

Messiahship, why should they have believed in his Divinity? If they did not believe in his Divinity, why should they not, with their intense and passionate monotheism have shown their hatred of a blasphemer? Therefore, concludes Mr. Montefiore, 'though there is doubtless a

great deal of exaggeration of theatrical effect and of designed contrast between light and darkness, good and bad, in the alleged behaviour of the Jews at the catastrophe at Jerusalem, the main outlines seem to me neither antecedently improbable nor morally atrocious.'

The Gospel and the Gospels.

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THE Gospels are the law books of the New Testament. The word *εὐαγγέλιον* (good tidings) in the ancient classic Greek, as used by Homer, Aristotle, Plutarch, meant properly a reward for good news, in token of gratitude and as an expression of mental satisfaction, especially in relation to the gods; and, further, every communication itself which contained something agreeable. Both these nuances of meaning—'a reward' and 'glad tidings'—are found in the LXX when the Greek translators of the Old Testament render the Hebrew word *besorah* (1 S 31⁹, 2 S 4¹⁰ 18²⁰, 22²⁵, 27, 2 K 7⁹), as well as in the works of Cicero, Josephus, etc.

But besides this use, the word *εὐαγγέλιον* preferentially and in its strict sense was applied in the Old Testament to the Messianic prophecies which announced the New Testament kingdom of inner peace and of release from the burthen of sin (Is 40⁹ 52⁷ 60⁶ 61¹⁻²). Therefore *gospel* was for a Jew chiefly prediction respecting the glorious coming of the Messiah—the promised Reconciler. Quite naturally, when the latter made His appearance in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ, this term was made use of (comp. Ac 13³², 1 Co 9¹⁴) in order to point out what He had done for the salvation of mankind. In this case 'gospel' marks off the fact itself—'great joy' (Lk 11¹⁰), 'the mystery' (Eph 6¹⁹) of the redemption by 'the power of God' (Ro 1¹⁶) for 'salvation' (Eph 1¹³) and 'pacification' (Eph 6¹⁵), 'through the grace' (Ac 20²⁴), in 'the kingdom' (Mt 4²³ 9³⁵ 24¹⁴) 'of God' (Mk 1¹⁴), which the believer ought to enter with hearty obedience (Ro 10¹⁶, 2 Th 1⁸) and a contrite recognition of his sinful weakness (Mk 1¹⁵), through an effort

(Ph 1²⁷) of self-sacrificing (2 Ti 1⁸) declaration (Ac 20²⁴) of his gospel hope (1 Co 9²³), of the eternal (comp. Rev 14⁶) 'glory of the great God' (1 Ti 1¹¹; comp. 4⁶) and 'Christ' (2 Co 4⁴). In fine, 'gospel' is 'the coming of God the Word, even the Lord Jesus Christ, who for the salvation of the human race was incarnate of the Holy Ghost and of the Virgin Mary.'

But if the word 'gospel' denotes properly the historical work of the salvation of mankind, only the Lord Jesus Christ may be called properly the author of it. An evangelist may be so called only as it can be gathered from Christ's own words (Lk 4¹⁸, Mt 11⁴ 5; comp. Lk 7²²), and from testimonies both of the New Testament (Mt 9³⁵; comp. 4²³, Mk 1¹⁴) and Church writers (St. Ignatius, *Trall.* 10⁵). And, indeed, the gospel is called the gospel of the Son of God (Ro 1⁹), the gospel of Jesus Christ (Mk 1¹; comp. Ro 15¹⁹, Gal 1⁷, Ph 1²⁷), and from its original source in God, the gospel of God (Ro 1¹ 15¹⁹, 2 Co 11⁷, 1 Th 1¹⁻⁸ 9, 1 P 4¹⁷).

It is, however, perfectly natural to find that this term soon began to be transferred also to the accounts of Christ's work in all its details,—all the more readily that the Saviour Himself so designated the announcement of certain episodes of His life upon earth (Mt 24¹⁴ 26¹³; comp. Mk 14⁹; comp. Jn 12¹⁴). It is not difficult then to see how and why reminiscences of the apostles not only spoken but written, began to be called 'Gospels' (St. Justin the Martyr, 1st Apol. chap. 66). It is quite possible that the books of the Gospels obtained this appellation very early; it is at least found to have been used by almost all the original codices both of the Greek and versions, and St. John Chrysostom

(*Disc. Matt. i. 2*) distinctly asserts that 'Matthew has justly called his work Gospel.'

From the foregoing it follows that the first four books of the New Testament are named the Gospels on account, and in the sense, of their proclaiming ('evangelizing') good tidings (*εὐ-αγγέλιον*) of the redemption of mankind through Christ, the incarnate Son of God, as of an especial act of God's love and grace (comp. Eph 11⁸). And inasmuch as our Christian faith is based entirely thereon (comp. Lk 1⁴), the Gospels are in a perfectly legitimate way considered as 'fundamental' records of the New Testament canon.

This definition is of great importance for a correct and scientific comprehension and appreciation of the written Gospels. In their subject-matter they have in view the same object which our Saviour Himself pursued in His activity, and consequently they only narrate that which has a direct relation thereto. Their aim is practical soteriology; everything that goes beyond its limits is omitted by the God-inspired writers (Jn 20³⁰ 21²⁵). St. Luke, it is true, expresses his intention of writing *everything in order*, but *only that* Theophilus 'might know the certainty concerning the things wherein he was instructed' (1³⁻⁴). Therefore, the books of the Gospels strictly so called, are not a historical and biographical work; therein lies the key to a right comprehension of their character and great importance. They endeavour to describe for us the personality and the work of Christ as our *Redeemer*. One can easily understand that in carrying out such a plan many facts in the human existence of the Lord were considered as mere accessories.

It is in this sense that the Apostle Paul persistently calls his preaching of the good tidings concerning Christ the Saviour *gospel*, and in so far as this preaching was true, and in its exposition precisely expressed, the actual fact of Christ's redemption in the fullest authenticity, power, and depth (1 Co 15¹, Gal 1¹¹ 2²), he himself, as it were, becomes identical with the Lord, and appropriates this gospel in the quality of his own (*τὸ εὐαγγέλιόν μου*, Ro 2¹⁶ 16²⁵, 2 Ti 2⁸; *τὸ εὐαγγέλιον ἡμῶν*, 2 Co 4³, 1 Th 1⁵, 2 Th 2¹⁴). This trait is most characteristic in all respects; so that in speaking about the teaching of St. Paul it is necessary to retain the term 'gospel,' which shows at once and faithfully all the peculiarities of 'preaching among the Gentiles,'

and sets aside all kinds of misrepresentations (for instance, the period of infancy as leading to that of manhood), since out of the facts of His manifold activity those things alone must have been selected which particularly expressed it. Therefore, in the narration of His sojourn among men, *that only* was important and necessary which characterized Him especially from this point of view, showing Him to be God Incarnate, Saviour of the world, which made it clear to every one that He was the Redeemer. Under this condition only was it possible adequately to conceive His God-man personality, inasmuch as in the salvation of mankind are to be looked for the starting-point, the life-long principle, and the terminating point of His life on earth. Isolated facts had to be made use of only for this end, and thus we find in our canonical Gospels that every writer, pursuing his practical objects and making his book subservient to the benefit of his readers, presents his own delineation of Christ *as the Saviour of men*, and touches upon everything else solely on account of its connexion, tangency, and relation to this the chief point. Thus the Gospel, being neither a yearly chronicle nor a biography, is an entire and objective reproduction of the work of Christ, illuminated by an idea which constitutes its inalienable essence, and therefore fully develops it.

From this point of view one cannot help characterizing as an obscuration and a reversal of the true ideal of the gospel-story, and as an entire loss of a correct conception respecting it, all the latest of the apocryphal Gospels which endeavour to fill up the gap, as if it had not been purposely formed by the Synoptics and St. John, with legends of the period of the infancy of Christ the Saviour, with narrations of His life, which frequently appear monstrous and absurd and so forth.¹ For that very reason we believe that the

¹ Apocryphal Gospels are those stories of the Life of Christ the Saviour which were either not recognized or were rejected by the Church as not deserving credence, fabulous and even thoroughly impious and heretical. Their number is very considerable. Even Fabricius counted as many as fifty, and now this total must be raised still further; thus in 1892 the Greek fragments of the Gospel of St. Peter were discovered in Egypt, and made a great sensation in Western theological literature. Several similar fragments were also preserved in the old Slavonian 'secret' literature. Some of the apocryphal Gospels are as old as the third, perhaps even the second century, but at all events it has not been proved beyond doubt that even one of these might be accounted older than the canonical Gospels. The most

actual Life of Christ, the God-man, cannot possibly be written, although attempts of the kind and under such a title are to be met with in Russian literature, not to speak of their striking multitude abroad (Strauss, Renan, Keim, Weiss, Beyschlag, Farrar, Didon, etc.).

The Gospel, as *the work of Christ*, proceeded from, and can only belong to, the Lord Himself, and may not have other 'authors.' This explains all the peculiarities *in the superscriptions of our canonical Gospels*. First of all, we must accept the opinion of St. John Chrysostom (*Discourses on Rom.* i. 1; *Matt.* i. 2) that Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John did not write their names; the superscriptions have come into use afterwards, although not much later, as we have to conclude from the testimonies of Tertullian (*Vers. Marcion*, iv. 2), Irenæus (*Vers. Heresies*, iii. 11), Clement of Alexandria (*Strom.* i. 21), and the Fragment of Muratori (i. 3). At the same time it is perfectly natural that the designation of the evangelists could not be made in the form of 'genitivus auctoris' or 'possessivus,' inasmuch as the author of the Gospel was Christ. Consequently preference was given to a complex form, *Εὐαγγέλιον κατὰ Ματθαίου, Μάρκου, Λουκᾶν, Ἰωάννην*,—according to Matthew, Mark, etc. In accordance with the character of the Gospels, this formula would precisely express the substance of the matter, if it be amplified as follows:—'The Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to the exposition (as related in writing) by Matthew.' The authorship of the evangelists would evidently not be excluded thereby, and, consequently, some savants (Kruedener, Renan, Volkmar, Reuss, Holzmann) have no ground for finding therein support for their notion that our canonical Gospels were made up *in accordance with the tradition only or*

important of them are: The Proto-Evangel of James (25 chaps. from the time of the Annunciation of the birth of the Theotokos to the Massacre of Innocents at Bethlehem); The Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew, or The Book of Birth of the all-holy Mary and of the Childhood of the Saviour (42 chaps.); The Gospel of the Birth of Mary (10 chaps.); The History of Joseph the Carpenter (32 chaps.); The Gospel of Thomas (in fragments relating in chaps. 19, 21, and 35 the Life of Christ from the Flight into Egypt until the Twelfth Year); Arabian Gospel of Virginity; The Gospel of Nicodemus (consisting of the Acts of Pilate and of the Descent of Christ into Hades); The Report of Pilate; The Gospel of the Hebrews; The Eternal Gospel; The Gospel of Andrew, of the Twelve Apostles, of Barnabas, of Bartholomew, and so forth.

built up on the basis of original notes of the persons whose names they now bear.

If the gospel is, strictly speaking, the work of redemption, it can, like every historical event, be one only (Adamantius); that is why St. Irenæus (*Vers. Heres.* iii. 8) speaks only of *ὁ τετραμορφον εὐαγγέλιον*—*a four-aspected gospel* (comp. Hieronimus on John xxxvi. 1; Sermon ccxxxi. 1, *de Util. cred.* 7), and St. John Chrysostom of *one according to four* (*διὰ τεσσάρων ἑν*). And with regard to *the quadruple number of the Gospels*, the ancient Church authorities (Origen, Augustine, John Chrysostom) asserted that thereby is pointed out the necessary fulness in the exposition of the subject, authenticity and stability of the delineation, as well as the universality of the good tidings. On account of such considerations as this, the holy Irenæus (*Vers. Heres.* iii. 11) deemed the present the only self-sufficient quantity, and rightly judged it 'vain, irrational, and extremely presumptuous to attempt to introduce greater or smaller forms of the Gospels.' And when we carefully examine into the contents of the canonical Gospels, we can easily discover that they contain the life of Christ, from all points of view, in forms adapted to all racial subdivisions, and answering all questions that human intellect can raise, and by their mutual agreement with some differences in details, they convince us of their historical truth (St. John Chrysostom).

In this general outline there remains still untouched the question of the origin and mutual relation of the canonical Gospels. In the Western negative and sceptical literature it has become very complicated, and has given birth to such a multitude of complex, original, and fanciful theories that only one who is well versed in the subject can help feeling bewildered amongst them. But at the bottom of all these ragings and researches lies, strictly speaking, the distrust of the fact itself in that supernatural form in which it is presented in our Gospels; from this springs the endeavour to amplify and to write a literary history of the Gospels in accordance with the originals, and in different forms; from this also flow the efforts to dismiss, to deform, and to explain away ancient testimonies in favour of Church-tradition, etc. But the very diversity and mutual contradiction of these attempts, the indefinite arbitrary character and instability of their construction, prove that these savants do not stand upon a sure,

firm, and safe ground. Before the tribunal of true science the proposition that our Gospels were written by Saints Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, and appeared, the first three in the second half of the first century, and the last either at the end of the first or not later than the very first years of the second, would stand firmly for ever. It is of greater importance to note that the first three Gospels, differing somewhat from the fourth, resemble one another in an extraordinary degree, both with regard to the scope, the contents, and the treatment of the narrative. That is why they are not infrequently called in scientific terminology, *synoptical*, and their writers *synoptics*, whose narrations could be disposed in parallel lines. To explain this fact different savants offered (1) the hypothesis of an oral primordial Gospel of a stereotyped form, which with slight modifications was reproduced in our written Gospels; (2) the hy-

pothesis of a written proto-evangelium, which was rewritten by the synoptics; (3) the hypothesis of mutual use by the evangelists of the work of each other, and so forth. No undoubted conclusions can be reached in this direction on account of absence of direct and sure data. It is only certain that at the foundation of our Gospels are laid personal observations and oral communications of eye-witnesses of the life and work of Christ. Naturally, all the information of the kind was sacredly preserved by Christians on—so far as it was possible—strictly inviolate conditions both as regards the form and contents. Nevertheless, literary approximation of the synoptic Gospels permits of the admission that the Synoptics mutually knew the writings of one another, namely, Mark that of Matthew, Luke both that of Matthew and of Mark, as it has already been expressed by blessed Augustine (*De cons. ev. i. 2*).

Happiness at the Table—and After.¹

BY THE REV. A. C. MACKENZIE, M.A., DUNDEE.

WE have had, I believe, a joyous and profitable Communion season, and we are all here, I trust, to give glory to God through Jesus Christ. Whether or not the individual experience has in every case been of this joyous kind, I must for the purposes of my text assume it to have been so. And in any case we can easily imagine it to be so, for we have a common experience of humanity, Christian and unchristian alike, to go upon. We have all at some time or other been present on a festive occasion which we have very much enjoyed. Our pulses beat faster, our spirits rose with the occasion, and our whole being was suffused with an indescribable feeling which we usually express by saying that we greatly enjoyed ourselves.

The day after, when we have brought it all to the clear, cold light of reflection, we sometimes wonder what it was that we did enjoy. The lights, the music, the viands, the decorations, the company, the feast of reason, the flow of soul,—all

¹ Given at a post-Communion service, 28th October 1901.

'For as the sufferings of Christ abound unto us, even so our comfort also aboundeth through Christ.'—2 Cor. i. 5 (R.V.).

these we pass through the mind in turn, but our account of the occasion is unsatisfactory till we combine with these a *something* that we cannot name—the festal spirit of the hour which expressed itself through the whole. It does not diminish our sense of the enjoyment nor make our memory of it pale, that we may not be able satisfactorily to account for it, but if we could lay our finger upon the true cause of it, we could again evoke the same joyous spirit to repeat the experience.

Now in Christian joy the Communion is a thing that a man may feel as he feels the warmth of sunshine without being able to account for it. But Christian joy in any of its phases is not a vague and formless, still less a baseless, thing. It has roots and foundations which can be laid bare. As Christians we are expected to be able to render a reason for the faith that is in us, and as Christian communicants we should be able to say not only that we were happy at the Table, but also why we