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Vincent Henry Stanton

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PART II
THE SYNOPTIC GOSPELS

BY
VINCENT HENRY STANTON, D.D.

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PREFACE

IN the preface to Part I the aim and plan of the whole work were described. In accordance therewith we shall now pass from the consideration of the evidence in regard to the history of our Canonical Gospels which is afforded by traces of the use of them in early days, by express statements about them, and by the position they held in the Church before and at the close of the Second Century, to the examination of the Gospels themselves. A few of the discussions in Part I will prove of service in connexion with points that must now come before us. But the significance of the conclusions there reached will be chiefly felt when, in the last Part, we consider more generally the value of the Gospels as historical records.

In the present Part, as in the last, I have endeavoured both to indicate clearly the results which appear to me to be well-established, and also to advance knowledge by further investigations. From the positions stated, and the brief accounts of the reasons for them, and the references to opposite views, in Chapter I, the reader will, I hope, be able to gather what the chief turning-points have been in the history of speculation and inquiry on the subject of the relations of our first three Gospels. A study of that history, the review and the testing of the arguments that have been employed in regard to questions that have been raised in the past, form the best discipline that the student can undergo in order to prepare him for grappling with problems that still press for solution.

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Preface

The inquiries with which we shall be engaged in the present Part have this advantage over those with which the last was occupied, that the means of verifying descriptions of the phenomena to be explained, and therefore, also, of forming an independent judgment upon the theories propounded, are at the disposal of a far larger number of students. They have the Gospels in their hands. Valuable aids also for the work of comparing the Synoptic Gospels have been provided, especially in England, as in the *Synopses* of Mr W. G. Rushbrooke, and Dr A. Wright, and the studies and tables contained in the *Horæ Synopticæ* of Sir J. C. Hawkins. I have sought also to add to such aids in the Additional Notes to the first four chapters, and the two Tables at the end, of this volume.

The fact, too, that in pursuing these inquiries a fuller and more accurate knowledge of the actual contents of the Gospels will be acquired, should be an encouragement to those who are inclined to be disheartened by the difficulties of the subject, the variety of views with which they are confronted, and the intricacy of the considerations upon which decisions must depend. Their labour cannot be wholly thrown away.

V. H. S.

TRINITY COLLEGE,
CAMBRIDGE.*May 31, 1909.*

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