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I. THE CHRISTO-CENTRIC PRINCIPLE OF THEOLOGY.¹

THE work to which special reference is here made is the product of an able and distinguished scholar, who is a theological professor in the Reformed (German) Church. He is the author of an article in the *Schaff-Herzog Encyclopædia* which clearly foreshadowed the distinctive principle of the work before us, and the moulding influence of that principle, as a constructive one, upon the whole system of theology. This assists us, in view of the fact that only the first volume of the "Institutes" has as yet been issued, in estimating the comprehensive sweep and the modifying effect of Dr. Gerhart's fundamental assumption, in relation to his theology as a whole.

It is not intended in these remarks to attempt an articulate examination of the doctrines maintained in the author's theological system, but to devote particular attention to its constructive principle. The whole system is based upon what is denominated the

¹INSTITUTES OF THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION. *By Emanuel V. Gerhart, D. D., LL. D., Professor of Systematic and Practical Theology in the Theological Seminary of the Reformed Church, Lancaster, Pa.* With an Introduction by Philip Schaff, D. D., LL. D., Professor of Church History in Union Theological Seminary, New York. New York: A. C. Armstrong & Son, 51 East Tenth street, near Broadway. 1891. 8vo., pp. 754.

V. THE FOUR GOSPELS: THEIR DISTINCTIVE CHARACTERISTICS.

The four Gospels of Jesus Christ are in many respects like him whose life they record, and whose nature, character and mission they set forth. They are of divine origin and nature, inspired and infallible, "full of grace and truth." They also bear all the marks of human origin, and are full of diverse human nature. Christ came as the Saviour of all men, "a light to lighten the Gentiles and the glory of his people Israel," and he reaches out in helpful sympathy to all peoples of every age. So these Gospels are universal in their adaptations. But he was also a Jew, "sent unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel," the "Son of David, the Son of Abraham." So each Gospel was primarily written for a certain class of people, appealed particularly to certain human wants and needs, and was even specially adapted to certain national characteristics. Again, as Jesus consistently unites the most diverse and complex elements in the unity of his being, so these Gospels, while altogether giving one consistent narrative of his life, and a consistent representation of his nature, character and mission, yet tell the story in a variety of ways, emphasize different elements of their subject's nature, and present very different views of his character and mission. When we consider by whom each of these Gospels was written, for whom, with what purpose, and under what circumstances and influences, we see that they must, naturally and necessarily, exhibit marked distinctive characteristics. It is our present purpose to show the diverse aspects in which they present Christ and Christian truth, and their differences in spirit and style. Let us therefore compare and contrast them.

I. AUTHORS, AND PEOPLE FOR WHOM PRIMARILY INTENDED.

Matthew was a converted Jewish tax-gatherer. He probably wrote at Jerusalem, where the Apostle James was the presiding

genius of the church. His Gospel is written in the very spirit, if not under the direct influence of James, the great representative of the Hebrew element in the Apostolic Church. Mark, according to most authentic tradition, was the intimate associate of Peter, and compiled his Gospel from the historical discourses of the apostle. He seems to have caught the hopeful, ardent spirit of his master. Luke was a cultured Gentile (probably Greek) physician, and the companion of Paul, "the Apostle to the Gentiles." John was "the disciple whom Jesus loved," who was admitted to the closest communion with the divine Teacher, and was lifted to the highest plane of spiritual thought and feeling.

The primary mission of Matthew's Gospel, like that of its subject, was "unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel." It is "the book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham." It was written for the Jew in love with the history and traditions of his nation, and "waiting for the consolation of Israel." It comes to God's covenant people, Abraham's seed according to the flesh, and David's kingdom. It presents Jesus as the Anointed Saviour, the Messiah, David's Heir and Abraham's Seed, King of Israel and Promised One.

Mark wrote for the Romans, a people practical and energetic, living in and for the present, uninfluenced by tradition or sentiment or philosophy. His Gospel appeals to these principles of Roman character: respect for *facts*, respect for *practical deeds*, and respect for *proress*.

Luke wrote for the Gentile "seeking the Lord, if haply he might feel after him, and find him." His gospel appeals to the man who has tried heathen philosophy and morality, and found them wanting. It is, like its subject, "a light to lighten the Gentiles." It also appeals to the tender, sympathetic, and compassionate elements of our nature.

John wrote for the man marked by no national trait, but belonging to that class in all countries and times represented by the Alexandrian philosophers, "fervent in spirit and mighty in the Scriptures," and "searching the deep things of God," profoundly contemplative and spiritual.

Matthew appeals to the man of tradition; Mark, to the man

of action; Luke to the man of sentiment; John, to the man of philosophy.

This catholicity, realized thus by all the Gospels together, is also displayed in the style and language of each. Every one of them has a Greek body, a Hebrew soul, and a Christian spirit. "The most beautiful language of heathendom and the venerable language of the Hebrews are here combined, and baptized with the spirit of Christianity." They all together constitute the Universal Book.

II. THEIR RESPECTIVE VIEWS OF CHRIST.

Matthew is "the book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham." It links the New Testament with the Old, and connects Jesus with God's covenant people. It gives the birth and life and death, the character and mission of Jesus as the fulfilment of type and prophecy embodied in Jewish history and law and worship. "Now, all this was done, that it might be fulfilled," etc. (See chapters i.—iii. *passim*.)

Mark is "the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God;" connects Jesus with the Infinite One from whom he derived his divine energy and power.

Luke traces his genealogy as "the Son of Adam," thus connecting him with our whole race; presents him in his broad human relationships, as the relative and Saviour of humanity.

John, like Matthew and Mark, strikes the keynote of his Gospel in his first words: "In the beginning was the Word—and the Word was God—and the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." He passes beyond all human relationships, and connects Jesus immediately with the eternal Father. This Gospel is the revelation of the mystery of incarnate Deity.

Matthew's is the Gospel of the MESSIAH. The Jews long for their Anointed One. He is come, says Matthew. They sigh for the kingdom of heaven. It is here among you, he tells them. But they had grossly false conceptions of both Messiah and kingdom; these must be corrected. They look for a prince; Matthew points them to a pauper. They are waiting to hail a conqueror;

he shows them a crucified felon. They anticipated a glorious earthly reign; he presents Jesus "despised and rejected of men." Instead of organizing an army and setting up a throne, Jesus "began to shew how that he must suffer, and be killed." Hence this book also reveals the intense disappointment of the Jewish hierarchy and nation, their bitter spite against this unpretentious pretended Messiah, and their savage revenge. It also emphasizes the near approach of Israel's doom, in the parable of the wicked husbandmen and in the prophecy of the destruction of Jerusalem.

The Messiah of Matthew is: 1. *Lawgiver*. Jesus delivering the Sermon on the Mount corresponds to Moses delivering the law on Sinai. Moses, however, spoke as a mouthpiece; Jesus, "as one having authority." Moses gave "the law of commandments contained in ordinances;" Jesus expounds their spiritual meaning, realized in true holiness of heart and life. "The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." 2. *Prophet*, that prophet raised up of the Lord like unto Moses. (Dent. xviii. 15.) This is the Gospel of discourses and parables. Here too we learn how Jesus, in the very spirit of the prophets of old, denounced the sins of the Jews; their pharisaical hypocrisy, sanctimoniousness, formalism and hierarchical assumption and pride. Here he sets forth purity of heart and blamelessness of life, rather than perfunctory observance of ordinances, as that righteousness which they sought after. 3. *King*. "Son of David," the kingly title of Messiah, is frequently recorded by Matthew as having been applied to Jesus. This is preëminently the Gospel of "the kingdom of heaven." In one chapter alone (13th) is set forth its foundation by God and growth in spite of every obstacle, its corruption by the devil and final purification, its outward progress and inner development, its preciousness, and its comprehensiveness.

Mark sets forth Jesus as the MIGHTY CONQUEROR and WONDER WORKER; the conqueror of natural forces, of diseases, and of devils; the man of good and great deeds. Peter, under whose influence the Gospel was written, struck its keynote in these words: "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power, who went about doing good, and healing all that were op-

pressed of the devil; for God was with him." So also Jesus in these words quoted by Mark alone: "The Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many." The nature and effect of his ministry are described in the words of the multitude recorded by Mark: "They were beyond measure astonished, saying, he hath done all things well: he maketh both the deaf to hear, and the dumb to speak." Mark's miracles are works, powers, wonders and signs. He loves to record the effects on the popular mind of the Master's words and deeds; to depict their astonishment, wonder, awe, fear, reverence and adoration; and to tell how he attracted multitudes: "So many came and went, he could not even eat." It was just the kind of life of Christ to attract and impress the practical, un-sentimental, unphilosophical, deed-loving and prowess-admiring Roman.

Luke presents Jesus in the aspects of PRIEST and SAVIOUR. He heralds no royal infant born to a glorious inheritance, "Son of David, Son of Abraham," but an humble ministering Saviour, bearing human sin and suffering, "the Son of Adam." No one asks, "Where is he that is born King of the Jews?" but an angel announces, "Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord." No Magi offer tribute and adoration to the royal seed; but lowly shepherds worship their infant Redeemer. Simeon welcomes him as the "salvation prepared before the face of all people; a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel." Luke alone records that beautiful sermon in which Jesus defined his ministry of love and mercy: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken hearted; to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind; to set at liberty them that are bruised; to preach the acceptable year of the Lord." Everything in this Gospel centres about the atonement. In the transfiguration scene, Matthew speaks only of Jesus' radiant countenance and shining garments, and the glory that surrounded him; but Luke mentions also that strange conversation about "the decease which he should

accomplish at Jerusalem." Luke presents the resurrection not so much in its triumphant aspects (like Matthew), but rather as supplementary to the passion, unfolding the spiritual necessity by which suffering and victory were united. (xxiv. 7, 26, 44, 46, 47.) It is the Gospel of the genuine and full humanity of Jesus. Matthew relates such incidents of the nativity as connect Christ with prophecy; Luke such as exhibit his pure humanity. Here we have the fullest account of his birth and childhood; the humble life at Nazareth, in subjection to his human parents, his "increasing in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man." It is Luke who tells us of the bloody sweat, of the "man of sorrows," and of Pilate's thrice repeated, "I find no fault in this man." It is the Gospel of Jesus' universal sympathy—for the afflicted, the despised, the outcast, the depraved, and the guilty. (Chapter iv. 18-22.) He is introduced to us as "the friend of publicans and sinners;" as "the Son of man who came to seek and to save that which was lost;" as preaching his gospel to the poor and oppressed, to Samaritans, publicans, prodigals, thieves, and harlots. It is Luke who records that prayer of Jesus on the cross for his own murderers: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

John portrays Jesus as INCARNATE GOD. "The Word was God. . . . And the Word became flesh." The other evangelists tell us how Jesus was born and lived and died, and what he did and said; John, in the doctrine of the incarnation, gives us the unifying principle of the life of Christ, on the basis of which we can logically and consistently and intelligibly reconstruct that life so full of paradoxes. The others give all the material circumstances of the life; John enables us to combine and construct them into one organic whole. He lifts the veil that hides the mystery of Christ's being; he furnishes the clue which alone can guide us through all that labyrinth of apparent contradictions and absurdities. As some one remarks, what Jesus *did* and *said* can be understood only by knowing what he *was*.

While the other writers begin with the idea of Christ's humanity, and through the influence of his wonderful life gradually lift us to the conception of his divinity, John descends from the con-

ception of his eternal sonship to those of his incarnation and crucifixion. Their miracles are "signs" to prove Christ's divinity; his are the natural "works" of divine power and energy. "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." They give the history of the divine man; he gives the history of the human God.

To sum up, then: Matthew is the Gospel of the MESSIAH, Lawgiver, Prophet, and King; Mark is the Gospel of the MIGHTY WORKER and CONQUEROR condescending to minister to human needs; Luke is the Gospel of the atoning HIGH PRIEST and sympathetic SAVIOUR; John is the Gospel of INCARNATE DEITY, "the Word made flesh."

Matthew emphasizes Christ's AUTHORITY; presents him as King and Lawgiver to be *obeyed*. Mark emphasizes his ACTIVE MINISTRY; presents him as our Example in good and great deeds to be *imitated*. Luke emphasizes his SACRIFICE; presents him as our Saviour to be *believed in*. John emphasizes his INCARNATION; presents him as Eternal Spirit, Source of Life and Light, to be *worshipped*.

In Matthew, Christ is exalted, after his resurrection, as Mediatorial King: "All power is given unto me in heaven and earth." In Mark, the Conqueror is exalted to the throne of power and glory. "He was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God. And they went forth, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following." In Luke, the High Priest is exalted to dispense forgiveness: "Thus it behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead, that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations." In John, Jesus represents himself as going to be by the right hand of God exalted, in order that he might receive of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, and send that Comforter who should initiate the disciples into the still deeper mysteries of divine wisdom.

Ecclesiastical symbolism has always represented the Christ of Matthew's Gospel as a Man, in token of the overlordship therein ascribed to him. The Christ of Mark is a Lion, "the lion of the tribe of Judah," "Lord of all power and might." The Christ of Luke is an Ox, the patient, laborious, burden-bearing animal of sacrifice. The Christ of John is an Eagle, soaring away with un-

wearied wing in the rare atmosphere of heavenly thoughts, and gazing with undazzled eye upon the sun of the divine countenance.

III. THEIR RESPECTIVE VIEWS OF CHRISTIANITY.

These four Gospels present not only Christ but Christianity in various aspects; they embody the different elements of theology coëxisting in apostolic teaching. Matthew, writing as the exponent of the Hebrew element in the Christian church, presents Christianity in its objective aspects; gives us the *law*, elevated and spiritualized. It is the Gospel of evangelical works; is designed to bring forth "fruits of righteousness." Mark, disciple of Peter, the ardent and buoyant, represents Christianity as a vitalizing, organizing, fructifying force. (See 1 Peter i. 3, 23.) Luke, disciple of "the apostle to the Gentiles," is the antithesis of Matthew; he makes Christianity to consist in faith in a crucified and glorified Saviour, rather than in obedience to a divine Lawgiver and King. John presents Christianity in its mystical elements; it is the Gospel of metaphysical theology. Here we find the hard doctrines of the Bible; hard to apprehend and hard to believe: the Trinity, the eternal sonship, and veritable divinity of Christ united to a true and genuine humanity, human depravity and moral inability, the election of grace and effectual calling of the Spirit, union with Christ, and the final preservation of the believer. All these doctrines come from Jesus dogmatically and authoritatively.

Matthew represents Christianity as the fulfilment of Old Testament type and prophecy and law; as the promise to Abraham fulfilled, as the realization of the hope of the faithful and the consolation of Israel. Mark represents it as a new regenerating force introduced into a spiritually dead world. Luke presents it in its adaptability to the needs and wants of sinful and suffering humanity. John, as the unfailing source of spiritual life and light.

Luke gives us the truest and most comprehensive view of Christianity. It is the Gospel of the free forgiveness of sins, the Gospel of Zacchæus, and the publican, and the prodigal, and the sinful woman and the dying thief. It is the Gospel of salvation for all men :

the Gospel of "the son of Adam." In Matthew Christ's mission is "unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel;" in Luke it is to the whole brotherhood of man. In Matthew he sends forth the twelve, saying, "go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not;" Luke mentions no such restriction in the sending of the twelve, and also records the sending out of the seventy on their larger mission (Matt. x. 5, 6, Luke ix. 1-6; x. 1-3). Matthew "preaches peace to them that are nigh;" Luke, "to them that are afar off," aliens, strangers, godless, and hopeless. Luke alone records Simeon's song (ii. 30-32), and Jesus' gracious allusion to the widow of Sarepta and Naaman the Syrian (iv. 24-28). He mentions the fact of the superscription on the cross being in Hebrew and Greek and Latin, for the whole world to read. It is the Gospel of the brotherhood of mankind. It teaches Christ's compassion and love for the sick and afflicted, the lowly and despised, the publican and Samaritan, the prodigal and the harlot. Here we naturally look for the parable of the good Samaritan, that sweet rebuke to bigotry and caste pride, and commendation of helpful compassion toward the stranger. "As Paul led the people of the Lord out of the bondage of the law into the enjoyment of gospel liberty, so has Luke raised sacred history from the standpoint of Israelitish nationality to the higher and holier ground of universal humanity."

IV. COMPARISON AS TO SPIRIT AND STYLE.

Each Gospel draws its inspiration, on the human side, from the character of the writer, or of him under whose influence it was written. James was the Apostle of Duty; Peter the Apostle of Hope; Paul the Apostle of Faith; and John the Apostle of Love. And so we find Matthew pervaded by the spirit of Obedience; Mark by the spirit of Hopeful Activity; Luke by the spirit of Penitent Faith; and John by the spirit of Love.

Matthew exemplifies the power of teaching; Mark, the power of working; Luke, the power of suffering; John, the power of loving.

Matthew's Gospel is didactic, and abounds in long discourses. His style is fresh, vivacious, ingenuous, and graphic. He has a

simple, happy, almost child-like admiration of what he tells. He abounds in exclamations: "Lo!" "Behold!" As in the transfiguration scene: "Behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elias. And behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them; and behold, a voice out of the cloud."

Mark's Gospel is the record of a busy campaign, with little time for comment. See how appropriate are the matter and abrupt manner of his introduction and conclusion, and how many wonderful events he crowds into his first chapter. Note his frequent use of *εὐθὺς* (i. 10, 12, 18, 20, 21, 28, 29, 31, 42, 43). He has no long discourses, but gives minute details of incidents, and vivid descriptive touches. His Gospel abounds in miracles, but is almost destitute of parables. "He leaves it to faith to translate the passing deed into the abiding lesson." His style is compact, energetic and lively. His narrative, broken, abrupt, graphic, may be compared to a series of stereoscopic views. He gives little touches, interjects remarks and descriptive expressions, that enliven the picture and bring out the prominent features. His style is not only stereoscopic, but phonographic. Note the "εα" of the unclean spirit (i. 24), not, "Let us alone," but "Ah," expressive of dismayed surprise, or "alas!" a sigh of anguish. Listen to that derisive exclamation of the rabble about the cross; "ουα!" Note how Jesus in the weakness and semi-delirium of his mortal agony cries out in the Aramaic speech of his childhood; "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabbachthani!" Mark's Gospel is the shortest and freshest, but the least elegant and literary. On the other hand, the narrative of the cultured Greek physician, companion to the scholarly Paul, is longest and possesses most literary merit. It is accurate, complete and orderly (i. 1-4). Luke abounds in artistic and poetic elements. Here the painter finds his favorite sacred subjects, the Virgin and child, the aged Simeon, the scene in the temple with the doctors, the ascension, with Christ's uplifted hands shedding blessing on the gazing disciples. Luke abounds in graphic touches. See the whole narrative of the youth of Jesus, the home at Bethany, Jesus sobbing aloud (*πλαίων*) over Jerusalem, the big drops of bloody sweat in Gethsemane, the weeping women on the way to Calvary. How pictorial are his parables; the lost sheep,

the prodigal son, the rich fool, Dives and Lazarus, the Pharisee and the Publican, the good Samaritan.

Luke evidently possessed also an exuberant poetic nature. Read his description of the nativity and childhood of Jesus: "all that idyllic serenity, that softness as of a spring morning, contrasting so touchingly with the tears and blood and darkness of the close." His story of the penitent sinful woman bathing the Saviour's feet with her tears, and wiping them with her hair is almost a poem (vii. 44-47). See also his accounts of the resurrection, the walk to Emmaus, and of the ascension. This Gospel is the Pierian spring of Christian hymnology. It is Luke who gave us the Salute, the Magnificat, the Benedictus, the Gloria in Excelsis, the Nunc Dimittis. These hymns are the garments of Christian praise steeped in Hebrew dyes; "echoes of the harp of David."

John has a Greek vocabulary and grammar, but, more than any of the others, a Hebrew spirit and style. His Gospel can be almost literally translated into Hebrew without losing its beauty and force. He has the Hebrew simplicity and imaginativeness. His style is also marked by the rythmical parallelism so characteristic of the Hebrew writers. This parallelism of John is no tedious repetition, but a symmetrical and continuous progression; like the motion of the moon as it revolves in its own orbit, and at the same time moves along the line of the orbit of the earth; or like the gyrations of an eagle in his flight, whirling and whirling, yet ever advancing. "The eagle of God seems to wheel round and round his favorite thoughts." (i. 1-14; vi. 53-58; xiv. 27; xvii. 21-26; 1 John ii. 9-11.)

This Gospel in its simplicity and depth is like the sea on a calm fair day, with its blue surface and the transparency of its sunlit superficial depths, but below, invisible and unfathomable depths of life and treasure and beauty. The heavens have their worlds of beauty which they reveal to the naked eye, and others again which can only be seen through the telescope; they are at once the admiration of the infant, and the unfailling source of interest to the astronomer. So John is the delight of the Sunday-school pupil, and the thesaurus of the metaphysical theologian. It is like everything in nature; each simple beauty, like the embroidered veil before the Holy of Holies, conceals some wondrous

mystery. This Gospel is the natural revelation of infinite Deity ; if it is incomprehensible at times, that is through no fault of language or style, but because of the infiniteness of the subject matter. It may be said to many a perplexed reader of this book: "Sir, thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep."

There is a striking contrast in style between the discourses of Jesus as recorded by John and as recorded by the synoptists. There are several reasons for this: First, the subject matter of John's discourses differs widely from that of the others. In the latter, Jesus deals mostly with the objective truths of Christianity ; in the former with subjective experiences, and with the divine philosophy of external facts. Second, the auditors of Jesus in the two cases are generally different ; the discourses of the synoptists were addressed chiefly to Galilean fishermen and peasants ; those of John to Judean theologians, and to his own inner circle of disciples. The former therefore are popular, concise, parabolic, and proverbial ; the latter, being concerned with the profoundest mysteries, are metaphysical, lengthy, and sometimes mystical and obscure. Compare the difference between the discourses of Socrates addressed to Xenophon and those addressed to Plato, as recorded by the two auditors. Third, There was evidently an attraction of the style of John to that of Jesus. The disciple had absorbed and assimilated the Master's matter and spirit and manner, a common effect of the influence of sympathy and congeniality and association. Fourth, John had for about fifty years revolved in his mind and repeated these discourses, till they had become cast into the mould of his own thought and expression.

The difference in the subject matter of the discourses of John and those of the Synoptists, is one which runs also through their narrative portions, and affects the style of the latter also. The Synoptists deal principally with facts, deeds, and sayings ; John with the divine philosophy underlying them, their spiritual ideas and principles. John's may be called the Gospel of idealism and symbolism. He relates and describes everything so as to bring out its spiritual and supernatural lessons. His very characters are, as some one has called them, "idealized pictures ;" and his miracles are parables: "the miracles of the Synoptists teach as well as prove ; those of John prove as well as teach."

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