

# **THE GOSPEL IN THE GOSPELS**

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The Gospel in the Gospels by William Porcher Dubose

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**WILLIAM PORCHER DUBOSE**

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THE GOSPELS

BY

WILLIAM PORCHER DuBOSE, M.A., S.T.D.

AUTHOR OF "THE SOTERIOLOGY OF THE NEW TESTAMENT"  
"THE ECUMENICAL COUNCILS"; PROFESSOR OF  
EXEGESIS IN THE UNIVERSITY OF THE SOUTH

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To  
SILAS McBEE  
TRUE FRIEND  
AND  
FAITHFUL CRITIC





## PREFACE

THE title of the present volume is intended to indicate that, while it aims to be an exposition of the whole Gospel of Jesus Christ, it does not purpose to be a whole or final exposition of that Gospel. It looks forward definitely to a further and fuller expression of it. We have here to do with the Gospel, not in its developed utterance as that of the New Testament or of the Church, but only so far as it is contained in our canonical Gospels or can by ourselves be deduced from them. My own position is that, while the Gospel as an act or fact is complete in Jesus Christ Himself, the *rationale* of its operation in human salvation is best interpreted and stated by St. Paul. My true objective point has therefore been the completer construction of the Gospel according to St. Paul, to be treated in a volume to follow the present one. That the epistles of St. Paul are an interpretation only, and not a transformation nor even an essential modification, of the Gospel of our Lord is — next to the hope of casting a single new ray of light upon the nature of the Gospel itself — the point which I have most at heart to prove in the end.

Indeed, in opposition to what is claimed in high quarters to be the well-nigh acknowledged conclusion

of present criticism, my own firm conviction is that the variant conceptions of the Gospel in the New Testament, so far from being different gospels, are consistent and mutually complete aspects of the one and only Gospel. In proportion as we conceive the Gospel of God in its entirety and in its immensity, in just that degree do all scriptural, as well as all truly Christian and catholic, statements of it, no matter how partial and seemingly contradictory in themselves, fall into their proper places and serve to magnify the greatness and harmony of the whole. If the Gospel is divine at all, it is the divinest fact of the universe, the final cause of creation, the end for which all else exists. Mistake any one fragment or aspect of it for the whole, and all the other fragments and aspects will be involved in confused and hopeless contention with it for the usurped position. Let the whole stand out for itself in its complete proportions, and every part falls of itself into its proper place, and is confirmed and supported in it by every other part.

On the other hand, however necessary it is for us to know the whole Gospel in order to know any part, it is equally necessary if we would know the whole that we shall not ignore or neglect any one or more of the parts. Besides other grievous consequences, it is only as we do full justice to the claims of every least fragment of the Gospel, that we can guard legitimately or effectively against the fatal withdrawals from the unity of Christianity of the parts that are denied rightful expression within it. Moved by these considerations, I look forward to an entrance into the full mind of the

New Testament by way of a comprehensive comparison of all its diverse points of view and variant expressions of the Gospel.

Not only so, but in this volume itself, which is but part of the proposed plan, I have recognized the fact that even within the narrower limits of the Gospels which give us our record of the Gospel, there are not only possible but actual diverse impressions of what the Gospel is; and that not only is full justice due to each such impression, taken by itself and for its own sake, but that the very fullest justice to each is the only way of arriving at the truth of all, or at the truth of the whole of which they are the complementary and necessary parts. The one great lesson that must forerun and make ready the Christian unity of the future is this: that contraries do not necessarily contradict, nor need opposites always oppose. What we want is not to surrender or abolish our differences, but to unite and compose them. We need the truth of every variant opinion and the light from every opposite point of view. The least fragment is right in so far as it stands for a part of the truth. It is wrong only when, as so often, it elevates into a ground of division from the other fragments just that which in reality fits it to unite with and supplement them.

What has been said may indicate at least the spirit and temper in which the study before us is sought to be conducted. I speak here, of course, only in generalities; the concrete application or use of the principles enunciated must be found and judged in the book itself.