INTRODUCTION. ] THE THREE GOSPELS. [cn. 1.   
   
 implicitly disclaims such authority. This claim is, however, advanced in   
 direct terms by St. John (see below, ch. v. § ii. 1). Again, in the   
 character of our Lord’s discourses, reported by the Three, we have the   
 same distinctness. While His sayings and parables in their Gospels   
 “almost exclusively have reference to His dealings with us, and the nature   
 of His kingdom among men, those related by St. John regard, as well,   
 the deeper subjects of His own essential attributes and covenant purposes;   
 referring indeed often and directly to His relations with His people and   
 the unbelieving world, but usually as illustrating those attributes, and   
 the unfolding of those purposes. That there are exceptions to this (see   
 e.g. Matt. xi. 27: Luke x. 22) is only to be expected from that merci-   
 ful condescension by which God, in giving us the Gospel records through   
 the different media of individual minds and apprehensions, has yet fur-   
 nished us with enough common features in them all, to satisfy us of the   
 unity and truthfulness of their testimony to His blessed Son.   
 5. Reserving further remarks on the character of St. John’s Gospel for   
 their proper place, I further notice that the three, in their narration of   
 our Lord’s ministry, proceed in the main upon a common outline. This   
 outline is variously filled up, and variously interrupted ; but is still easily   
 to be traced, as running through the middle and largest section of each   
 of their Gospels.   
 6. Besides this large portion, each Gospel contains some prefatory   
 matter regarding the time before the commencement of the Ministry,—   
 a detailed history of the Passion,—fragmentary notices of the Resur-   
 rection, and a conclusion. These will be separately treated of and   
 compared in the following sections, and more at large in the Com-   
 mentary.   
   
   
   
   
   
   
   
   
 SECTION II.   
   
 THEIR INDEPENDENCE OF ONE ANOTHER.   
   
 1. Having these three accounts of one and the eame Life and   
 Ministry of our Lord, it is an important enquiry for us, how far they   
 may be considered as distinct narratives,—how far as borrowed one from   
 another, It is obvious that this enquiry can only, in the absence of any   
 direct historical testimony, be conducted by careful examination of their   
 contents. Such examination however has conducted enquirers to the   
 most various and inconsistent results. Different hypotheses of the   
 mutual interdependence of the three have been made, embracing every   
 possible permutation of their order’. To support these hypotheses,   
   
   
   
 3 1, That Matthew wrote first—that Mark used his Gospel—and then Luke both   
 these. This is held Grotius, Mill, Townson, Hug, &c., and Greswell, who   
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