SOME POINTS IN THE SYNOPTIC PROBLEM.

III. Some Secondary Features.

In the discussion of so intricate a problem as that of the origin of the Synoptic Gospels, it is clearly desirable to portion out the phenomena as definitely as we can, and to form an estimate, as soon as we find it practicable to do so, of the relative importance of the different groups. Now the resemblances in substance, order, and language, broadly considered, between the first three Gospels, and the matter common to St. Matthew and St. Luke, but not found elsewhere, are, in regard to their mass at all events, so much more striking than any other characteristics of the Gospels which seem to have a bearing on the solution of the Synoptic problem, that we may justly call them primary features.

To this extent there would probably be very general agreement. As to whether we should reserve this name for these two classes of phenomena and treat all else as subsidiary, or as to the amount of significance which belongs to other facts, there would naturally be more difference of opinion. I should not venture myself to say that all other phenomena are secondary, though it seems to me that those to which I shall be referring in this paper may fairly be so described, without any intention to represent them as unimportant. But I admit that in such an investigation every classification must be more or less provisional till a real solution is reached, if it ever is reached.

1. Certain of the facts may, according to the manner in which they are viewed, be connected with or detached from those main groups which I have already indicated. For example, the bulk of the phenomena of agreement between the first three Gospels can, in the view of a large number of

critics at the present day, be best explained on the assumption that the first and third used a document substantially the same as our St. Mark. But the possibility cannot be excluded that St. Mark, in its exact present form, may contain touches derived from St. Matthew and St. Luke, which were imparted to it by an editor or editors, or simply by copyists, who were familiar with these two Gospels. Out of the general mass of agreements, some may be singled out for investigation which can, it may be thought, be thus most easily accounted for. It may conceivably in this way be established that the original Mark, (*Ur-Marcus*) differed more or less considerably from our St. Mark, and some idea may be formed of the character of the differences. And speculation of this kind may even be pushed so far as essentially to modify the view at which so many critics have arrived, that the dependence is mainly on the side of St. Matthew and St. Luke; and to carry us back a considerable distance in the direction of the position which is now so generally discarded, that St. Mark is compiled from them. I do not propose to enter into this question, as it would take me too far out of the course of inquiry which I have been following.

2. Again, in the opinion of Mr. F. P. Badham [1] the "doublets, repetitions, and inconsistencies" in the several Gospels would certainly rank among the primary features. In fact he finds mainly in them the key to the whole problem. I shall refrain from discussing his theory also. Mr. Badham works it out with great ingenuity, and his argument merits careful consideration on the part of those who are making a special study of the Synoptic problem. But he is at variance with the views of the majority of other investigators on some of the points on which there is most tendency to agreement. And it will be generally felt that a new theory must obtain some important adhe-

[1] *The Formation of the Gospels*, 1891.

sions, before it becomes worth while to make it the subject of minute criticism in papers intended for general readers. Yet one or two remarks on the inferences to be drawn from "doublets" may not be out of place. Mr. Badham allows that "history repeats itself," and that "our Lord may have reiterated His maxims frequently." But he adds: "It is unlikely that the earliest Evangelists, with a plethora of material, would reproduce such reiteration in writing. In the case of didactic incidents, they would naturally record one of a kind."[1]

By the help of this principle, which has been applied for the analysis of Genesis and other books of the Hexateuch into earlier elements, he thinks that he can distinguish documents which have been put together in our Gospels. But it seems at least somewhat to detract from the reliableness of this method in the case of the Gospels, that the writers of our present Gospels cannot, at the furthest, have been removed by more than a generation or so from "the earliest evangelists." If, therefore, it did not seem to our evangelists unnecessary to embody incidents and sayings closely similar in form, it is difficult to say that those who were only by a comparatively short interval their predecessors, and shared their intellectual temper, and who, *ex hypothesi*, found these similar narratives current in tradition or knew them to be actually connected with different occasions, should in many instances have recorded both. I would add that the number of what can fairly be regarded as "doublets" seems to me to be often much exaggerated, and that of the points which can reasonably be reckoned as inconsistencies, vastly so.

Nevertheless, the question of the existence of "doublets" is not without importance; it has a bearing, as it seems to me, on the subject which was discussed in my last paper. It will be very generally conceded at the present time that

[1] *The Formation of the Gospels*, p. 11.

some reduplications of events, and of sayings, may have taken place through the same fact being handed down by different reporters. And further, it may be taken for certain that our Lord must have made many different applications of the same sayings, and worked out what were substantially the same figures of speech in slightly varying ways. This is in accordance with the laws of the human mind, and in particular all do it who are in any sense prophets,—who feel that they have a message to mankind. How eminently this is true, for example, of Carlyle and Ruskin. Or to take another example: F. D. Maurice wrote towards the end of his life, "I have but a few things to say, and I can but repeat them." It is a sign of depth and intensity, not of poverty of thought, so to repeat. Moreover, it was necessary that our Lord should so act in order that the truths to be conveyed might be duly impressed upon the minds of His hearers.

Now when we realise that, as indeed even the repetitions in a single Gospel taken by itself would show, pieces of teaching or incidents must have been recorded in written documents, or in oral tradition, which had much in common, but yet had some traits or attendant circumstances which differentiated them, we see how possible it is that in the case of many of the parallel naratives in St. Matthew and St. Luke which have been treated as both derived from the "Logia," their diverse settings and other peculiarities in each, may in reality point to a difference of derivation. And at all events it cannot be legitimate, both, on the one hand, to infer that "doublets" when occurring in the *same* work, whether it be Genesis or a Gospel, are a sign of *difference of source*, but that when two narratives in *different* Gospels bear precisely the kind of relation to one another that "doublets" do, they must be taken from *the same source*. And this inconsistency cannot but bring home to our minds how far we still are from any well-ascertained principles of critical inquiry.

3. There is another group of facts which, though it may justly be reckoned as a subsidiary one, needs to be considered here with somewhat greater care, because it has a more direct bearing on the relation of the Synoptists to the "Logia." One class of agreements between St. Mark and the other two Synoptists — or more particularly between him and St. Matthew—seems to stand on a different footing from the rest. Though St. Mark is mainly occupied with narratives of incidents, including short sayings, he does at some critical points in his Gospel, give portions of discourses which are also reported in the other two. But whereas he is, as a rule, fuller than St. Matthew or St. Luke in the narratives that he has in common with them, he is briefer in these reports of discourses than St. Matthew, and also, in one instance, than St. Luke. They give what he gives, but they have more that is closely connected with it.[1] It may, therefore, be doubted whether in this class of passages, his is really the most original account.

Weiss's theory that St. Mark, as well as the authors of the first and third Gospels, knew and used the "Logia," the "oldest Apostolic source," as he terms it, may most reasonably be made to rest mainly on the ground of the phenomena just noted.[2] He would thus explain these discourses

[1] The passages referred to are :—

On the power by which Christ cast out devils—Mark iii. 23–30; Matt. xii. 24-37; Luke xi. 15-26.

The teaching by Parables—Mark iv. 1-34; Matt. xiii. 1–52; Luke viii. 5–18;

The charge to the twelve—Mark vi. 8–13; Matt. x. 5–42; Luke ix. 3–5;

Concerning offences—Mark ix. 35–50; Matt. xviii. 1–35; Luke ix. 46–50;

Denunciation of the Pharisees and Scribes—Mark xii. 38–40; Matt. xxiii.; Luke xx. 45–47;

Discourse on the Last Things—Mark xiii.; Matt. xxiv., xxv.; Luke xxi. 25–36.

The preaching of the Baptist—Mark i. 7, 8; Matt. iii. 3–12; Luke iii. 7–17.

[2] He did not state the evidence quite as I have done. His statement seems to me to mix up the points which appear most favourable to his view with

which are preserved, in some measure in all three, and so far as they all extend, in nearly identical form. They all drew from the same document, the great repertory of the discourses of the Lord. Weiss does not, however, stop here. Having once assumed a knowledge of the "Logia" on the part of St. Mark, and seeing, too, that he does not restrict the contents of the "Logia" to discourses, he is naturally tempted to derive many passages that the three Synoptists have in common from the "Logia." He further accounts for the facts noted under (4), below, by this same theory. Supposing all three Evangelists to be drawing from the "Logia" in the passages where, in two of the three parallels, the phenomena in question occur, he thinks there are details in the "Logia" which St. Mark omitted, but which were retained by the other two.

Weiss does not, however, appear to have made any converts. There is an arbitrariness about the explanations offered by this theory, which renders it very unattractive. No clear criteria seem to be left for determining what came from the "Logia" and what from recollections of St. Peter's preaching. There are, moreover, more fundamental objections to it. St. Mark is not averse to giving full accounts. On the contrary, in what all three relate, he is usually the fullest. There is no good reason why he should have made an exception in the case of discourses, if he had access to the same comparatively full report of them as the other two.[1] It would be still more strange that he should not, either in fuller or briefer form, have given the Sermon on the Mount, the delivery of which not less clearly marked an epoch, and which contained teaching certainly not less

others the bearing of which is most debatable. See his *Introduction to N.T.*, p. 222, n. 1.

[1] As a matter of fact, too, in a tolerably long discourse, *on eating with unwashed hands*, Mark vii. 5–23, he is somewhat fuller than St. Matthew (xv. 2–20) while St. Luke is wanting. Again, in the chief example of the *Teaching by Parables*, the parable of the sower and its interpretation, he is the fullest.

characteristic, than the discourses actually reported by him did. Yet this was by common consent contained in the "Logia."

Another and probably the more common view of the relation of the three Synoptists to one another in the passages now under consideration, is, that here too the first and third copied from St. Mark, but that they wove the additional matter which they found in their other source on to that which he had recorded. It should, however, be observed, that in this other source there clearly *may* have been contained not only the additional matter which St. Matthew and (in one instance) St. Luke give, but also portions corresponding to, and even verbally identical with, those which St. Mark has preserved. Indeed, it seems most probable that this should have been the case, for the discourses in question in St. Matthew, and in the one case in St. Luke, present a general appearance of being connected wholes. And the additional sayings sometimes clearly presuppose words similar to St. Mark's in the source from which they are taken. See, for example, Matt. xii. 27, 28, and Luke xi. 19, 20; or again, Matt. xxiii. 3–5. Again, it is surely improbable that one of the principle sources from which our St. Matthew was derived should have contained only the parables which St. Mark does not give, and not the most striking parable of all, that of the sower.

Now, if we are justified by these considerations, in inferring that another document besides St. Mark, of which the latter was independent, had some corresponding matter, this helps us to realise that narratives and sayings and even discourses, might be handed down in more or less closely similar form by different channels, and tends to show that the assumption which many critics are wont to make, that wherever there is identity of form in two of the Gospels there must be direct dependence upon one

another, or upon a common document, is without foundation.

4. I pass on to another secondary feature. Even in the narrative portions where all three Synoptists are parallel, there are some touches, occasional similarities of form, both in sayings and descriptions, common to St. Matthew and St. Luke, but not contained in St. Mark. These, though limited in number, are noticeable from the contrast they present to the prevailing characteristics of the relationship of St. Matthew and St. Luke to St. Mark. For it is well-known that, while in many phrases all three agree, where two only agree, St. Mark is usually one of them.

It must probably have occurred independently to many students of the Synoptic problem, as it had to the present writer, that the cases of which I am now speaking must be the crucial ones for deciding whether St. Luke was directly dependent upon our St. Matthew. And it is upon these cases mainly that Simons bases his argument in his thesis entitled, "*Did the third evangelist use the canonical Matthew?*"[1] He thinks, indeed, that he finds other signs of such a use. But he lays no great stress on them; and in considering the theory we may safely confine our attention, at least in the first instance, to this class of facts.

Simons' thesis was directed against two other explanations of the phenomena in question; (*a*) that of Holtzmann, who supposed them to be relics of the use of the *Original Mark*, which he imagined to be not in all points fully and completely represented in our St. Mark. This theory its author has since abandoned; (*b*) that of Weiss, already referred to, that they were derived from the "Logia," to which in the passages in question all three Synoptists were indebted, but from which St. Matthew and St. Luke had in common retained some traits which St. Mark had omitted.

[1] *Hat der dritte Evangelist den kanonischen Matthäus benutzt?* Von Eduard Simons. Bonn, 1880.

Against both of these Simons' argument appears to be very telling. And it is, so far as it extends, a clear and thorough piece of work. He examines the words and expressions which they both have, and which are not in the parallel passages in St. Mark, and also their common omissions from St. Mark. Omissions of themselves should not count for much. The same motive might influence two writers to make them in using St. Mark. Nevertheless, when, taken in conjunction with more positive features, their effect is, that a sentence or passage as a whole has acquired the same cast in both, they are worthy of being noted. When the whole set of phenomena are collected together, though they are confined to slight touches, they undoubtedly suffice to make a definite impression upon the mind, and to suggest Simons' explanation.[1]

But, on the other side, the difficulties of the view that St. Luke used our St. Matthew have to be considered. With these, Simons does not really grapple. He shows, indeed, a certain consciousness both of the slenderness of the evidences of connection, and of the many particulars in which the two evangelists differ, for he repeatedly insists that he supposes the similarities to have been produced only by *reminiscences* of the canonical St. Matthew on the part of the third evangelist. It must still remain strange that his reminiscences should not have been of a more substantial kind. Further he acknowledges that the differences between the two Gospels would be fatal to his theory, were it not for the "Logia." When these differences are too troublesome he has the resource of suggesting that St. Luke followed this document instead of the canonical St. Matthew.[2] But he subjects this explanation

[1] As illustrations of passages in which such agreements of St. Matthew and St. Luke, against St. Mark, occur, take Matt. ix. 1–8 : Luke v. 17–26 (Mark ii. 1–12). Matt. xxi. 23–27 ; Luke xx. 1–8 (Mark xi. 27–33). Matt. xxi. 33–46 ; Luke xx. 9–19 (Mark xii. 1–12).

[2] Simons, *ib.*, p. 8.

to no such examination as, even on the assumption that both evangelists did use the "Logia," it would require; while if our conclusion in the last article was correct, the ground is here cut away from under his feet.

We have to consider, then, whether the agreements between the first and third Gospels of the class now before us, can be explained otherwise than by assuming a knowledge and recollection of the one by the other. I believe that the operation of the following causes is sufficient to account for them. (*a*) In adapting St. Mark's narrative some of the same changes would naturally suggest themselves to both writers. Many coincidences between them might occur, which it would not be fair to call the result of accident; for the same general principles would in part guide both evangelists in dealing with the same authority. (*b*) Tradition as known to both may have been marked by these forms of expression in which they differ from St. Mark. (*c*) For some of the similarities, copyists may be responsible. A process of assimilation in the texts of the Gospels may have been going on at a time prior to the earliest of which textual criticism can give us any information, like that which we know to have taken place at a later time.[1]

The agreements which I have just been discussing are for the most part individually slight and the class is not extensive. The explanations just suggested will, it seems to me, remove the necessity for the hypothesis of direct knowledge by one evangelist of the work of the other. It would be quite a different thing to offer such explanations as adequate of themselves to account for the great mass of close resemblances, amounting in some cases to identity, in the matter contained in St. Matthew and St. Luke. Yet they may rightly have the effect of modifying in some degree our view of those parallels. In particular, in many

[1] Cf. Sanday, EXPOSITOR for March, 1891, p. 191.

places where there was originally only general similarity, assimilation by copyists may have done the rest. For it should be noticed that this assimilation would especially go on, wherever there was already a good deal of likeness.

The points which have been considered in this paper have their independent interest. In addition to this they seem to strengthen somewhat the argument of the last paper against the supposition that St. Matthew and St. Luke used a common document. Any more direct suggestions as to the composition of these Gospels had better be reserved till after we have considered the question of the authorship of the third Gospel, which I propose to do in another paper. But before concluding this one, it will be interesting to quote the following opinion from Dr. Salmon's *Introduction to the New Testament*, "What I have said gives me occasion to remark that theories as to one of the Synoptics having copied another, seem to me deserving consideration only if we confine them to the relations of Mark to the other two, for Matthew and Luke show every sign of being quite independent of each other."[1] I understand him in the closing words to refer to the question ot dependence through the use of a common document as well as to direct dependence. Such an opinion from a scholar who has shown that he has no prejudice against the belief that the Synoptists used a common written source or sources, and who holds that they had such "a common source, which is represented most fully by St. Mark,"[2] should certainly have weight.

V. H. STANTON

[1] *Introduction to New Testament*, 1st ed., p. 167.
[2] *Ib.*, p. 187.