

the appearance of Jesus himself among them. Nor does it weaken, by any means, the force of the evidence to remember that the resurrection was an event entirely unexpected by the disciples themselves, so much so that, when intelligence was first brought to them of the fact, they utterly refused to believe it, and it was only after the appearance of the risen Saviour among them that their lingering doubts were dispelled. From this time the Evangelists were much in the Master's company. Some of them were present when He said to Thomas, "Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side." They heard from day to day His teachings, as he expounded to them the things concerning His kingdom; and, last of all, they beheld Him as He "ascended up on high," leading "captivity captive," until "a cloud received Him out of their sight." What wonder, then, that from that hour they preached everywhere that Christ had risen?

If we now consider the motives by which the disciples were influenced, we shall find their testimony reliable still. Evidently their motives were not selfish; for what could they possibly gain by declaring that Christ had risen if they knew that such was not the case? The testimony brought them no honor,—it opened up no pathway to wealth or power. On the contrary, it identified them with a cause universally hated and despised,—it laid them under the ban of both the civil and the ecclesiastical powers,—it sent them forth as wanderers from home and country; and, worse than all, it exposed them continually to death in its most appalling forms. So far as this world was concerned, there was everything to lose and nothing to gain by this testimony; and yet these witnesses held on their way, unmoved by threats, undeterred by fiercest persecutions, and even in death gloried in the NAME they bore, and testified, with their latest breath, that Christ had risen from the dead.

It is impossible to ascertain, with any degree of certainty, when the Gospel history was first reduced to writing, but it seems morally certain that Matthew's narrative was not composed before A.D. 50, or about twenty years after the resurrection of Jesus had taken place. During this interval the great facts of the Gospel history were communicated orally by those who had been eye-witnesses of the same; but as years passed by it became necessary for the edification of the churches, and for the uncorrupted preservation of the truth, that these oral traditions should be reduced to writing. Hence those who were most competent for the task wrote "as they were moved by the Holy Ghost;" and in the four Gospels which bear their names we have the result of their inspired labors.

That the narrative of the Saviour's life and death should have remained so long unwritten need excite no surprise. It is only since the era of the printing-press and the telegraph that history is photographed as it proceeds, and that the published document becomes contemporaneous with the events which it records. In Apostolic times the living voice was the chief means of communication; and even when events were committed to writing, the multiplication of copies, by the process of transcribing, was necessarily very slow. Viewed from the human side we may regard the Gospel histories as