other, or by common written sources, exhibit also the most marked verbal characteristics of their own. With what is furnished them they have blended what they, as persons, have furnished.

4. Admitting that the writers of the synoptic Gospels drew from both oral and written sources, which Gospel, in its present form, has best claim to priority? Quite clearly, it is Mark. To this view all our examination of the history of the question, and of the phenomena which the books present, has been leading us. After a long and well fought controversy, and with the fruits of this entire contest at hand, this is the opinion to which the best modern scholarship is tending. The view which DeWette, a few years since, thought scarcely worthy of a passing notice, has now gained respectability and credence, after the question has been so much more thoroughly sifted. We may be confident that the second Gospel will not again receive such treatment as it formerly had at the hands of the advocates of the hypothesis of Griesbach. The phenomena themselves, now very amply known, support strongly the same view which the history of their discussion suggests. In the present instance, little more can be done than appeal to them as they have been exhibited above. In brief, it may be said that the priority of Mark is proved by the extent of its contents, since it commences at the baptism by John, just where the older and more uniform cycle of evangelic narrative began, the cycle which was most useful and necessary to the wants of the early church, while the other Gospels furnish evidence that the tendency was

continually to widen the narrative, and carry it back further into the history of Jesus and John, and since no satisfactory reason can be assigned, if the second Gospel came later, why it should have omitted these sections. The priority of Mark is proved by the nature of its contents, since it avoids long discourses; by the whole style and cast of composition, with its lively circumstantial narrative, being, as Ewald has expressed it, "a fresh jet from the apostolic fountain"; by its firmer and more natural sequence, showing an arrangement of material less artful than the one adopted by the other evangelists; by the nature of its Old Testament citations, giving no signs of Matthew's twofold method, with nothing added through reflection on the part of the author; by the absence of "doublettes," which in Matthew and Luke point to a complexity of sources; by the phenomena of verbal characteristic, which show that the peculiarities of Mark are, for the most part, the peculiarities of the common sections, and thus, that Mark, or some writing to which Mark was most intimate, was the common source; and finally, by the fact that the difficulties occasioned by the divergences in the common sections can, in general, be best resolved by taking Mark for the original type, though in all such attempts great caution should be used.

5. Granting the priority of Mark, what opinion shall we hold as best suited to account for the relation of the other synoptic Gospels to each other, and to it? We are to remember that any opinion must be held only as an hypothesis. The two views of Meyer and Holtzmann, as given above, seem to suit the phenomena better than other views, and between them it is difficult to decide. What are the objections to each, has already been mentioned. If we agree with the former, we shall believe that Mark wrote first, using no written sources that can be distinguished besides the *λόγια* of the apostle Matthew, and that Matthew made use of Mark, and Luke of both, though but superficially, and with additions from oral tradition and short written sources. We shall thus avoid positing unknown gospels, very like, though differing

somewhat from, the gospels which have come down to us. Our hypothesis may then be reconciled with the witness of Papias, since his words, *οὐ μέντοι τάξει*, do not prove that he, throughout the entire passage, was not speaking of the present Gospel of Mark,¹ and since the Gospel which he attributes to Matthew must have differed from our first Gospel.

If we agree with the latter, we shall believe that the Gospel which was written *οὐ μέντοι τάξει*, was somewhat unlike the present Mark, and formed the common source for the three synoptic Gospels, and that the present Mark conformed to it, while Matthew and Luke have supplemented it by material drawn from one principal source common to them only, and from other sources both written and oral. We shall thus have an intermediate term to explain discrepancies, and shall, perhaps, have less trouble with the testimony of Papias.

ARTICLE II.

JONATHAN EDWARDS.

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WHEN a great man comes upon the stage the full sense of his greatness does not ordinarily dawn upon the world till long after his removal from it. Especially is this true when the man belongs, not to the sphere of outward action, but to the realm of pure thought. This is the secret of that obscurity which rests over the early life of many of the great literary and intellectual leaders of the race. Had the generations to which they belonged seen them as we now see them, the minutest particulars of their childhood and youth would have been gathered up and faithfully preserved. When men had become fully awake to the fact that an im-

¹ Vid. Kirchofer's *Quellensammlung*, p. 32; Meyer on Matthew, p. 38 sq.