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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.)

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## How to Remain Abreast of the Times in Knowing Theological Literature.

Almost a thousand years before Christ the wise King Solomon stated that of the making of books there is no end. He had good reasons for this complaint, if it is to be regarded as a complaint. He himself was a most voluminous author, having written, according to Scriptures, three thousand proverbs and a thousand and five songs. His library, or the Royal Library, may well have contained thousands of manuscripts. Even in the days of Abraham the library of Ur of the Chaldees was noted for its many treatises, remnants of which have lately been excavated. Professor Sayce states that the very fellaheen of Egypt used the books of their day with the greatest facility. The civilization of the entire Orient in the time between 2000 and 600 B. C. was at least as high, regarded from the standpoint of mere human advancement, as that of the England of George III. So the libraries were well stocked, and Solomon owned his share of the world's books. It is not to be wondered at, therefore, that he felt the obligation of keeping in touch with the world's progress in letters as a task.

This task has grown to immense proportions since the invention of the printing-press. Even in Luther's days, when all the setting was done with rather clumsy letters, and entirely by hand, it required a stupendous amount of energy to remain abreast of the times in the matter of new publications. Since the time of Luther the difficulties of the problem have multiplied in a most amazing manner. In Europe, libraries of one million volumes are no longer unusual. In America we have at least the Congressional Library

that has assumed such proportions, while the libraries of many of our universities and most of our large cities now include between five hundred thousand and one million volumes, and many of them are growing at the rate of three thousand volumes a month, or more than thirty thousand volumes a year. This means, of course, that no individual person can be at home in every department of human learning. The encyclopedias which have now been published for about a century have become an actual necessity in the life of a cultured person.

But what is true in a general way concerning the entire field of human knowledge is true also of the department of theology. Just as we have specialists in every division of medicine and surgery, just as we have specialists who have divided the field of dentistry in a number of special departments, just as the legal profession has now been developed to such an extent as to make specialized branches necessary, so we are realizing more and more that the field of theology has grown to most amazing proportions.

This does not mean that we shall have to divide the profession, as the other professions have been divided, or separated, into subsidiary departments. It is true that the Scriptures have given us a clear hint concerning the possibility of having auxiliary offices in the Church, all of them subsidiary, or ancillary, to the one office of the ministry which God Himself has established. It is true that we now have deacons and deaconesses; we have Christian day-school teachers and Sunday-school teachers; we have special officers in charge of charitable institutions and certain features of educational endeavor. But this is all in the interest of more efficient work. We cannot relieve the one great office of the Church of its responsibility with regard to the whole field of a congregation's activity. For that reason we cannot change fundamentally the manner of training which is given to the men who are preparing themselves for the holy ministry. They are required to be "apt to teach," that is, they are to be able to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ for the salvation of men, witnessing for the Savior both publicly and privately. This includes all the pastoral work and the educational work of a congregation as well. For that reason we must continue to give courses in fundamentals of theological education, such as exegesis, dogmatics, homiletics, catechetics, and church history. In these departments of knowledge every candidate for the ministry ought to be at home.

But after one has entered the ministry, the question very naturally arises: How may I remain in touch with the general field

of theology, so that I may at least in a general way be familiar with the outstanding publications in the field? The interest of a pastor will be connected with the actual preparation for his ministry, first of all. He will actually want to know which books in the great departments of theology will be of direct value to him for the purpose of remaining in touch with theological thought, especially in its application to changing conditions in the Church. Besides, most pastors will feel themselves attracted to the one or the other department of theological learning. One pastor will desire to make further progress in the field of exegetical theology, not only by studying Scriptures for himself, but also by making use of the material gathered by others. Another may be interested in systematic theology, another in historical theology, and still another in practical theology. Without becoming a one-sided specialist, a pastor will pay particular attention to special features in his chosen field of knowledge. And to this must be added a third fact, namely, that most pastors will want to know at least what is being done in the general field of theological knowledge, since it may happen at any time that a conference paper must be written or some other particular study is required of them.

The question is a very practical one, but it can be solved without too much difficulty. In the first place, every pastor will be able to set down a nucleus of a theological library on the basis of his notes in encyclopedia and methodology. To this may be added the bibliographical notations which one will make from time to time as the teacher mentions a valuable book in any one department of theological knowledge. If these lists are entered in a special notebook, with such notations of a critical nature as may be available, there will be an excellent basis for further exposition. Some further material can always be gotten from catalogs of theological seminaries, especially of the more conservative type. To some extent the book-lists of the great publishers will prove of value, although it may be necessary to confine oneself to such publications as come from reliable houses and are put out by standard authors.

But one of the best sources of information, also for the further development of a good theological bibliography, is that which is contained in the various reviews in our own theological publications and in those of other conservative bodies. It is true that one may not wish to index book reviews. One may, of course, occasionally enter a few sentences from a thorough book review in his commonplace book. But one may always do one thing without trouble, and that is to enter the name of the book in his list of theological pub-

lications, possibly with a short characterization of the book or with the notation as to whether the reviewer gave a favorable or an unfavorable opinion. If this idea is carried out consistently for a number of years, every pastor ought to be in possession of a list of books which will stand him in very good stead and will most likely serve for all the regular needs and for some of the extraordinary requirements in the work of his office.

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