



UNTO THEE IN ORDER,  
MOST EXCELLENT FRIEND...

THE SYNOPTIC PROBLEM  
"SOWING THE SEEDS OF THE SOLUTION"

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# THE SYNOPTIC PROBLEM

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## PART I: THE SYNOPTIC PROBLEM

### A WORKING DEFINITION

The four gospel accounts of Matthew-Mark-Luke-John are synoptic testimonies which comprise what is commonly called the gospel of Christ. Synoptic means eye-to-eye. The synoptic problem is the disagreement found between the four gospel accounts, with the crux of the problem being their conflicting chronologies, their disordinate arrangement of dramatic events, and a general confusion surrounding the over-all gospel narrative. The prologue to Luke's gospel account cements the problem:-

### LUKE 1

- 1 Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us,
- 2 Even as they delivered them unto us, which from the beginning were eyewitnesses, and ministers of the word;
- 3 It seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus,
- 4 That thou mightest know the certainty of those things, wherein thou hast been instructed.

### CONFLICTING CHRONOLOGY

In Luke's prologue we are informed that the 'many' proceeding him were eyewitnesses of the LORD Jesus and ministers of his gospel, with Luke himself having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first. With this background information we note that Matthew-Mark-Luke record Jesus being baptized, conducting a six month public ministry, with Christ crucified on the sixth day of the week, being the day after Jesus celebrated 'the passover at thy house with my disciples'.

However, a change of seasons at the feeding of the 5,000, found recorded in John's gospel that "there was much grass at the place," would allow an eighteen month public ministry; and this additional twelve months would be most welcome due to the great improbability that Jesus could have accomplished in only six months all the events recorded by Matthew-Mark-Luke. And although John's gospel is in perfect agreement with Matthew-Mark-Luke during the feeding of the 5,000, to the dismay of those gospel accounts John has a total of four passovers, with Christ crucified on the sixth day of the week, being the day before "the feast of the passover".

(In THE DECLARATION the first link begins at pp. #1122 in Bethany 'six days before the passover' and then followed by: [1st Day/1127](#) [2nd Day/1145](#) [3rd Day/1155](#) [4th Day/1254-5](#) (ref)1265-67 [5th Day/1272-74-90](#) [6th Day/1426](#) [7th Day/1553](#) [8th Day/1556 & 1557](#).)

## DISORDINATE GOSPEL ACCOUNTS

Luke understood the importance of the order of scripture, knowing that for his gospel account to be received as an authentic biography of Jesus of Nazareth, the dramatic events had to be set forth in their true historical order. Likewise, if the “many” mentioned in his prologue mistakenly recorded events out of their true historical order, then their gospel accounts could not be lawful depositions having a perfect historicity; causing Luke to believe in a confused declaration of eyewitnesses who “couldn’t get their story straight.” And furthermore, if the “many” deliberately recorded dramatic events out of their true historical order, they would be guilty of bearing false witness; causing the hearers out of confusion to either reject their gospel accounts, or to supersede them with a religious tradition that justified itself by apologizing for these apostolic “ministers of the word”. And if this be the case, their gospel accounts would be the greatest hoax ever played on mankind, aided and abetted by generation upon generation of religious superstition and myth-making.

An example of disordinate gospel accounts is best illustrated by the temptations of Christ in the wilderness:-

MATT 4:1-11	MARK 1:12-13	LUKE 4:1-13
1 Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. 2 And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterward an hungered.	12 And immediately the Spirit driveth him into the wilderness. 13 And he was there in the wilderness forty days tempted of Satan; and was with the wild beasts;...	1 And Jesus being full of the Holy Ghost returned from Jordan, and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, 2 Being forty days tempted of the devil. And in those days he did eat nothing: and when they were ended, he afterward hungered.
	<complete agreement>	
3 And when the tempter came to him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread.	<stones vs. stone>	3 And the devil said unto him, If thou be the Son of God, command this stone that it be made bread.
4 But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.	<different quotes>	4 And Jesus answered him, saying, It is written, That man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God.

MATT 4:1-11	MARK 1:12-13	LUKE 4:1-13
<p>5 Then the devil taketh him up into the holy city, and setteth him on a pinnacle of the temple,</p> <p>6 And saith unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone.</p>	<p>&lt;city vs. mountain&gt;</p> <p>&lt;different dialogue&gt;</p>	<p>5 And the devil, taking him up into a high mountain, showed unto him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time.</p> <p>6 And the devil said unto him, All this power will I give thee, and the glory of them: for that is delivered unto me; and to whomsoever I will, I give it.</p> <p>7 If thou therefore wilt worship me, all shall be thine.</p>
<p>7 Jesus said unto him, It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the LORD thy God.</p>	<p>&lt;different quotes&gt;</p>	<p>8 And Jesus answered and said unto him, Get thee behind me Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the LORD thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.</p>
<p>8 Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and showeth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them;</p> <p>9 And saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me.</p>	<p>&lt;mountain vs. city&gt;</p> <p>&lt;different dialogue&gt;</p>	<p>9 And he brought him to Jerusalem, and set him on a pinnacle of the temple, and said unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down from hence:</p> <p>10 For it is written: He shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee:</p> <p>11 And in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone.</p>
<p>10 Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the LORD thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.</p>	<p>&lt;different quotes&gt;</p>	<p>12 And Jesus answering said unto him, It is said, Thou shalt not tempt the LORD thy God.</p>
<p>11 Then the devil leaveth him, and, behold, angels came and ministered unto him.</p>	<p>13 ...and the angels ministered unto him.</p> <p>&lt;complete agreement&gt;</p>	<p>13 And when the devil had ended all the temptation, he departed from him for a season.</p>

#### A GENERAL CONFUSION

All four gospel accounts record the resurrection of Christ on a Sunday morning from the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea located just outside Jerusalem. However, the ensuing events in the four gospel accounts create a general confusion as to what actually happened after the resurrection, with the main concern being the time and place of the ascension. Matthew records that Christ appeared to his disciples some time after his resurrection, at a mountain in Galilee where he had appointed them, with no record of an ascension. Mark records that Christ appeared to his disciples on the day that he was resurrected, Sunday evening in Jerusalem as they sat at meat; and that upon giving his great commission, he ascended up into heaven. Luke records that Christ appeared to his disciples on the day that he was resurrected, Sunday evening in Jerusalem as they sat at meat; and that upon commanding them to “tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem until ye be endued with power from on high,” he led them out as far as to Bethany, where he ascended up into heaven. John records that Christ appeared first to his disciples on the day that he was resurrected, Sunday evening in Jerusalem as they sat at meat; that Christ appeared a second time to his disciples eight days later as they sat at meat; that anon Christ appeared a third time to his disciples at the sea of Tiberias; and finally, that he wandered off into Galilee with his disciples following, with no record of an ascension. And last but not least, the Book of Acts must be included, which records that a full forty days after his resurrection, Christ ascended from the mount of Olives in broad daylight before a multitude of eyewitnesses!

#### A COMMON RESPONSE

Apologists have traditionally responded to the synoptic problem by asserting that the different perspectives of the eyewitnesses somehow “explains away” their disagreements. (But this is utter sophistry; the fact is that testimony from different perspectives should establish a fullness of understanding, not disagreements followed by endless apologies.) The apologist then opts to supersede the authority of these “eyewitnesses and ministers of the word” with a mystery ministry of the Holy Spirit, enshrouding their disagreements with the assertion that the Spirit made them “write what they wrote”. And if that isn’t enough, this mystery ministry then enables a grand consideration of all four gospel accounts; allowing the apologist himself to “think what they thought,” strongly asserting with an apostolic mantle that the disagreements are caused by the charismatic concerns of the writers: that the eyewitnesses’ evangelical zeal caused them to depart from the true historical gospel in order to allow the Holy Spirit to minister in a special way for a special reason to a special person with a special theme in mind;...(and at this juncture he is compelled to expand upon that special theme at great length: and this he does not in his own name, but in the names of the apostles and the Holy Spirit, having a great wisdom in all these matters). And therefore, the stratagem of appealing to the illusive nature of perspective, mystery, and charisma creates a lily-field scarecrow made in the image of his own apologist: a double-minded strawman unstable in all his gospels; who groans under the weight of his own apologies, while hanging from his own stake.

IN CONCLUSION: "BUT THEIR WITNESS AGREED NOT"

Therefore, a working definition of the synoptic problem is best defined as the disagreement found between the eyewitness testimony of Matthew-Mark-Luke-John. It is a great irony during the trial of Christ before the Sanhedrin that Mark rests upon a point of law that requires the complete synoptic agreement of all witnesses:-

MATT 26:59-63		MARK 14:55-61
<p>59 Now the chief priests, and elders, and all the council, sought false witness against Jesus, to put him to death; 60 But found none: yea, though many false witnesses came, yet found they none. At the last came two false witnesses, 61 And said, This fellow said, I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to build it in three days.</p>	<p>&lt;point of law&gt;  &lt;But the testimony of these "false" witnesses does in fact agree.&gt;</p>	<p>55 And the chief priests and all the council sought for witness against Jesus to put him to death; and found none. 56 For many bare false witness against him; but their witness agreed not together. 57 And there arose certain, and bare false witness against him, saying, 58 We heard him say, I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and within three days I will build another made without hands.</p>
<p>62 And the high priest arose, and said unto him, Answerest thou nothing? what is it which these witness against thee?</p>	<p>&lt;point of law&gt;</p>	<p>59 But neither so did their witness agree together. 60 And the high priest stood up in the midst, and asked Jesus, saying, Answerest thou nothing? what is it which these witness against thee?</p>
<p>63 But Jesus held his peace.</p>		<p>61 But he held his peace, and answered nothing.</p>

## PART II: THE TRADITION OF THE SYNOPTIC PROBLEM

### A SCHOLASTIC HISTORY

Wm. R. Farmer in *THE SYNOPTIC PROBLEM: "A Critical Analysis"* (pp.1-6) states, "In the eighteenth century the central problem facing the student of the Gospels was that of chronology. True chronology was regarded as essential for true history. The conflicting chronologies of the four canonical Gospels cast doubt in the minds of thinking men concerning the reliability of these documents as trustworthy witnesses. The older type of "gospel harmonies" designed to reconcile the accounts of all four Gospels were replaced by a new type of "gospel parallel," where no attempt was made to include the gospel of John, except where in isolated instances there was some evidence of a close connection between John and one or more of the other three. This reflected a consciousness that Matthew, Mark, and Luke were more closely related to one another than they were to John. The most famous and influential of these new gospel parallels was that of Griesbach, published 1774-1775. In the beginning of [Griesbach's parallel], which in its successive editions was to become a handbook for subsequent scientific investigators, Griesbach confessed to "the heresy" of doubting the possibility of harmonizing even the closely related but conflicting chronologies of Matthew, Mark, and Luke. In other words, Griesbach's harmony, if a harmony at all, was a harmony to end harmonization. Henceforth, those [synoptic scholars] who followed in his footsteps would no longer seek to reconcile the conflicting chronologies of the Gospels, but rather would seek to understand the relationships between the Gospels in terms of their direct literary dependence, or in terms of their indirect literary dependence through the mutual use of earlier hypothetical sources."

### THE LOST GOSPEL

These earlier hypothetical sources were imagined to be lost gospels of the bible. The private invention of a hypothetical gospel by "scientific" investigators of the synoptic problem has resulted in an uncontrolled plethora of solutions. Synoptic scholars assume that another source, (which they formally refer to as "Q", from the German word "*quelle*", meaning "source,") holds the key to understanding the synoptic problem, theorizing that the literary disagreements between the canonical gospels were caused by the authors epitomizing or "borrowing" from a lost gospel.

### A DEVELOPED SOLUTION

Therefore, in order to "solve" the synoptic problem, the synoptic scholars first separated the gospel of John from Matthew-Mark-Luke. (This had to be done because John's gospel had four passovers with Christ crucified before the Passover; while Matthew-Mark-Luke have one passover with Christ crucified after the Passover; and the scholars could find no way to reconcile this major chronological disagreement. So they separated the gospel of John claiming that it was so spiritual that it should always be treated off by itself.) But that still didn't make the synoptic problem go away, because they found that the chronologies and dramatic events of Matthew-Mark-Luke didn't agree either; that the three gospels had their own little synoptic problem! So the synoptic scholars continued to develop their solution by making

a new “parallel” of the three gospels. They did this by arranging the accounts of Matthew-Mark-Luke in such a manner that their gospels had an over-all agreement on a literary basis. (For example, the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5:1-7:29 and the Sermon on the Plain in Luke 6:17-49 were placed in parallel because of the similar beatitudes in both; and likewise, the Temple Discourse in Luke 21:5-36 and the Olivet Discourse in Matt 24:3-25:46/Mark 13:3-37 were placed in parallel because of their similar escatology and prophecy.) They then used the invention of an earlier hypothetical source to explain away the remaining discrepancies, leaving themselves to follow after a three-legged parallel while carrying a lost gospel that spawned an endless patchwork of theories, apologies, and historical myth-making;...leaving themselves ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth!

#### A SYNFUL IMPASSE

In The Jerome Biblical Commentary: “The Synoptic Problem” written by Frederick Gast is a thorough review of the “syn” problem which arrives at the following conclusion:-

[40:25] “All the time and effort put into the consideration of the Syn Problem over the past century and a half have not been in vain. For each attempt at a solution—though faulty in some area—has contributed some insight. With each new insight we are brought closer to the complete answer. Yet the origins of the Syn, going back as many centuries as they do, are difficult to perceive. We are still a long way from a completely satisfactory answer. Perhaps the problem will never be totally solved. The challenge, however, still remains and will continue to be accepted by dedicated scholars.”

#### THE END OF A SCHOLASTIC ABERRATION

The end of this scholastic aberration is the heresy of denying that the four canonical gospels are the inspired and inerrant accounts of apostolic eyewitnesses; denying that each gospel is a true historical account qualified only by the perspectives of the individual witnesses and their selection of testimony; denying that all four gospels are lawful depositions in complete agreement, able to withstand any challenge to their content or authenticity; and furthermore, denying that all questions concerning the interrelationships of the four gospels are best answered by having a perfect understanding of how they interlock to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among the saints! Amen.

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#### NOTES AND QUOTES

In *From Plato To Nietzsche*, E. L. Allen (p. 119) writes, "Adults who have lost the sense of continuity in time and continuity in space, who cannot see the connection between events, have to be put in someone's charge. They cannot live and work in the actual world."

Comment: The church needs one gospel that can be easily understood rather than four gospels which can't...no longer forced to apologize for what has always been known in the heart but not understood in the head.

From *The History Of Philosophy*, Emil Brehier (p. 105) states, "The true dialectician is the "synoptic" thinker, the thinker who does not keep the sciences in a scattered state but sees their relationships one with another and with Being; the thinker, in a word, who connects the many hypotheses with their one source, the Good, and by knowledge of the Good, the greatest knowledge of all, illuminates them and shows their reality."

Comment: To enter into the "Parable of the Lord" one must be a synoptic thinker that sees the relationships of the four gospel accounts "one with another" and with their Author.

From *New Synoptic Studies (the Cambridge Gospel Conference and Beyond)*, William R. Farmer (p. xxiv) writes, "It turns out, however, that in disproving Augustine's view "that Mark was an abbreviator of Matthew," Reformation and Enlightenment scholars from John Calvin to Koppe were knocking down a straw man. As professor Gamba's essay now makes clear, and as Peabody's essay confirms, the tradition of the church on the relationship of the Gospels is diverse, not monolithic. Yet once "Augustine's view" was discredited, the way was effectively open to discount the whole of tradition and concentrate almost wholly on internal evidence, that is, on what one can learn by focusing attention on the texts of the Gospels themselves. The result has been an uncontrolled plethora of hypotheses. New hypotheses are being invented, old hypotheses are being revived, and confusion threatens to reign."

Comment: *The Synoptic Problem: "A Critical Analysis"* by William R. Farmer is a well written introduction to the synoptic problem. The research set forth by Prof. Farmer is an invaluable resource, and credit for the content found in Part II of this letter rightfully belongs to him. In the paragraph entitled "The Lost Gospel" the phrase "uncontrolled plethora" was taken from the above statement. It is hoped that Prof. Farmer would waive this little plagiarism; his phrase was too good not to use a second time.

From *The New Testament: "The History Of The Investigations Of Its Problems"*, Werner George Kummel (pp. 74-75) writes, "Griesbach, on the other hand, by separating the Fourth Gospel from the first three and printing the latter together in parallel columns under the title, "A Synopsis of the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke," laid the foundation for a truly historical investigation of the literary interrelationships of the Gospels. In so doing his specific intention was to furnish an indispensable tool for a comparison of the three Gospels that were henceforth to be known as the "Synoptics," for he held that, since the three evangelists offer an unreliable chronological arrangement of their subject matter, a harmonization is impossible. [In his preface Griesbach writes,] "I frankly acknowledge and wish my readers to keep in mind that under no circumstances will one find a so-called "harmony" [of the Gospels] in this little book. Although I am quite aware of all the trouble learned men have taken to prepare a harmony in accordance with the rules they have laid down, I believe, nevertheless, that not just a little but no profit at all can be derived [from their "harmonies" of the Gospels] that my synopsis despite its inexactitude does not offer. Furthermore, I doubt very much whether a harmonistic account can be composed from the books of the evangelists that with respect to chronological sequence agrees sufficiently with reality and is built on sure foundations. How could that be done? When none of the evangelists anywhere exactly follows the temporal sequence? And when there does not exist sufficient evidence from which to deduce who deviates from the chronological order and at what point he does so? And to this heresy I confess.""

Comment: Griesbach concluded that the synoptic problem was insoluble; and therefore his new "literary parallel" of the gospel accounts of Matthew-Mark-Luke was designed to compromise the issue. Hence, Griesbach concludes his statement, "And to this heresy I confess." Over the ensuing two hundred years scholars compounded this misunderstanding by using Griesbach's "Harmony of the Gospels" to study the synoptic problem. For to concur with Griesbach and formally conclude that the "witnesses of the gospels agree not" would be tantamount to denying the inerrancy of scripture, leaving them this final question to be answered:—"Who's lying?" In conclusion, let it be said that for men of faith who love the scriptures, the synoptic problem has been a challenge from the Lord; and rest assured, even though many have wrestled the scriptures throughout the night and lost, that in the morning when the Son arose in their hearts, they all received a blessing: for in this matter they had wrestled with the Lord. This is the Lord's doing and it is truly marvellous.

From *The Quest Of The Historical Jesus*, Albert Schweitzer writes, (p.13), "Before Reimarus, no one had attempted to form a historical conception of the life of Jesus. Luther had not so much as felt that he cared to gain a clear idea of the order of the recorded events. Speaking of the chronology of the cleansing of the Temple, which in [the Gospel of] John falls in the beginning, in the Synoptists [Gospels of Matthew-Mark-Luke] near the close, of Jesus' public life, Luther remarks: 'The Gospels follow no

order in recording the acts and miracles of Jesus, and the matter is not, after all, of much importance. If a difficulty arises in regard to the Holy Scripture and we cannot solve it, we must just let alone.'

When the Lutheran theologians began to consider the question of harmonizing the events, things were still worse. Osiander (1498-1552), in his "Harmony Of The Gospels," maintained the principle that if an event is recorded more than once in the Gospels, in different connections, it happened more than once and in different connections. The daughter of Jairus was therefore raised from the dead several times; on one occasion Jesus allowed the devils whom he cast out of a single demoniac to enter into a herd of swine, on another occasion, those whom he cast out of two demoniacs; there were two cleansings of the Temple, and so forth. The correct view of the Synoptic Gospels as being interdependent was first formulated by Griesbach."

Comment: Luther is correct: if one does not understand, it is best to "let alone"; for it is better to wait upon an answer, than to go out and "find" one. Schweitzer should have heeded the advice of Luther.

From The Westminster Theological Journal, Vol. 46, "When Is A Parallel Really A Parallel?," Craig L. Bloomberg (pp. 78-79) writes, "Anyone who has ever used a Gospel synopsis knows the difficulty of determining just which passages should be matched in compiling a table of parallels. As most modern synopsis stand, at least certain sets of parallels present fairly blatant contradictions between Gospels which call into question the trust-worthiness of the Gospel tradition. Many apparent discrepancies affect areas of seemingly little doctrinal or ethical importance, but when one examines the teaching ascribed to Jesus, the problem becomes more acute. Even those who would restrict the accuracy of Scripture to matters of faith and practice must come to grips with the problem of the divergent forms of the various sayings of Jesus; here if anywhere is the very core of the biblical message. Yet even here Gospel parallels present striking similarities side-by-side with marked divergences—consider the details of Jesus' great sermon (Matthew 5-7 vs. Luke 6:17-49), of his commissioning the twelve (Matthew 10 vs. Luke 9:1-6), and of pairs of parables like the pounds and talents (Matthew 25:14-30 vs. Luke 19:11-27), the wedding feast and the great supper (Matthew 22:1-14 vs. Luke 14:15-24), and the two versions of the lost sheep (Matthew 18:12-14 vs. Luke 15:4-7). This problem of parallels has elicited a variety of responses....The issue which remains almost entirely unaddressed in all this discussion forms the topic of this paper. When is a parallel really a parallel?"

Comment: A parallel is a parallel when two or more scriptures are arbitrarily ordered together according to literary unities of issues, doctrines, or concepts. A harmony is a harmony when the four gospel accounts of who did what-where-when are in perfect agreement according to dramatic unities of time-place-movement. THE DECLARATION OF THE APOSTLES ACCORDING TO WILLIAM is the only true harmony of the four gospel accounts; and thereby sets forth in order the solution to the synoptic problem. All other "harmonies" have been in fact literary parallels fashioned after the Griesbach pattern; and to call such a literary parallel a "Harmony of the Gospels" is misleading.

From *New Synoptic Studies*, edited by William R. Farmer (p. ix), Roland Mushat Frye, in his paper "A Literary Perspective for the Criticism of the Gospels" writes as follows, "The fact that the synoptic problem has been studied and debated for one hundred and fifty years without satisfactory solution would seem to indicate the impossibility of arriving at a satisfactory solution—unless new evidence is discovered. In the words of Professor Fitzmyer's working paper, "Jesus and Man's Hope" (2:213), 'The history of synoptic research reveals that the problem is practically insoluble. As I see the matter, we cannot hope for a definitive and certain resolution to it, since the data for its solution are scarcely adequate or available to us.'"

Comment: THE DECLARATION OF THE APOSTLES ACCORDING TO WILLIAM is the "new evidence" that is wholly adequate in and by itself for the solution. Found in the appendix is a chronology, which being in perfect harmony with all scriptural, scientific, and secular data confirms the historicity of the gospel of Christ.

From *New Testament Foundations Vol.1*, Ralph P. Martin (p.139) writes, "Comparative study of the three Gospels reveals both differences and similarities among them. The "synoptic problem," then, is basically the question of how these similarities and differences can be explained most satisfactorily."

Comment: His definition reduced to the core is a sophism: "the synoptic problem is basically the question of how to explain." To explain the synoptic problem is one thing; to solve it quite another.

From *The Life Of Christ In Stereo* Stanley A. Ellisen (ix) states, "If God had wanted the Gospels combined into one story, would he not have provided such a presentation through an inspired writer? And is not the fact that church history knows of no such minute combination of the Gospels an evidence of the illegitimacy of initiating such a harmony at this time?"

(215) "This combination of the four Gospels is unique in several ways and is believed to be the first true harmony of the Gospels. Its first distinction is that it combines the four Gospels into a four-part harmony rather than presenting them in four columns as four "solos". Many such four-column "Harmonies" have been produced, but the effect has not always been harmony. Often disharmony has been the result as seeming discrepancies have been brought to light without indicating how they are resolved. Such "harmonies" have served incalculable service in bringing together the pertinent materials relative to each segment of the Gospel story; but they make no attempt at true harmony, for that is not their basic function."

(217) "This perfect interrelation between the Gospels strongly demonstrates the irresistible fact of their divine superintendence. The possibility of human collusion on the part of the four Evangelists is so remote as to be unthinkable, if one accepts the recorded statements of the Fathers and the obvious intent of the writers."

(218) "Discrepancy has been charged to [the problem of Peter's denials] because the related details are so diverse that they simply refuse to group themselves into just three denials without some very questionable manipulating of the texts. A surplus of details has proved embarrassing and the problem has long been deemed practically insoluble....The evidence is that Jesus predicted six denials."

(220) "It is to be recognized that each of the individual Evangelists recorded and was evidently aware of only one warning by Jesus and three denials by Peter. They each recorded accurately what they knew. And what they knew in the matter was not the same with any two of the writers. This demonstrates both the absence of collusion on the part of the human authors and the divine guidance of the One Who knew all the facts to make the four accounts to fit as one. Although Peter, of course, did know all the facts."

Comment: The Life Of Christ In Stereo is not a four-part harmony; but is in fact "another" gospel which has a full four-year public ministry, with Jesus being crucified in 33 A.D. at the age of 37, and appearing four times to his apostles after his resurrection. The work is a apologetic whitewash of the synoptic problem. Caveat lector.

From Interpretation XVIII: "A Journal Of Bible And Theology," (January, 1964); Harvey K. McArthur in "Basic Issues: A Survey Of Recent Gospel Research" (pp.52-53) states, "Today no competent scholar would attempt a detailed chronology of the ministry of Jesus....The trend of current scholarship is away from confidence in the Gospel chronology. However, this trend will need to be tested by the challenges of a new generation before it can be recognized as permanently valid. The question of chronology remains one of the basic issues in Gospel research."

Comment: Ours is the new generation! And on the horizon is a renaissance of biblical research. The question remaining for those burdened with the tradition of "Q" manuscripts and hypothetical solutions is whether for the gospel's sake they will enter into the Parable of the Lord. To be branded "incompetent" by the wise and prudent should encourage one who already knows he's a fool for Christ!

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