

very far from dispossessing the old, very bad translation of Authorised Version. I find it in some pulpits, but few people know it I think. Besides, it is dear.

## IX.

By the Rev. W. J. WOODS, B.A., Secretary to the Congregational Union.

I am very far from regarding the Revised Version as a failure. In my private reading and in my public ministrations I habitually use it. It may not be unexceptionable—what revision could be?—but it is as good, and has been as generally appreciated, as was to be expected.

## X.

By CHARLES SHIRREFFS, Secretary Young Men's Christian Association, Aberdeen.

Since its appearance in May 1881, I have used the Parallel Bible in Bible classes and Fellowship meetings. The clear division into paragraphs and subjects, the helps in tenses, the definite article, the particles and prepositions, etc., to a half-informed person like me, are invaluable. At our Fellowship meeting last Saturday, we had 1 Thess. ii. 7-12. There are several changes I venture to think improvements, and at least three of them I reckoned worthy of notice. Then on Sabbath morning, when we had 123 present, the International Lesson furnished a little variety. At 3 P.M., we had Acts vi. 1-8, with another large class, and here again got distinct help. I am devoutly thankful for these aids.

## XI.

Rev. J. J. STRUTT BIRD, B.A., Colerne Vicarage, Chippenham, Editor of the *Homilist*.

The Revised Version is an utter and a grievous failure. It has failed in giving a closer interpretation of the original, it has failed in improving the lucidity of expression, it has failed in ennobling English literature.

This is the result of a most painstaking and unprejudiced investigation. A year or two ago I had the pleasure to prepare a Homiletical Commentary on the Epistles of St. Peter for the *Homilist*. In doing so I entered into a most minute criticism of the text, with the assistance of a most learned scholar, and the occasional suggestions of the late brilliant Dr. Young. I was, unfortunately, obliged, throughout the whole of those articles, to revert to glaring inconsistencies, mistranslations, some utterly misleading, glaring misrepresentations of tenses, moods, and relatives; a harshness of language, and, in several cases, a perversion of the original which no sophistry can alleviate.

There was too much cordiality among the Revisers to make the work a success. It was a continual "hobnailing" between brother this and brother that. A new translation must be *fought* out, worked on the anvil of burning thought and intense investigation. There must be fire, life, not dull timid toadyism and respectable smirking. Dr. Young's little book, *Hints on a Future Revision*, evidently points out what that unsurpassed scholar thought of the job.

## Mr. Halcombe on "The Historic Relation of the Gospels."<sup>1</sup>

By REV. G. H. GWILLIAM, B.D., FELLOW OF HERTFORD COLLEGE, OXFORD.

PERHAPS the reader of this paper will inquire at the outset, with some pardonable impatience, what is the advantage of spending time on yet another account of the interrelation of the Four Holy Gospels. It may be replied that Mr. Halcombe's is not "another account" in the sense which the

reader supposes. He claims to approach the problem from a point of view different from that of any of the scholars whose opinions are noticed and discussed in the ordinary *Introductions*. And even if his position be not absolutely novel<sup>2</sup> (and

<sup>1</sup> *The Historic Relation of the Gospels; an Essay toward re-establishing Tertullian's account*, by the Rev. J. J. Halcombe. Also, by the same writer, (2) *Gospel Difficulties due to the reversal of the two central sections of St. Luke*; (3) *A Plea for a Gospel Evidence Commission*; (4) "Science and the Gospels," a Letter to *The Guardian*, December 23, 1891.

<sup>2</sup> The opinion that the one-sidedness of the Synoptic Gospels is of itself a proof that *St. John* must have existed in some shape before the former were written ("Science and the Gospels") can hardly be called a confirmation of Mr. Halcombe's view, for he deals not with some hypothetical form of *St. John*, but with the Four Canonical Gospels, as they have come down to us.

the writer of this review is not prepared either to affirm or to deny the claim of some other theologian to have anticipated Mr. Halcombe), yet his treatment of the gospel problem will be new to most, if not to all, who read his book;<sup>1</sup> for it is an entire reversing of the teaching we have received, and have ourselves been wont to give. We have been taught, and have subsequently studied and taught, from the standpoint, which we have assumed to be the one alone tenable, that the Gospels are to be divided into *the three* and *the one*—the three Synoptists being in some way related to one another (and here the theories have been many and conflicting), and the one, St. John, the supplement of the three. Mr. Halcombe reverses this, and so his book is not “only another theory,” more or less plausible, in explanation of well-known facts. He bids us look at these facts from another standpoint; then will they assume new proportions, different forms. He contends that St. John’s Gospel was not the *last* written, but the *first*; that it is not a supplement, but a complete work; and that the other Evangelists wrote to supplement St. John. If Mr. Halcombe convinces scholars of the truth of his position, he will have supplied them with a theory, or explanation, of the origin and interrelation of the Holy Gospels, which is not another, in addition to the many popular claimants, but springs from a different field of criticism, and is obtained by arguments which are distinct from those on which the common theories depend.

This much requires to be plainly stated at the outset, lest Mr. Halcombe’s labours should be disregarded from a misconception of their real value. The writer of this review holds no brief for either side. He rather assumes the part of the judge, and desires to secure for Mr. Halcombe a fair hearing. Let Mr. Halcombe, by all means, be condemned, if he be in the wrong; but it will not do to thrust him aside and bid him wait while gospel students are patiently investigating facts, and collecting evidence. Mr. Halcombe demurs to the methods which these students pursue. He avers that they are off the track. And he claims

<sup>1</sup> So great is now the mass of what may be called theological light literature, in England, Germany, and America, that the author of any thesis may suspect that his theme has been already handled. But if there have been any forecasts of Mr. Halcombe’s views, they have attracted no attention. He has the field before him.

to speak because he is no novice in acting as a guide through the labyrinth of gospel difficulties. He has studied the highways and cross roads of the country for not less than twelve years. Let us at the least give him a courteous audience, while he explains how we ought to proceed.

Mr. Halcombe’s view of the gospel problem may be thus stated:—

1. He repudiates the antithesis commonly made between the Synoptical Gospels and St. John.<sup>2</sup>

2. He contends that the so-called Fourth Gospel was actually the first, and was composed at a very early date.

3. He collects evidence to prove that St. Matthew wrote to supplement, or expand, the history recorded by his brother apostle, and that St. Mark, again, added new details to the two previous records.<sup>3</sup>

4. He considers that St. Luke closed the Gospel Canon by rearranging the incidents which his predecessors had committed to writing; and he understands St. Luke as expressly stating in his preface that such was the purpose with which he wrote.

5. He holds that the inter-relation of the four narratives is the result of the deliberate application of a principle which may be enunciated in the following rule: “There shall be no repetition save for a purpose. But where repetition is required, then, so far as the purpose of repetition admits, the later writer shall always use the *ipsissima verba*

<sup>2</sup> The inaptness of this antithesis has been clearly noted by an able writer, who approaches the problem from a different standpoint. “The exact meaning of the term [Synoptic Gospels] is not at once apparent, nor is its application at all justifiable. If the incidents [the first three Gospels] relate are reckoned without regard to their bulk and importance, the contributions peculiar to each amount to nearly half the record. The portion which has given rise to the term ‘synoptic’ does not amount to one-third, . . . nor are these proportions dependent on any particular system of harmony.” So Canon Slatter in *The Student’s Gospel Harmony*, Pref. xxxv, n. 1.

<sup>3</sup> Mr. Halcombe complains that commentators contend that the several Evangelists were unacquainted with each other’s writings, but Dr. Thomas Townson, an old-fashioned, but not therefore necessarily antiquated, writer, in his *Discourses on the Four Gospels*, a work replete with the solid learning of those days, maintains the opposite view, and so far supports Mr. Halcombe. Indeed our author may claim that, as far as relates to the (so-called) Synoptists, he has on his side all the harmonists who, like Greswell, believe that the Gospel narratives can be arranged, not only in substantial agreement, but even in verbal relation to one another.

of the earlier." He claims that this rule explains equally the differences and agreements exhibited by the several narratives, and so gets over the confessed *crux criticorum* of the subject.

This view of the origin and mutual relation of the Four Gospels Mr. Halcombe supports by (i.) an appeal to historical evidence, and (ii.) by a close and critical examination of the structure and contents of the several books.

i. The former of these two lines of proof does not yield definite results. It is impossible that it should until the dark places of early Church history have been illuminated by fresh discoveries. Perhaps these will never be made. But even if a whole library of documents illustrative of the origin of the sacred Christian literature should come to hand, yet some men would not be satisfied. The treatment which the books of the Old Testament, and notably of late the Books of Psalms, have received warn us that the opinions of the ancients would be thrown aside as of no account, in comparison with the latest theory of the last decade of the nineteenth century. However, from such information as has come down to us, Mr. Halcombe deduces an argument in support of his view. He contends that, with the exception of Tertullian, all the early authorities repeat a tradition which "practically rests as nearly as possible upon the sole authority of Irenæus"; and he gives reasons for doubting the value of this "Ephesian story." Against the account given by Irenæus he sets the testimony of Tertullian, and gives a translation of chapters ii.-vii. [ii.-v., ed. Oehler] of the fourth book of the *Adversus Marcionem*. He points out that Tertullian seems to know nothing of the "Ephesian story," and he understands him to declare "that the Apostles John and Matthew wrote before those Evangelists [viz. Mark and Luke], who were confessedly only disciples of apostles." Tertullian is the chief witness for the historical evidence in support of Mr. Halcombe's view. Others are cited in the chapter *Discredited v. Accepted Traditions*. To some of the evidence thus adduced, exception must be taken. When it is said that the great majority of MSS. only reproduce the change of order stereotyped by the Vulgate, it being assumed that before the fourth century a different order prevailed, the writer forgets that the critics of Edessa certainly adopted the same order from the earliest days, and there is no proof that they

owed this order to Jerome. He admits that the Peshitto is against him, but seems to think that the slightly varied order in the Curetonian is evidence that an alteration of the order had taken place in early times. In this he assumes that the Curetonian, as we now have it, is an older version than the Peshitto. But not all Syriac scholars will be prepared to admit the prior date of the Curetonian.<sup>1</sup>

ii. However, Mr. Halcombe will no doubt be ready to admit that the historical evidence for his theory is but slight, with the exception indeed of the statements of Tertullian. It is in the second line of argument that he comes forth in his strength. His examination of the testimonies afforded by the Four Gospels themselves in their internal structure and interrelations is most thorough and minute, and yields results which teem with suggestive thoughts. This part of the work is very valuable, even if we cannot at present see our way to abandon the opinions of a lifetime and accept our author's conclusions. Mr. Halcombe's treatment of his subject certainly possesses merits which will commend it to different classes of readers.

1. It is a method of treatment which is eminently satisfactory to the Catholic Christian. From such chapters as these he can collect and appropriate grains (it may hereafter be found that there are ounces and pounds) of truth, free from that alloy of rationalism with which much of the modern exegesis abounds. There is no timid explaining away of the miraculous, and no resolving of gospel anecdotes into "Judeo-Christian traditions." The last verses of St. Mark enjoy a place of equal honour with the rest of the sacred text.

2. Mr. Halcombe's method must surely commend itself as sound and sensible, even if it be thought that he has not applied it in the right direction. He understands St. John as professing to give a complete, although limited, account of the words and works of the Saviour, and he treats his Gospel as possessing the character which it seems to profess. He interprets St. Luke's preface as indicating an acquaintance with the other three Evangelists. He examines the relation of St. Luke's Gospel to the others from this point of view. And if there be no real *à priori* objection

<sup>1</sup> See *Studia Biblica*, iii. pp. 84-90; also vol. i., No. viii., with Mr. F. Tilney Bassett's remarks in his paper in EXPOSITORY TIMES, October 1891, p. 27 f.

to such an interrelation of the four sacred writers as Mr. Halcombe proposes, then it must be admitted that a very good case has been made out for reversing the ordinary view of commentators. A method which yields a sensible interpretation of the contents of ancient documents, while treating them as being what they profess to be, is certainly deserving of the most attentive consideration.

3. The harmonising of the gospel narratives, to which Mr. Halcombe's careful analysis leads, possesses the very great merit "that there are no alterations whatever of the actual order of narration observed by the several Evangelists,"—an arrangement in striking contrast to the dislocation effected by some harmonists.<sup>1</sup> Two great sections, and two only, are necessarily omitted by our author in his verification of the "inherent harmony of the Gospels"; but the incidents contained in them, in so far as they are peculiar, can be disregarded without affecting the current of the main history. (i.) Every gospel student knows that Matt. iv. 13–xiii. 58 cannot be harmonised with the other narratives in the order in which it now stands. Mr. Halcombe will carry his readers with him in describing it as a case of "literary grouping." (ii.) The other great difficulty in harmonising, which is presented by the section, Luke xi. 14–xiii. 21, our author overcomes by proposing an insertion of the section after viii. 21. He gives most elaborate arguments in support of his view, that the section was displaced at a very early time in the copyings of the text. It must be confessed that the arguments would be almost overwhelming, could they but obtain the support of some external evidence. Those who deal with ancient documents on subjective grounds alone (a not unfashionable method of criticism in the present day) will not feel any *à priori* objection to Mr. Halcombe's alteration of the text.

<sup>1</sup> It may not be known to all who are acquainted with the late Dean Burgon's writings, that he had in preparation a harmony, one chief feature of which was that there would be no alterations of the order of the sacred text; passages which he could not adjust to the narrative without dislocation were to be relegated to an appendix. But some of his solutions of harmonistic difficulties were most clever. On Sunday evenings at St. Mary's, Oxford, he gave from time to time a foretaste of his future book. Students of the Gospels would be greatly indebted to the Dean's literary executors if they could publish some of these exegeses. As he had been engaged on this particular study for many years, it is possible that materials might be found for a complete harmony on Dean Burgon's scheme.

In connection with the harmony, the author gives an *Analysis of Parallel Narratives*, which will be found full of suggestive matter, most serviceable to all students of the Gospels. The arrangement is different from that adopted in ordinary harmonics, and provides a separate tabulation of the *additions* and the *variations* in the several accounts.

The chief objection to Mr. Halcombe's position seems to lie in its apparent incompatibility with the style and character of St. John's Gospel. Assuming that the opinion of its late origin rests on a mere tradition, and that, too, of uncertain value, there still remain to be taken into account all those internal marks of a later period,<sup>2</sup> all those characteristics of the work of the disciple in his old age, of one who appears to write with a regard to the conditions of a more matured Christian society, on which commentators have constantly insisted. It may be that prejudice reads these characteristics into St. John's language. But Mr. Halcombe does not seem to have realised the force they exert in the judgment of the ordinary student. The more complete removal of such prejudices (if prejudices they be) will be necessary before the mind can be laid open to the reception of the view of the interrelation of the Gospels, which Mr. Halcombe has set forth with such painstaking skill, with such honesty of purpose, and with such reverent regard for the character of the documents which he subjects to his analysis.

Mr. Halcombe desires the co-operation of other students, who, laying aside traditional views,<sup>3</sup> will study the phenomena of the Gospels from his point of view. It would be unreasonable to interfere with the work of those well-known scholars whose investigations, on other lines, have not been barren

<sup>2</sup> No evidence as to date can fairly be deduced from a comparison of the Greek of St. John with that of the Apocalypse. Both works were composed in a language which was unfamiliar to St. John and to all the Galilean followers of our Lord. The strangeness of the subject-matter would increase the difficulty of writing the Apocalypse in the foreign tongue. For the Gospel St. John probably had more efficient literary help, whether he wrote in Ephesus or, according to Mr. Halcombe, in Jerusalem.

<sup>3</sup> In one sense Mr. Halcombe repudiates the claim of novelty; he would rather represent his theory as based on the oldest traditions; and he quotes (*Historic Relation*, p. 251) the dictum so apposite to his case, "When error is very old, and by age and continuance has grown to strength, they which speak for the truth, though it be *older*, are usually challenged for the bringers in of *new* opinions."

of results which Mr. Halcombe himself would not fail to recognise.<sup>1</sup> But the field is vast, the

<sup>1</sup> The studies to which Mr. Halcombe invites us in no way trench upon those investigations which Professor J. T. Marshall is pursuing, and of which he has given such interesting accounts in recent numbers of the *Expositor*. The former pleads for a fresh research into the characteristics of the extant Greek books, Matthew, Mark, Luke, John; the latter may hereafter be able to reproduce the vernacular documents which were employed by some, if not by all, of the four Evangelists.

problems awaiting solution are many and intricate. It is earnestly to be hoped that some willing workers, perhaps amongst the younger men, will follow on the track which Mr. Halcombe has marked out. His treatises certainly deserve our careful consideration. He has taken a position which he has made exceedingly strong. To turn aside from his arguments, and treat them as of no account, would evince blind prejudice rather than critical acumen.

## Professor Green on the Pentateuch.

BY THE REV. N. L. WALKER, D.D., EDITOR OF THE "FREE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND MONTHLY."

THE *New York Independent* has just published, *in extenso*, a sermon by Dr. Green, of Princeton, on the Higher Criticism. It would be impossible for you to reproduce that sermon in whole. But it has occurred to me that your readers might like to hear what so great a scholar thinks about the present aspect of things; and if you will allow me, I will try to give briefly a view of his position.

1. About *the state of the question*, he refuses to admit that all that is at present in debate is the point of the minute accuracy of Scripture in trivial and unessential matters. "This," he says, "is an utter misunderstanding of the real gravity of the case. The actual issue which is now before the Evangelical Churches of Christendom is far more serious and far-reaching than this. It is vital and fundamental. It is a question of the historical truth and the Divine authority of the Old Testament from beginning to end. Are its statements trustworthy? Can they be depended upon, not in minor and unessential matters, but in the great body of its contents? And has it any just claim to be regarded as really the Word of God?"

Dr. Green illustrates his view of the issue raised by referring to the attitude which some assumed when it was proposed by the Confession of Faith Committee to insert among the characteristics of Scripture "*the truthfulness of the history*." This was vehemently opposed; the opposition proves, he thinks, that the new Criticism "unsettles the verity of the sacred oracles, and annuls the reality of their inspiration." He is not surprised that in present circumstances there should have arisen a clamour for a modification of the common doctrine of inspiration.

2. Another thing which Professor Green strongly

objects to, is the contention that the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch is a matter of no importance. This is a position which many take up in an easy way, as if it did not in the least signify who wrote the books or when they were written. But (Dr. Green argues) the reasoning leaves out of view "*the intimate connection between the genuineness of a production and its truth and authority*." "It is not (he adds) accounted a matter of indifference in the affairs of ordinary life whether a legal instrument, claiming to be authoritative, has proceeded from the proper authority, and whether the signature that it bears is genuine." "If you detach these books from Moses as their author, you thereby detach them likewise from the endorsement of our Lord and His apostles. They bid us accept what Moses taught and what Moses commanded. If these are not the teachings of Moses, and these commands are not his, their sanction is withdrawn."

3. But, Dr. Green readily allows, we must bow before convincing evidence. "If all antiquity has been in error, and the Jewish people and the Christian Church through all the ages have been in error, in believing that the Pentateuch was the production of Moses, let the truth be told, though the heavens fall." He utterly refuses, however, to admit that the positions taken up by the critics have been established, and he proceeds to endeavour to show this at some length.

(1) He points out the precariousness, and even absurdity, of the narrative as the higher critics have constructed it. In favour of the theory that Moses wrote the story of the Exodus, there is this consideration, that he was an eye-witness of what occurred; but the critics claim to have provided