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CHRIST AS POET

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AUTHOR OF "COMEDY AND HUMOUR OF THE BIBLE", "THE FUNCTION OF THE BIBLE IN LITERATURE", ETC.

SAINTE MATTHEW was the "Boswell" of Christ! For inventing and employing a metaphor that, by anachronism and anti-climax, signalizes the relations of Christ and His disciple, the Synoptic writer, in terms of modern literary history, I shall, no doubt, be enfiladed by all sorts of critics. If not accused of irreverence, I shall be charged with writing in very questionable taste. Or, taking the strictly literary point of view as being in good taste as well as being culturally worth while, I shall be told that I have employed an anachronism so audacious and anomalous as to make it unwarrantable and an anti-climax so impossible as to make it absurd. The anachronism, however, is only for pedagogical purposes, and is therefore valid; but it is valid the more because St. Matthew, in a literary way more than the other Synoptic writers and even St. John, displayed, in the etymological sense of the term, an

"enthusiasm" for the Master quite like Boswell's for Johnson, and "hung on" the Master's words—the *ipsissima verba*—and reported them with the same kind of stenographic and *verbatim* accuracy as did Boswell with Johnson's "talk". For St. Matthew, as for Boswell, what was written was done under the inspiration of an intense admiring affection and worship and must, therefore, be done with the mind as reverently accurate and veracious as the stylus or pen of the writer was finely pointed and his hand solicitous of legibility. At any rate, it is from the Gospel "according to Matthew" (whether that means actually written by St. Matthew or by another writer who made a "revised and enlarged edition" of Aramaic *Logia*, that is *Sayings* of Christ, compiled by St. Matthew)—it is from this Gospel, pre-eminently, that we shall discover the *Poet* in the mind and heart and speech of Christ.

To that pleasant adventure in literary psychology, I address this essay.