sage: “From which general variety in the  
verbal narrative amidst agreement in the  
facts and sense, it is evident enough that  
we are wholesomely instructed that nothing  
js to be looked for in the words of Scripture but the general purport of those who  
spoke: to display which purpose should be  
the watchful care of all truthful narrators,  
whether relating concerning man, or angel,  
or God Himself.” I repeat the remark so  
often made in this Commentary,—that if  
we were in possession of the facts as they  
happened, there is no doubt that the various forms of the literal narrations would  
fall into their places, and the truthfulness  
of each historian would be apparent:—but  
as we cannot at present reconcile them in  
this way, the humble and believing Christian will not be tempted to handle the word  
of God deceitfully, but to admire the gracious condescension which has given us the  
evidence of so many independent witnesses,  
whose very difference in detail makes their  
accordance in the great central truths so  
much the more weighty. *On every point of  
importance here, the four sacred historians  
are entirely and absolutely agreed.* That  
every minor detail related by them had its  
ground in historical fact, we fully believe ;  
it is the *tracking it to* this ground in each  
case, which is now *beyond our power*; and  
here comes in the simplicity and reliance  
of faith: and the justification of those who  
believe and receive each Gospel as they  
find it written.

**unto Philip]** Why to  
*Philip*, does not appear; perhaps some  
reason lay in the words “*this He said to  
prove him*,” which is now lost to us. From  
his words in ch. xiv. 8, we cannot infer, as  
has been done by Cyril of Alexandria and  
others, that he was weaker in faith, or  
tardier in spiritual apprehension, than the  
rest. Of all the Apostles who appear in  
the sacred narrative, something might be  
quoted, shewing equal unreadiness to believe and understand. I would take the  
circumstance as simple matter of fact, implying perhaps that Philip was nearest to  
our Lord at the moment. We must not  
fall into the mistake of supposing that  
Philip being *of Bethsaida the city of Andrew and Peter* (ch. i. 45) throws any light  
on the question: for the Bethsaida near  
which our Lord now was, Luke ix. 10, was  
*another place*: see notes there.

**Whence**—‘ from what store?’ Hence Philip’s answer.

**6.] he knew**:—by this  
St. John must be understood not only to  
rescue our Lord from the imputation of  
asking counsel of Philip, but to refer the  
miraculous act, on His part, to His purpose  
of exhibiting Himself as the Son of Man  
the Life of the World in the flesh.

**7.]** See notes on Mark.

**8.]** Meyer  
remarks, that the words **one of His disciples** may seem strange, seeing that  
Philip also was this: but that it has its  
value in the narrative, seeing that, Philip,  
having been asked in vain, one from among  
the circle of the disciples answers, and is  
afterwards specified as having been Andrew.

In the three other Gospels,  
the loaves and fishes appear as the disciples’ own;—and we have thus a very  
simple but very instructive instance of  
the way in which differences in detail  
arose. They were their own,—but not  
till they had bought them.

**9.] barley loaves**—this was the usual barley bread  
which formed the food of the lower orders.

**10.] much grass**, in accordance with  
the time of year, the latter end of spring,  
after the rainy season.

**the men]**Before, when our Lord commanded, as in  
A. V., “*make the men sit down*,’ it was  
the general word, signifying both men and  
women indiscriminately. And I have therefore substituted in the margin, **people**.