ART. V.—ST. LUKE'S GOSPEL AND MODERN CRITICISM.—IV.

I FAIL to find in the articles on our Gospels in Hastings' Dictionary any presentation of the arguments which I have tried to set before my readers in Papers II. and III. There appears to be a tacit assumption on the part of our modern critics that our Lord's predictions in xix. 41-44, xxi. 20-25 bespeak on the part of Luke an experience of the events predicted. Nothing is said of the numerous proofs that this Gospel was published about A.D. 62-64 from materials which Luke had a few years previously accumulated in Palestine.

This treatment of the subject becomes more unsatisfactory when we find (Hastings, *s.v.* "Luke") the worthlessness of those arguments which are cited actually admitted. This is done again and again by Mr. Bebb without regard, apparently, to the effect on the minds of such readers as do not think detailed prophecy suspicious, and do think that Luke makes an obvious claim to authorization from first sources. Our attention is diverted from the plain question, Are the detailed predictions in this Gospel necessarily written after the event? Often we are summoned to a mere σκιαμαχία, or contest with once fashionable critical arguments which are recognised to be worthless. I do not understand how these proofs of past error commend the destructive criticism of to-day. But it would be certainly unfair not to give the whole catena of argument its full claim to consideration. Let, then, any such reader ask: "Apart from this question of prophecy and arbitrary theories about the date when oral teaching was superseded by written Gospels, what objection is there to supposing Luke wrote before the fall of Jerusalem?" The whole case may be put before him in the following compendium of "objections" and my "answers" to them.

Objection 1: Because certain critics once supposed that

Luke i. 35" ("Encycl. Biblica," Art. "Mary," iii., 2967), and it is difficult to see how anyone who reads the "Protevangelium," ch. xi., can reasonably doubt that the words of the angel are a distinct reminiscence of the same verse (see, *e.g.*, Mr. Walker's translation in T. and T. Clark's "Apocryphal Gospels"). Other points adduced by Mr. Conybeare are fully answered by the rejoinders of Mr. Headlam. It is a pleasure in this connection to be able to quote Dr. Chase's words with regard to the verses under discussion: "I cannot think that there is a shadow of justification for regarding the question of Mary, 'How shall these things be?' and the answer of the angel, as an interpolation inserted in the story of St. Luke, and for thus eliminating the idea of the Virgin birth from the original narrative which St. Luke edited."—"Supernatural Element in our Lord's earthly Life," etc., 1903.

Luke must have read Josephus, who certainly wrote after that event. *Answer:* The critics of the same school have had to give this up. Mr. Bebb, in fact, himself endorses Schürer's dictum: "We must suppose either that St. Luke did not use Josephus at all, or that, if he did, he forthwith forgot what he had learnt from him."

Objection 2: Because this Gospel repeatedly bears out the testimony of the fourth Gospel, which is admitted to be late. *Answer:* So much the better for those who believe that Luke consorted with first witnesses. It is, as I have shown, an indication that St. John was one of those authorities from whom Luke got materials for his story. Mr. Bebb, without noticing this inference, candidly admits that the old hypothesis of indebtedness to the fourth Gospel was wrong, and that "these points of contact do not establish a literary relationship, but are only common points in the oral tradition." So this, again, is not an argument for late date.

Objection 3: Because in iii. 1 Luke apparently dates Tiberius's reign from the time when he received the *tribunicia potestas* from Augustus. Titus was somewhat similarly "associated" with Vespasian in A.D. 71, and his reign was afterwards reckoned from that year, not from his accession as sole Emperor in A.D. 79. Luke, writing in A.D. 80, is conceived to have read back the practice of his times into the times of Tiberius. *Answer:* This argument, though undoubtedly ingenious, is admitted by Mr. Bebb and by Dr. Ramsay, its propounder, to be "taken by itself insufficient" for any assignment of date.

Objection 4: "More weight," says Mr. Bebb, "may perhaps be attached to the evidence afforded by the theological terms used in this Gospel, as, for example, the expression ὁ κύριος of our Lord (*cf.* 'Ev. Petri'), some of which point to a date later than St. Matthew and St. Mark." *Answer:* The reader may estimate the value of this criticism from the one instance alleged. Whatever the usage of the apocryphal "Gospel of Peter," we know that one Paul, with whom Luke much associated, continually refers to our Saviour in this very term, ὁ κύριος, "the Lord." He does so in every one of his surviving epistles except that to Titus. The term also occurs in Hebrews and in James, and was doubtless in general use. Otherwise I should press the obvious inference: "It is a proof that Luke wrote while in constant contact with St. Paul, who is so fond of this term, 'the Lord.'" As a fact, the characteristic theological terms of Luke are again and again those of the Pauline Epistles.

Objection 5: Matt.-Mk. has: "When ye see all these things, know that *He* is nigh, even at the doors." Luke:

"When ye see these things coming to pass, know ye that the *kingdom of God* is nigh" (xxi. 31). Further, Matt.-Mk. has: "This generation shall not pass till all these things be accomplished"; Luke the same words, omitting *these* (xxi. 32). These minute differences in the records of our Lord's prophecy are held to imply that Luke wrote at a time when the Second Coming of Christ was no longer connected with the prediction of the fall of Jerusalem, and therefore that the latter event had actually happened. *Answer:* It is extremely doubtful whether such slight variations of language have any theological import. The "coming of the Lord" and the "coming of the kingdom" were interchangeable terms in the early Christian idiom. If they are to be pressed at all, they must be judged side by side with Luke's knowledge of our Lord's prophecy of the "times of the Gentiles" that were to intervene between the fall of Jerusalem and the final justification of Israel's privileges. Throughout we claim that Luke is conscious of an element in our Lord's prophecies which is admittedly absent in Matthew and Mark. With that element, however, we find that St. Paul was acquainted when he wrote the Epistle to the Romans *circa* A.D. 58. Mr. Bebb apparently admits this. Why should not Luke have the same knowledge in A.D. 62-64?

I think my readers will agree with me that the claim of Luke to early date is not invalidated by such arguments as these. We are thrown back on Dr. Sanday's dictum that "It is probable that the common basis of our synoptic Gospels was itself not committed to writing so early" as A.D. 63; or rather, on the general assumption in regard to the prophecies which accompanies it. For, considered by itself, what is more baseless than this theory that written narrations of our Lord's doings were unknown for more than thirty years after the Ascension, or that people who wrote on all other subjects never put in writing the story dearest to their hearts? "Written Gospels were not necessary," it is sometimes said, "till after the dispersal and deaths of the Apostles." In other words, if anybody between A.D. 30 and A.D. 68 wanted to learn about the life of Christ, he had necessarily to hunt up an Apostle or trust to some "oral tradition" of the Christians. The quasi-ecclesiastical pretensions of this assumption have made it acceptable in quarters where the insidious postulate against prophecy would not find such a ready acceptance. It is often repeated as if it afforded a sort of scientific clue to the history of our Gospels. Yet "this thing" said St. Paul, "hath not been done in a corner." Whatever the tendency in later and more troublous times, there is no indication of any desire at this period to keep the Christian tenets at all secret.

What is more unlikely than that there should be this abeyance of written accounts for some thirty or forty years? On the Day of Pentecost 3000 converts were made, many of them foreign Jewish proselytes from distant lands. Can we suppose that such men never afterwards required any written account of the life of Jesus, but were dependent always on oral traditions and the chance of meeting an Apostle? Did the Ethiopian eunuch return to the Court of Queen Candace and never correspond with Palestine on the subject of the faith which he had so hastily embraced? Were Paul's numerous and scattered converts from about A.D. 45 to A.D. 68 entirely dependent on his oral teaching and letters of admonition? Did no one throughout this period ever conceive the thought that the doings of Jesus should be put in writing? The assumption seems to conflict with all our experience of the ways of men.

We have to face, too, the fact that in Luke's opening chapters we have a use of documentary narrations seemingly as old as the career of John the Baptist. We have also to recognise the Evangelist's free handling of the common source or sources in the account of our Lord's Galilean ministry. The re-editing itself involves fresh testimony from a circle of first witnesses. We cannot otherwise conceive of anyone taking the liberty of reshaping a story which we may suppose had some ecclesiastical sanction. Luke's own position is clearly that of one who not only has this ecclesiastical story, but who claims the right from personal intercourse with eye-witnesses to publish a fuller and revised narration. Such claims seem to come best from a man who had been recently in touch with the circle at Jerusalem, a privilege which Luke had in A.D. 58-59. Finally, there is no force in the argument that Luke's mention of other and quite unauthoritative narratives (i. 1) implies a late date, when once we are rid of that theory that the first Christians did not write. A parallel case is the circulation of unauthorized accounts of Paul's teachings which is alluded to by that Apostle as early as A.D. 54 (2 Thess. ii. 4).

Let us now approach the subject of the predictions recorded by Luke with an open mind as to the date of his Gospel. First there is the great discourse on the fall of Jerusalem and the Final Day of Judgment, which all three Evangelists connect with an occasion of the disciples showing Jesus the splendour of the Temple (Matt. xxiv., Mark xiii., Luke xxi.). It is obvious that in the first two Gospels we have an account in which the two subjects were commingled, and that Luke was informed by a witness who distinguished the one from the other and knew how our Lord had foretold the dispensa-

tion of the Gentiles (Luke xxi. 24) which was to intervene. In this respect, then, and in the mention of Jerusalem being "compassed with armies," Luke's account is certainly richer. His informant, however, had not told him of the other sign of impending ruin, "the abomination of desolation standing in the holy place," nor of the prediction "of false Christs and false prophets." In these respects, therefore, Luke's account is poorer than the other, and it may be remarked again, if Luke wrote in A.D. 80, and was the kind of historian to press wherever possible our Lord's predictive power, it is curious that he omits these prophecies, which had been fulfilled in men's experience. The critics tell us they were published by Matthew and Mark as early as A.D. 70. How is it Luke misses such a good opportunity?

For those who admit prophecy as a fact there is nothing more suspicious in Luke recording this discourse with details not found elsewhere, than there is in his similar presentation of such scenes as the Last Supper and the Crucifixion. Our Lord's words were intentionally obscure; the discourse was uttered only once. It is natural that some details should impress themselves on the memory of one hearer, others on the memory of another. Nor is this all. With respect to that prophecy of the delimited "times of the Gentiles," we have, as I have already noticed, an extraneous testimony to its genuineness. St. Paul in Rom. xi. 25 can allude to this topic as a "mystery," or partly revealed Divine purpose. "A hardening in part," he says, "has befallen Israel until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in." This peculiar phraseology is best explained by a knowledge on Paul's part of that very element in Luke's record of the prophecy which seems most assailable. He, too, seems to be cognizant of a part at least of the prediction that "Jerusalem should be trodden down of the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled." But Paul's allusion to this matter is made *circa* A.D. 58. Obviously, then, there is no ground so far to regard Luke as embellishing our Lord's prophecy by the light of events which he had noticed occurring between the years 70 and 80.

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(To be continued.)