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Brief Sketch of the Synoptic Problem and the Relation of the First Three Evangelists to St. John.

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Luke, the Evangelist, characterizes his gospel as a "treatise of all that Jesus began both to do and to teach." Acts 1, 1. Accordingly, we may term the four gospels treatises of all that Jesus did and taught. These historical records embrace almost one half of the New Testament. The longest gospel was written by St. Luke, who, in point of bulk, has contributed more than one-fourth of the New Testament writings, the greatest portion by any New Testament penman.

A characteristic feature of the gospels is that they quote Christ's words amply. The expressions ἀπεκρίθη or ἀποκριθεὶς ὁ Ἰησοῦς, εἶπεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς, ἔλεγεν πρὸς αὐτούς, ἐλάλησεν Ἰησοῦς, ἔφη αὐτοῖς, ἐτέλεσεν τοὺς λόγους, etc., occur frequently. The greater half of the Gospel according to St. Matthew comprises Jesus' spoken word; in fact, His oral teaching constitutes nearly one half of the four gospels.

The agreement of Matthew's, Mark's, and Luke's gospels with each other is truly remarkable, and the similarity becomes pronounced when a comparison is made with the Gospel according to St. John. At the same time, upon a closer examination, a surprising difference between the first three evangelists will be noticed. This harmony and this divergency is termed the Synoptic Problem.

Time and again, the deviating elements have been advanced as an argument against the inspiration of the Bible. It will suffice to adduce one dictum, that by Dr. Marcus Dods, who says: "The second fact which appears to be incompatible with the idea of verbal inspiration is the fact that those who record the sayings of our Lord greatly differ in their reports." (*The Bible: Its Origin and Nature*, p. 115.) On the other hand, Semler, Lessing, and others argued against the authenticity of the gospels in view of their uniformity. (*L. u. W.* 42, 4, 122.)

“World without End.”

Many a churchgoer is perplexed by the phrase which he hears, on an average, once in every service, “world without end.” The connection in which the words occur in the collects is such that one instinctively feels what is meant. There is hardly a worshiper of ordinary intelligence who would not say that according to his surmise the phrase is a synonym of “always” or “forever.” But thoughtful people would like to have the words explained, and a few remarks on them will not be amiss.

The phrase is found in the English Bible. As far as I am able to discover, it occurs twice in the King James Version, in Is. 45, 17 and Eph. 3, 21. The former passage reads: “But Israel shall be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation; ye shall not be ashamed nor confounded world without end”; the latter: “Unto Him be glory in the Church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end.” If we look at the original, it is clear at once that the meaning of the phrase in both instances is “forever.” In the Isaiah passage the respective Hebrew words are עַד עֲלֵי־עַד, meaning, “to the ages of eternity,” which, of course, is equivalent to “always,” “forever.” Eph. 3, 21, we have a remarkable accumulation of impressive words: *εἰς πάσας τὰς γενεὰς τοῦ αἰῶνος τῶν αἰώνων*. Literally translated, the meaning is: “to all the generations of the age of the ages.” Age of the ages (*αἶων τῶν αἰώνων*) is an expression formed in Hebrew fashion to denote the highest degree of something. Compare Holy of Holies. Age of the ages is the latest age, the age without end, eternity. We might render therefore: “to all the generations of eternity.” Eternity is here thought of as comprising an endless number of generations, generation standing for the time normally occupied by a generation. The New Testament Greek-German Lexicon of Preuscher, which is being brought out at present in a new edition by Walter Bauer and has reached the seventh instalment, says in explanation of *γενεά*:

"3. Die Zeit einer Generation . . . als ungefaehr 33 Jahre angenommen, indem der zunaechst festgehaltene Begriff mehr und mehr schwindet und der des Zeitabschnittes uebrigbleibt." If we said, "to all the centuries of eternity," we should have something very similar. The Greek, then, simply is a strong term expressive of endless duration. This concludes one section of my brief examination.

The question remains: How could the idea "to all eternity, forever," be clothed in these words, "world without end"? We must recall that the Greek word *αἰών*, which has the meanings "age" and "eternity," likewise is used in the sense "world." For instance, in Heb. 1, 2 we read that God, through Christ, made the worlds (*τοὺς αἰῶνας*) and in Heb. 11, 3, that the worlds (*τοὺς αἰῶνας*) were framed by the Word of God. The English scholars used this translation likewise in passages where they might have rendered "time" or "age." The *Standard Dictionary* quotes 1 Cor. 10, 11, "upon whom the ends of the world are come," which, if literally translated, would read: "upon whom the ends of the ages have come." As the *Standard Dictionary* remarks, world is used in the sense of "a period in the course of the divine dispensation; an age, eon, or dispensation." Substitute eon for world in the phrase under discussion, so that it reads "eon without end," and the words become more intelligible to us. We are then no longer thinking of this material world, but of a period of time. Let us consider, furthermore, that the prepositional phrase "without end" is a modifier belonging to world and can be given by the adjective "endless," "eternal"; making the substitution, we have the expression "endless eon." But it must be admitted that even with these changes the expression "throughout all ages, endless eon," still sounds somewhat mystifying. How is the construction to be explained? We have to take eon as an accusative (objective case), expressing extent of time and used adverbially. Compare the objective case in the sentence: He suffered *many years*. It is true, the singular "eon" is unusual in such a construction. According to our present way of speaking we should say "throughout all ages, endless eons," employing the plural. If we change the phrase in the doxology, Eph. 3, 21, to read: "Unto Him be glory throughout all ages, endless eons," we shall probably still be taken aback somewhat by this use of the objective case, but we shall understand what is meant. The English objective case would not cause this difficulty in a sentence like the following: Glory be to Him throughout all ages, all the years of eternity. Our modern usage has made us quite familiar with such

constructions. Conceive "world without end" to be such an adverbial accusative, expressing extent of time, and the problem of the phrase will be solved.

In conclusion I shall quote what *Cook's Commentary* says concerning these words: "The formula 'world without end' has grown so familiar to us that it seems hopeless to change it; but it is inexact and very misleading (this will be seen by any attempt to translate it into a foreign language). If it were possible, it would be better to substitute for the word in the text, 'through the duration of all time.' "
