THE LIFE OF OUR BLESSED SAVIOUR: AN EPITOME OF THE GOSPEL NARRATIVE

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LIFE OF OUR BLESSED SAVIOUR:

AN EPITOME

OF THE GOSPEL NARRATIVE

ARRANGED IN ORDER OF TIME FROM THE LATEST HARMONIES.

With Introduction and Notes.

BY THE

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PREFACE.

THIS epitome is intended to facilitate the study of the Holy Gospels. By tracing the outlines of the narrative distinctly, it becomes more evident, how sure are the foundations on which the Christian faith stands, and more easy to realize the full import of the narrative, both as a whole and in its constituent parts. In this way a work even of small dimensions may be of some service, it is hoped, amid the controversies of the day, in assisting to check the insidious tendencies of scepticism. The best of all answers to objections against the accuracy of this or that point of detail in the Old or New Testament, because it exposes most palpably the irrelevancy and futility of such objections, is a firm appreciation of the Gospel *as a whole*, and of the glorious truths there recorded, and providentially transmitted to latest generations in the faithful custody of the Church.

INTRODUCTION.

THIS Epitome of the sacred narrative of the life on earth of our Blessed Saviour is based for the most part on the Hulsean Lectures of Bishop Ellicott. The compiler has also availed himself of other works, including the interesting Essays of Andrews, the latest and not the least competent of the many writers on this subject. With some modifications[1], not of great importance, he has followed the arrangement proposed by Bishop Ellicott, not as the only possible way of solving the many and intricate questions which arise in harmonizing the four Gospels, but as being intrinsically consistent and supported by no slight weight of authority. He hopes that his compilation (for it is nothing more), may prove useful to those, who desire to form a clear and complete idea of the events in that adorable Life which is the great central object of our faith. The Epitome is not a Harmony of the Gospels, but the result without the process of harmonizing. There are many readers who have neither the leisure nor the special training required to follow the slow and

[1] For example, in the account of the Call of the Four Apostles by the Lake of Galilee, the circumstances of the Last Supper, several dates, &c.

lengthy disquisitions through which the true adjustment of the sacred records is attained, but who will gladly avail themselves of the result of those investigations, if presented in a simple and compendious form. Such readers may assure themselves that, though the arguments on which the arrangement adopted in the Epitome rests are of necessity withheld, it has not been adopted hastily nor without earnest consideration of conflicting arguments. It will approve itself, the compiler believes, more and more convincingly to the patient and devout student of the holy narrative.

There seem to be good and sufficient reasons for the conclusion at which Bishop Ellicott (in common with the best authorities on the subject) has arrived, that St. Mark and St. Luke observe the order of time most closely, and are, in a word, the most historical of the four Evangelists. St. Matthew appears to group together events or discourses by the law of similarity and on account of reference to the same subject, thus evincing that habit of classifying which might reasonably be expected from his previous occupations. St. John is led to single out the principal discourses with a view to establish the great doctrine of the Saviour's divine nature, and thus marks only the great yearly divisions of His Ministry. The other two usually prefix a note of time to the successive incidents, connecting them in due order into a continuous narrative, in which each stage of the journey may be traced with more or less exactness.

In this Epitome it has been judged best to omit such incidents as are inseparably connected with others, and may be said to form an integral part of them. For instance, the Song of Simeon obviously suggests the

Thanksgiving of Anna as belonging to the same time and place. Again, the "Appearance of the Angels" involves the consequent visit of the Shepherds to worship the new-born Christ. But, on the other hand, wherever the date and sequence of events require to be carefully marked by reason of some obscurity, there even subordinate points are specified. The relative proportion of events is kept in view, so far as an epitome admits of it, according to the rules of historical perspective. Thus a far larger space than usual is devoted to the narrative of the Passion and Death of Christ, which are related in their minutest particulars; and special care has been taken to distinguish plainly the several occasions on which He deigned to manifest Himself "after that He was risen."

Any thing like detailed annotation is out of place in a compendium. It is not easy, whilst enumerating things of so surpassing an interest, to pass by them without a word; and there is danger of irreverence in the abrupt and cursory mention of holy things. But the very nature of an epitome demands a rigid adherence to the bare outlines only. In one respect indeed comment is unnecessary. By the mere fact of being arranged in the right order of time and place, the several features of the history stand out in stronger light and shade, and thus illustrate each other. A few notes are appended, where the connexion of events is less obvious than usual, or to explain what might otherwise seem questionable in the text.

The reference on the margin is generally made to that Evangelist who narrates the incident most fully, as St. Matthew in "the Baptism," or who gives the most probable arrangement of details in order of time,