INTRODUCTION. ] THE THREE GOSPELS. (cH. 1.   
   
   
 12. With regard to those parts of our Gospels which do not fall under   
 the above remarks, there are various conceivable sources whence they   
 may have arisen, As each Evangelist may have had more or less access   
 to those who were themselves witnesses of the events, whether before or   
 during the public ministry of our Lord, or as each may have fallen in   
 with a more complete or a shorter account of those events, so have our   
 narratives been filled out with rich detail, or confined to the mere state-   
 ment of occurrences :—so have they been copious and entire in their   
 history, or have merely taken up and handed down a portion of our   
 Lord’s life. These particulars wfll come under our notice below, when   
 we treat of each Gospel by itself.   
 13. The above view has been impugned by Mr. Birks (Hore Evan-   
 gelice, &c. Lond. 1852), and Mr. Smith of Jordanhill (Dissertation   
   
   
 on the Origin and Connexion of the Gospels: Edinb. 1853). While ~   
   
 maintaining different hypotheses, both agree in regarding ‘oral tradition’   
 as quite insufficient to account for the phenomena of approximation to   
 identity which are found in the Gospels. But both, as it seems to me,   
 have forgotten to take into account the peculiar kind of oral tradition   
 with which we are here concerned. Both concur in insisting on the   
 many variations and corruptions to which oral transmission is liable, as   
 an objection to my hypothesis. But we have here a case in this respect   
 - exceptional and of its own kind. The oral tradition (or rather ORAL   
 TEACHING) with which we are concerned, formed the substance of a   
 deliberate and careful testimony to facts of the highest possible import-   
 ance, and as such, was inculcated in daily catechization: whereas com-   
 mon oral tradition is careless and vague, not being similarly guarded, nor   
 diffused as matter of earnest instruction. Besides which, these writers   
 forget, that I have maintained the probability of a very early collection   
 of portions of such oral teaching into documents, some of which two or   
 even three Evangelists may have used; and these documents or narra-   
 tions, in some cases drawn up after the first minute verbal divergences   
 had taken place, or being translations from common Aramaic sources,   
 would furnish many of the phenomena which Mr. Smith so ingeniously   
 illustrates from translation in modern historians and newspapers. I   
 have found reason to infer that St. Luke was acquainted with Hebrew ;   
 and he would therefore be an independent translator, as well as the other   
 two Evangelists. . .   
 14, For the sake of guarding against misunderstanding, it may be   
 well formally to state the conclusion at which I have arrived respecting   
 the origin of our three first Gospels: in which, I may add, I have been   
 much confirmed by the results of many ycars’ study of the sacred text   
 since it was first published :   
 That the Three first Gospels contain the substance of the Apostles’   
 testimony, collected principally from their oral teaching current in the   
 16)