(3) Luke was the follower of the great Pharisee St. Paul. The Apostle was never ashamed of his extraction. He proclaimed it in speech (Acts xxiii. 6, xxvi. 5) and in letter (Philipp. iii. 5). Was he likely to allow one who was closely associated with him to think nothing but evil of the Pharisees? In the time of Christ the majority of them were hard and prejudiced, but they were the descendants of the men who had uttered the finest plea for a forgiving spirit which the world ever heard before Christ Himself came (Test. xii. Patr. Gad vi.) and there were many among them who were still faithful to the earlier ideal. It is this mixed character of their class which is faithfully reflected in the Third Gospel. When the writer in the *Jewish Encyclopædia* (s.v. Pharisee) states that "owing to the hostile attitude taken towards the Pharisaic schools by Pauline Christianity, 'Pharisee' was inserted in the Gospels wherever the High Priests, Sadducees, or Herodians were originally mentioned as the persecutors of Jesus," he is alleging that which our evidence shows to have been the exact opposite of what actually took place. It is the lighter view of the Pharisees in the Third Gospel, not the darker picture in the First, which is due to the influence of St. Paul.

C. T. DIMONT.

ASSUMPTIONS UNDERLYING GOSPEL CRITICISM.

ONE cannot rise from the study of the criticism of the Gospels without feeling that the conclusions at which each writer arrives—whether they accord with traditional or anti-traditional views—are determined in great measure by assumptions concerning Christ and Christianity which must affect his notions as to the limits of the credibility or naturalness of what he has read in the Gospels. I have for some time felt strongly that Christians who belong to

the great historical communions, and recognise the authority of the ancient creeds, are in danger of forgetting that in that fact—a fact providentially ordered—they possess a reasonable ground for hesitation before yielding assent at once to conclusions of destructive criticism, which, while they attract the intellect, lower spiritual vitality. This thought has moved me to lay before the readers of the EXPOSITOR some of the fundamental considerations—assumptions as regards Christ, the nature of a Gospel, and the Church—which enable me, after giving every difficulty due weight, to retain my confidence in the Gospels, and not least in the Fourth Gospel, as a faithful presentation of the person and teaching of Jesus Christ our Lord.

That is the really important point. It is not essential to the preservation of our faith as Christians that we should be unable to suppose that the Evangelists were liable to the infirmities of human authors; but it is of vital importance that we should be able to accept as trustworthy the portrait they have drawn of Jesus Christ, and for this reason. The criticism of the Gospels differs from that of any other portion of the Bible in that it touches the foundation of the Christian religion. Jesus Christ is at once the foundation and the coping and the mortar and plumb-line of the temple of the living God. The literary and historical problems presented by the Old Testament do not affect us at all in the same way. The historicity of the persons of the Old Testament, the dates and composition of the books are, comparatively speaking, matters of no importance. You may wash off the canvas of your belief the traditional forms of Abraham, of Moses, of David, and of Isaiah; you may date *Malachi* earlier than *Genesis*; still there remain the unique literature of ancient Israel, and the unique people of Israel, with their ineffaceable testimony pointing forward to the Saviour of the world.

Again, the Hebrew religion, not less than the religion of Buddhism, is quite independent of the historical character of its supposed founder. But Christianity is Christ; a Person who was born as man, and who died as man, at certain definite moments of time in the past, and who nevertheless is now alive, unspeakably more alive than any living mortal man. If ever the time comes when none shall be able to say, "I live; and yet no longer I, but Christ liveth in me," then Christianity, as it has been experienced for the past nineteen hundred years, will have come to an end.

This statement has not a devotional value merely; it expresses a fact of spiritual experience, which is relevant to the critical matter in hand, because it involves a fundamental assumption, the acceptance or rejection of which must seriously affect our historical criticism of the Gospels.

If Jesus Christ is alive now in a sense in which no other of the great men of the past is alive, then His death had a sequel which the death of no other man ever had; it was followed by a miracle the nature of which is expressed in the words, "His flesh did not see corruption." Let there be no evading this simple, plain question of fact. It is best to see where we stand, and not to allow a clear issue to be obscured by the vague language which is permissible in the conventional intercourse of society. It is very proper to use euphemistic expressions when speaking of the death of those we love and respect; we do not allow our imagination to dwell on the natural processes of physical decay; and, consequently, many writers who do not accept the affirmations of the creeds in their original sense, and yet have a genuine veneration for our Lord's memory, shrink from stating in unambiguous terms their belief that the body of Jesus of Nazareth, like that of "imperious

Caesar," "turned to clay." It is simply disastrous for any Christian to accept the polite language of respectful unbelievers in their own Christian sense. Destructive criticism may not impair the aesthetic religious sense; unbelief may be, and is, consistent with admiration of and conformity to the outward manifestation of Christian character; but disbelief in the Christ of the Creeds unquestionably deprives us of the divine grace of help in the strength of which we ordinary men are enabled to live the Christ life.

The ordinary man—whether in ancient or modern times—cannot find a stimulus to "walk in newness of life" in a Jesus who deserved, if any one ever did, to overcome death. The ordinary man lacks the "exquisite subtlety" which can rest in what ought to have been, as though it had been; he asks, What did actually occur? The Roman Governor Festus was an ordinary man; and he stated the issue with commendable bluntness: The case of Paul, he told King Agrippa, concerned "one Jesus, who was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive" (Acts xxv. 19). Professor Sanday in his most recent work (*Christologies Ancient and Modern*) speaks (p. 101) of "two typical conceptions of Christianity": a "reduced" or "minimum Christianity," and a "full" or "maximum Christianity." He goes on to say, "In the roughest and most general way," the former is German and the latter English. We can, however, without any risk of being misunderstood, say that these two types of Christianity—the "reduced" and the "full"—primarily result from the Festus and the Paul conception of Christ respectively. Now the critics of the Gospels may be divided into those who think with Festus and those who think with Paul; and there can be no doubt that those who feel that Jesus is alive find it easier to accept the Gospel narrative as it stands than do those who are sure that He is dead. Let us frankly confess that Paul was pre-

judiced; but also let Festus confess that he, too, is not free from an antecedent bias.

If Jesus Christ really rose from the dead, He is a Person of such a supernatural character that it is hazardous in the extreme to say that He could not have performed such a miracle as the raising of Lazarus, or that the tone of His teaching could not on any occasion have been that which St. John reports it to have been. We may be prepared to grant, as a matter of literary criticism, that there is something to be said in support of the opinion that the stories of the feeding of the 5,000 and of the 4,000 relate to one circumstance; and there may be similar doublets in the Synoptic Gospels. The interest of such questions is merely an academic one. But, generally speaking, it is hard to see that Christians make their religion more acceptable to rationalists by whittling away the element of the miraculous from the historical record of our Lord's doings, if they maintain as immune and sacred from destructive criticism the greatest miracle of all.

The first and primary assumption, then, that lies at the back of my consciousness, when I begin the critical study of the Gospels, is that Jesus Christ is alive. This assumption is based not on my previous reading, but on a spiritual and very real actual experience, which makes me as sure that He is alive as that I myself am. This assumption does not make me credulous or uncritical in my deference to ancient documents; it merely predisposes me to accept as true statements about Jesus' life as man which I could not easily accept as true in the case of a man like one of ourselves, a man whose death had not been followed by evidence of continued life. I feel that it is not only natural that Jesus should do the things which the Gospels say that He did, but that, being what I assume Him to have been, it is natural that all His words would not be equally compre-

hensible to all men, with equal ease; in fact, that it is more likely than not that His sayings when they seem obscure are really profound.

I am now thinking of the discourses attributed to our Lord in the Fourth Gospel; and I am not now claiming for the supposed speaker of these discourses a deference distinct in kind from that which we yield as a matter of course to any author of acknowledged genius. When we are reading Shakespeare, and meet with a passage that seems difficult to understand, the last thing that occurs to our minds is to suppose that the dramatist was concealing by obscurity his poverty of thought. If Jesus was the Word of God made flesh, it ought not to surprise us if His language, too, demands patient study.

On the other hand, those who, with Festus, assume that Jesus is dead, quite naturally and rightly refuse to believe of Him things which they could not believe of any other exceptionally gifted man; and they do not feel themselves bound to conceive it possible that Jesus may have spoken in the Johannine manner as well as in the Synoptic manner, and that all men had not then, as they have not now, the capacity to receive and retain the Johannine tones. In point of fact, however, one of the Synoptic sources, that known as Q, did preserve a fragment of the Johannine utterance (Matt. xi. 25–27; Luke x. 21, 22), the most characteristic portion being—"All things have been delivered unto Me of My Father: and no one knoweth who the Son is, save the Father; and who the Father is, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son willeth to reveal Him." This precious fragment is a glimpse afforded by the compiler of Q into a world of whose wonders he could bring back this specimen only.

This fragment is all the more remarkable when we consider that we have not anywhere the actual words that

Jesus spoke, but only translations of them, translations preserved in the Synoptists and in St. John. We are, then, justified in believing that St. John has given us a faithful translation of the Aramaic words spoken by Jesus, even if we concede that he has in some places added an interpretation or a comment. It may not be always possible to mark with precision where the Master ends and the disciple begins. It often seems as if we were listening to a prophet who was also an apostle. While in the act of recalling what Jesus spake long ago in Judaea or in Galilee the beloved disciple hears the Spirit of Jesus speaking to him as he is writing.

This, however, need not disturb us, as I shall presently endeavour to show and the conclusion seems to be forced on us by the practical identity of style of the Epistles of St. John and of the Gospel.

This leads us naturally to a consideration of a second assumption which determines criticism—renders certain conclusions inevitable—and that is, our notions as to what manner of thing a gospel is. In the first place, it is not a *Summa Theologiae.* We have no reason to suppose that the writers or compilers of the Gospels intended to embody in them all that they believed about the Christian religion. So that when we are solemnly informed that the Fourth Gospel does not contain any direct teaching on the Atonement, it is natural to reply, Why should it? It is more important to note that a gospel is not a diary, or a chronicle, or even a history; it is a portrait in words of the Saviour of men in His character of Saviour. A historian differs from a diarist or a chronicler of events in that he correlates the data supplied by them, views the records as a whole, and interprets the several facts he deals with in the light of his view of the whole. But the historian, in common with the diarist or chronicler, attaches

importance to the sequence of events in time; he deems it essential to the accuracy of his work that events should be set down exactly in the order in which they took place.

It is quite otherwise with the portrait painter whether in colours or in words. The portrait painter seeks to present the liveliest possible interpretation of a personality. Now, to the making of a man's personality every one of his past experiences has contributed. The order in which these past experiences occurred affected, no doubt, the final result; but neither he who paints the portrait nor he who views it sees the experiences as a series; he sees only the result of them. We can then understand that what we in modern times call historical accuracy is not a matter of primary importance to the writer of a gospel—a portrait in words. I do not mean that he would be indifferent to it; on the contrary, St. Mark is careful to indicate the gradual growth of hostility on the part of the Jews towards our Lord; St. Luke shows more than once that he felt the importance of chronological data; St. Luke shows anxiety to set the work of Jesus and the fortunes of the Church in their place in the history of the world; the Synoptists let us see that St. Peter's great confession marked a turning point in the Ministry; St. John, of purpose, no doubt, silently corrects statements made by his predecessors, and supplies information which makes clear what they had left ambiguous. Some of these discrepancies, it must be confessed, involve one or other of the authorities in what we would now describe as historical blunders; but it argues a great deficiency in the sense of proportion to maintain that such mistakes as to facts of minor importance impair the fidelity of the portrait of Jesus Christ found in the Synoptists or St. John.

If every copy of the Gospels were now lost or destroyed, I suppose it would be possible for very many Christians

to reproduce a portrait of our Lord sufficiently faithful to draw all men unto Him; but very few indeed would be competent to reproduce the matter of the Gospels in the exact order in which we have it in our Bibles. If Pilate had "stayed for an answer" to his question, "What is truth"? he might have been met by another question, Truth about what? There are, no doubt, some matters the truth about which can be adequately expressed by the recitation of facts and phenomena such as it is possible for a machine or scientific instrument to record; but personality is not one of the things the truth about which is either capable of scientific expression, or is seriously affected by inaccuracies as to matters of time and place. The truth about personality needs an interpreter for its expression; and the greater the person the greater must be the insight and sympathy of the interpreter; indeed, it may not be possible for one interpreter to express all that a man was to his contemporaries. We are all interpreters—some good, some indifferent—of the persons whom we meet; and the physical impressions produced by them on our eyes and ears often vary considerably from the record of our interpreting faculty.

Again, the gift of selection is of all things necessary to the portrait painter. His interpretation of a personality depends on the selection he makes. He does not reproduce all that he sees; he selects the most self-revealing traits. St. John expressly tells us (xx. 30, 31) that such was his own method—"These [and these alone] are written that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God." And each of the other evangelists might have said the same.

The question then is, Can we trust the evangelic interpreter? The answer to this question, which is an emphatic *Yes*, depends in great measure on our attitude towards a third fundamental consideration—viz., the witness of the

Church, the Body of Christ, which "has the mind of Christ."

The claim that I would make for the Church as a factor to be reckoned with in the question as to whether the Gospels present us with a trustworthy portrait of Jesus Christ is not an unreasonable one. In the case of every kind of sensation, it is the testimony of other people similarly affected that makes us sure that the things we think we see and hear and feel have an objective existence; it is the authority of the vast majority of humanity that assures us that we are in a normal state, or, it may be, convicts us as the victims of delusion. And even with respect to physical sensations which we ourselves have not experienced, when great numbers of people assure us that these sensations are pleasant or painful, we cannot believe that their statements do not represent facts. It seems to me that even for those to whom the expression "The Catholic Church" is merely an archaic technical term, the undoubted fact that numbers of men of all sorts and conditions agree in affirming that they recognise in the Jesus of the Gospels a Divine Person who is in present living relation to themselves is a phenomenon that demands explanation. And the phenomenon becomes the more imperative of explanation when we note that the Church of to-day is, on this point, at one with the Church of every age and clime in the past. It is quite otherwise with respect to the ecclesiastical interests of any past age of the Church. These, even of the last generation, seem to us remote and unreal; as a rule, we wonder why they once seemed so absorbing. But when the saints of the second, third, or any century speak of Jesus Christ, and what He was to them, their words and thoughts meet with a fresh and living response in our own hearts.

Now, those who accept the teaching of St. Paul about the Church—that it is the Body of Christ, animated by

His Spirit, a continuation of the Incarnation—have, as it seems to me, an adequate explanation of the phenomenon of which we have been speaking. The Church's life is one with Christ's; "because He lives she lives also"; He "is the same yesterday and to-day, yea and for ever," unvarying in His relations with the members of His Church, His Body.

A realisation of this conception of the Church, not merely as a society of like-minded men, but as a body quickened by one and the same life from age to age, will help us to understand at once the nature of the portrait of Jesus Christ presented in the Gospels, and also the ground on which the Gospels came to be accepted without any question; for there is no trace of any controversy on the subject. In the first place, the Gospels—and this is especially true of the Fourth Gospel—are not so much a record of what Jesus was, as a testimony to what He is. I used to find a difficulty in the words, "All that came before Me are thieves and robbers: but the sheep did not hear them" (John x. 8); but since I have come to recognise there the voice of Jesus speaking to men of all ages, what seemed once to be inexplicable has become intelligible as a statement of spiritual experience. Again, in our thoughts about primitive Christianity, we must cease to allow our imaginations to be occupied exclusively by the great figures of a Paul, or a Peter, or a John. The Church was always greater than any individual saint. Christianity was not the product of a coterie of thinkers. The Church stood between them and Christ somewhat as Moses stood between God and Aaron (Exodus iv. 16, vii. 1).

The great leaders, a Paul or a John, gave logical expression to the beliefs of the Church; they formulated her theology; but they, not less than the rank and file of the Church, received the Gospels. The Church collective,

"having the mind of Christ," recognised certain writings as giving a true portraiture of Christ. The process of authorisation of books was similar to the recognition of true prophets in the primitive Church assemblies; the prophet spoke, but "the others"—the silent multitude—"discerned," and the sentence of their discernment, or discrimination, was final; so it was with the Gospels. In any case, however men may choose to account for it, the Gospels have a "natural force," which shows no sign of abatement. They will outlast both inconsiderate attacks and unwise defences, and they will continue to affect men in the future as they have in the past; because the Christ in the hearts of each generation is mirrored in them; because the Church of each age will always hear in them a voice that she feels to be divine.

NEWPORT J. D. WHITE.

THE STORY OF THE LOST AND FOUND.

THERE can be, I suppose, very little doubt but that we owe to our Lord's mother those stories of His infancy and childhood which are among the most precious things in the Gospel of St. Luke. The Evangelist nowhere claims or suggests that any part of his narrative was revealed to him in any supernatural way. However much it may have been overruled for the purposes of what we call "Inspiration," it is clear from his own statement that its compilation was (humanly speaking) due to his own profound interest in the Life of Christ, and his own careful inquiry concerning the details of that Life. This must have been pre-eminently the case with regard to those particular details which lay outside the Synoptic tradition. We have reason to believe that our Lord's mother was still living (probably at Ephesus) whilst St. Luke was preparing the material