

disciples to perform the work of an historian. None of them claim such authorization. Only Luke¹ makes any reference to the motives which led him to undertake the task of writing, and he claims no other than a personal desire to record a knowledge which he deemed fuller than that of others.

The four Gospels are evidently final and authoritative collections of oral histories and compilations of narratives which were already circulating among the early Christians. In the cases of Matthew and John, these materials were wrought upon the fabric of their own personal observation and experience.

There is in none of them any consistent regard to the order of time or of place. The principle of arrangement evidently is to be found in the moral similarities of the materials, and not in their chronological sequences. Different events are clustered together which were widely separated. Whole chapters of parables are given as if they had been delivered in a single discourse. We should never have known from Matthew, Mark, or Luke, that our Lord was accustomed to go up to Jerusalem to the great Jewish feasts; but we do get it from John, who is mainly concerned with the history and discourses of his Master in Judæa. Matthew, on the other hand, bestows his attention upon that part of the Saviour's life which was spent in Galilee. Moreover, he seldom enters, as John does,

¹ Luke i. 1-4. "Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us, even as they delivered them unto us, which from the beginning were eye-witnesses, and ministers of the word; it seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus, that thou mightest know the certainty of those things wherein thou hast been instructed."