

Lecture 18: Machen and the Synoptic Gospels

February 28, 2020

The New Testament begins with **four gospels**...

Four Portraits – one Person

Four Perspectives – one Event

Illus. Basketball Game





Four Preachments – one Purpose

“...but these have been written so that you may *believe* that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have *life* in His name” (John 20:31).

Sum: A gospel is not a biography, but a sermon in story from history.

The Four Gospels

Synoptic Gospels

Face	Gospel	Portrait	Audience
	Matthew	The King	Jews
	Mark	The Suffering Servant <i>and</i> Son of God	Romans
	Luke – <i>a two-volume work with Acts!</i> (cf. lots of <i>fives</i> in the Bible)	The Righteous Man	Greeks
	John	God	Everyone

Contextualization – the mustard seed was thrown on the “field” (Mt.), the “ground” (Mk.), and the “garden” (Lk.)

Ipsissima Verba vs. *Ipsissima Vox*

The Synoptic Question

Priority – *Matthew* or *Mark* first?

Source – *Collection of Sayings* (Q = German *Quelle*)?

J. Gresham Machen (1881-1937)

Princeton – Johns Hopkins – Marburg crisis

Prof. Wilhelm Herrmann

Eight years before seeking ordination!

(He “trusted” Christ, but denied the miracles, resurrection, and deity of Jesus?)

Theological Liberalism

Schleiermacher – faith is a feeling of dependence on God

Strauss – *The Life of Jesus* → starts the quest for the historical Jesus

von Harnack – *What Is Christianity?* Life, not doctrine.

Bultmann – “demythologize” the documents

The essence of Christianity is a sense of God as Father and man as brother.

Jesus achieved this piety and left us an example to follow—the faith of Jesus, not faith in Jesus.

Paul introduced doctrine through the alien Greek spirit of philosophical inquiry.

The myth of Scripture and the creeds of church history are mere cultural forms of a timeless spirit.

Sum: Liberalism is a fact-value split that separates the kernel of *piety* from the husk of *doctrine*.

As a result, science can deny the historical claims of the Bible, but Christianity is still “true”.

Machen’s Response

Beware of running from scholarship into pre-modern times (Psalm 24:1)!

“Christianity and Culture” (1912) – How should a Christian respond to culture?

Liberalism – submits to culture

Revivalism – ignores culture

Machen – sanctifies culture → *The Virgin Birth of Christ* (1930) – his *magnum opus*

“Faith and History” (1915)

The Origin of Paul’s Religion (1921)

Christianity and Liberalism (1923)

They are two distinct religions and should be separated by putting out or coming out.