

simple, straightforward New Testament record" has produced upon multitudes such a lasting impression of its self-evidencing truthfulness, that the ingenious arguments and speculations of unbelief have been unable to remove the impression. The sceptical theory which would overthrow the record has often seemed little better than "an outrage upon common sense." The Gospels give no impression that their writers were either weak-minded, fanciful, or untruthful. It is no uncommon experience, that of Lacordaire, who turned from the ingenious and learned pages of Strauss, and found that it never needed more than a few minutes' reading in the Gospels to dissipate the charm of a vain science, and to enable him to smile inwardly at the impotence to which God has condemned error. And this impression of truthfulness is vastly deepened when one turns from the Gospels to read the legends of Hercules, the confused accounts of the life of Buddha, or the stories of mediæval miracle-working saints. If one desires what, to most persons, will be a sufficient evidence of the historicity of the evangelic accounts, he will only need to peruse, by way of contrast with them, the so-called Apocryphal Gospels, which are indubitably forged, and in which the writers give the most reckless scope to their fancies in ascribing fictitious marvels to Jesus of Nazareth. One might dwell on this at length, and show the simplicity and naturalness of the references to Jesus in the Gospel histories as contrasted with the wild workings of invention in the Apocryphal accounts. The four evangelists give no play to their emotions or their fancies, and appear to be faithfully recording only what they have seen and known.

2. We have a second reason for accepting the Gospels as true histories, from the fact that they are the narratives of men who witnessed the life of Christ, or of those who were friends of eye-witnesses. It is certain that they were composed in the language in use during the first Christian century—that is, in what is called Hellenistic Greek—and we have the testimony of ecclesiastical writers for the first three centuries that they were composed by the men whose names they bear, a testimony supported by the heretical writers and pagan sceptics of that period. The doubts which were raised concerning some of the books that were finally accepted show that the critical spirit was not wanting in the early Church. The primitive Christians were not credulous in this matter; they received only on testimony and evidence. Tertullian says of the four Gospels that they have existed "from the beginning," and "are coeval with the churches themselves." Clement of Alexandria appeals to the four Gospels as being the only authentic history of Christ that has been handed down to us. Justin Martyr, born in Palestine about the year 100, refers to the "Memoirs of the Apostles," making one hundred and twenty allusions to the Gospel history which correspond to the records that we hold to-day. He speaks of these Memoirs as composed by "the apostles and their companions." Professor Fisher has said: "The universal reception of the four Gospels as having exclusive authority by the churches in the closing part of the

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