

SOME ASPECTS OF GOSPEL INTRODUCTION

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INTRODUCTION

IN these papers no attempt is made to give a complete outline of the present state of Gospel research. Their object is rather to survey some recent lines of approach to the Gospels, and to suggest some definite conclusions to which recent research seems to me to lead.

In the fascination of tracking down the original oral and documentary sources of our Gospels, the student at times forgets that each Gospel ought primarily to be studied for its own sake, and in the light of the distinctive purpose of each of the four Evangelists. Whereas the sources are largely hypothetical, the Gospels themselves in their present Greek dress are there before our eyes, each an individual literary work with its own characteristic viewpoint, which has in great measure controlled the choice and presentation of the subject-matter. In attempting to discover how they were composed, we must by all means beware of regarding them as mere scissors-and-paste compilations.

Again, important and interesting as critical study is, it should not obscure for us the real object for which all four Gospels were written, the knowledge of the Man Christ Jesus as Son of God and Saviour. The greatest and most lasting benefit will be derived from them if we study them not merely from the standpoint of textual, literary or historical criticism, of *Formgeschichte*, *Kulturgeschichte*, or even *Religionsgeschichte*, but rather from that of *Heilsgeschichte*, that is, with regard to the place they occupy in the unfolding of the world's redemption.

Questions inevitably arise about the bearing of these critical discussions on the divine inspiration of the Gospel record. These papers are written in full acceptance of the Reformed doctrine of the Scriptures. But the present study is confessedly a philological, not a theological one; it examines the production of the

Gospels on the human, not on the divine side, although the latter is always borne in mind. The divine inspiration of the Gospels may be regarded as largely a fulfilment of our Lord's promise, "The Comforter, even the Holy Spirit, . . . shall teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said unto you" (John xiv. 26). Inspiration, however, cannot be demonstrated by historical and philological arguments alone; "the things of the Spirit of God . . . are spiritually discerned" (I Cor. ii. 14).

Yet there are some historical views of the Gospels which accord better than others with belief in their divine inspiration. A view which denies them practically any historical value is certainly very difficult to square with such a belief. Indeed, it undermines the whole Christian position, so intimately are history and the Gospel interwoven. It is the essence of the Gospel message that God entered into the course of history when "Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord . . . suffered under Pontius Pilate". It is useless to argue that the historicity of the record does not matter, so long as its theological content is recognised. The outlook for Christianity would not be bright if we had no alternative but to agree with Professor Rudolf Bultmann :

"I do indeed think that we can now know almost nothing concerning the life and personality of Jesus, since the early Christian sources show no interest in either, are moreover fragmentary and often legendary; and other sources about Jesus do not exist."¹

Although Bultmann himself, by an act of faith (some might say by a happy inconsistency), maintains his belief in Jesus as the Word made flesh, probably the majority who felt bound to accept his historical conclusions would find it impossible to share his faith. Similar misgivings to those aroused by Bultmann's opinion must have been suggested to some hearers and readers by the conclusion of Professor R. H. Lightfoot's Bampton Lectures for 1934:

"It seems, then, that the form of the earthly no less than of the heavenly Christ is for the most part hidden from us. For all the inestimable value of the gospels, they yield us little more than a whisper of his voice; we trace in them but the outskirts of his way's."²

But we need not be intimidated by these sceptical conclusions; there are solid grounds for seeing a much greater element of history in the Gospels than these writers allow. Even an old-fashioned liberal Modernist like Professor C. J. Cadoux protests against this scepticism: "the use of Form-Criticism in order to demonstrate the legendary character of the greater part of the Synoptic narrative", he says, "seems wholly unjustified. . . . In regard to the historical credibility of the Synoptic Gospels themselves, I incline to take a more conservative and trustful attitude than has prevailed in many circles since Form-Criticism became known."³ Interpretation there necessarily is in the Gospels, but the interpretation arises out of the narrative; the narrative is not the product of the interpretation. "The assumption that the whole great course of Christian history is a massive pyramid balanced upon the apex of some trivial occurrence, is surely a less probable one than that the whole event, the occurrence *plus* the meaning inherent in it, did actually occupy a place in history at least comparable with that which the New Testament assigns to it."⁴ The interpretation is, indeed, part of the history, for history differs from a mere chronicle of facts in that it selects and interprets the relevant facts. The divine inspiration which controlled the recording of the events related in the Gospels also controlled their selection and interpretation.

From the very beginning, the proclamation of the Gospel story included an interpretation of the facts; the Christian belief is that this interpretation was the true one. In the earliest strata of our Gospels, as in the latest, Jesus is presented as the Messiah and Son of God. The earliest recorded proclamation of the Gospel after the Passion, Peter's address at Pentecost, narrated events which were known to all the hearers, but the point of the address lay in the interpretation which he gave of those events, the same interpretation as we find in the Gospels and in the N.T. generally. Even such a simple statement as the first clause of Paul's summary of his message in 1 Cor. xv. 3, "Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures", is much more than the statement of a historical fact; it involves the threefold interpretation (1) that the one who died was the Messiah, (2) that His death was "for our sins", and (3) that it was in accordance with "the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God" as revealed in Hebrew Scripture. Paul was as familiar with the event itself before his conversion as after; what made the differ-

ence was the new interpretation of the event.⁵ If this necessary presence of interpretation in all true history be kept in mind, it will be seen that the recognition of its presence in the Gospels does not in any way detract from their historicity.

For convenience, the ordinary notation of critical literature—"Q", "L", "M", etc.—is used in these papers. As used here, these letters do not necessarily denote separate sources. "Q" denotes the non-Markan material common to Mt. and Lk.,⁶ "L" the matter peculiar to Lk., and "M" the material peculiar to Mt. The abbreviations Mt., Mk., Lk., Jn. refer to the Gospels; when persons are intended, these names are written in full.

I

THE SYNOPTIC PROBLEM

The term "Synoptic Gospels" still serves a useful purpose, provided that it does not mislead us into exaggerating the distinction between the first three Gospels and the fourth. We are coming increasingly to see that the problems of the first three are much the same as those of the fourth; the differences are differences of degree rather than of kind. This statement holds good not only in form-criticism; that it is true also in textual and literary criticism has been shown by Streeter in *The Four Gospels*—it is suggested, indeed, in the very title of that work. The relation of the fourth to the first three has lately been described by Dr. William Temple in language which recalls the words of Calvin, *Dicere soleo, hoc evangelium clavem esse, quae aliis intellegendis ianuam aperiat.*⁷ The "evidence", says Dr. Temple, ". . . supports the view . . . that the mind of Jesus Himself was what the Fourth Gospel disclosed, but that the disciples were at first unable to enter into this, partly because of its novelty, and partly because of the associations attaching to the terminology in which it was necessary that the Lord should express Himself. Let the Synoptists repeat for us as closely as they can the very words He spoke; but let St. John tune our ears to hear them."⁸

Formerly one of the weightiest arguments against the historicity of some of the Johannine incidents was that the Markan narrative left no room for them. Thus Burkitt regarded this as the chief obstacle in the way of accepting as historical

the account of the raising of Lazarus.⁹ Few scholars of his rank will be found to-day to hold the same view of the continuity and completeness of the Markan narrative. Without going so far as those form-critics who deny any consecutiveness to that narrative,¹⁰ we have learned to allow for gaps in the sequence of events. Two recent writers in particular have to be mentioned, who have dealt with the relation between the Synoptic and Johannine chronology. One is Professor Maurice Goguel of the Sorbonne, who has shown that Lk. and Jn. agree in representing the Galilaean ministry as ending just before the Feast of Tabernacles preceding the Passion.

“ Jesus did not enter Jerusalem a few days before the Passover, but at the Feast of Tabernacles, in the month of September or October; he stayed there till the Feast of the Dedication, in December. Then he went away into retirement in Peraea; at the same time he remained in touch with his disciples in Jerusalem; he did not return to the capital until a short time before the Passover, ‘ six days before ’, says John (xii. 1), that is to say, about the same time as his arrival is placed by the Synoptists.”¹¹

Obviously this chronology puts the historicity of the raising of Lazarus in quite a different light, so far as Burkitt's argument is concerned. The other writer referred to is Dr. G. Ogg, whose *Chronology of the Public Life and Ministry of Jesus* appeared in 1940. Whether we accept his conclusions or not, they are significant for more reasons than one. He argues that the Synoptists imply a ministry of one year's duration, and this he accepts as true, in so far as the Galilaean ministry is concerned. This year, “ the acceptable year of the Lord ” (Luke iv. 19), he fits into the Johannine framework between John v and vii. Like Goguel, he places the end of the Galilaean ministry immediately before the Feast of Tabernacles of John vii. 2. All the other chronological data of John he finds consistent and accurate.

Leaving the Johannine question for the present,¹² we may briefly examine the present state of the Synoptic Problem. No new solution of the problem is here offered, but at most a modification of the solutions already in vogue. My main purpose is to suggest that, by examining the various lines of evidence in the light of recent research, we may be confident that in these

three Gospels we have several strands of first-hand testimony to the sayings and doings of our Lord, which together give us good and sufficient grounds for belief in the trustworthiness of our evangelic records.

So far as our Greek Gospels are concerned, the Markan hypothesis seems likely to stand. The discovery of the priority of Mk. dates from the eighteenth century, but Lachmann first set the Markan hypothesis on a stable basis when in *Studien und Kritiken* (1835) he deduced not only the priority of Mk., but also the dependence of Mt. and Lk. upon it, from the fact that the common order of the three is the order of Mk. With the Markan hypothesis usually goes the recognition that there is a good deal of non-Markan material common to Mt. and Lk., the material designated "Q".

The late J. H. Ropes, in a thoughtful and independent little book entitled *The Synoptic Gospels* (1934), summed up the present state of the Markan and "Q" hypotheses as follows:

"That Mark, in substantially its present form, was drawn on by Matthew and Luke for the greater part of their narrative of events and incidents, can be regarded as an achieved result of Synoptic criticism, and can be used without scruple as the basis of modern study. But it is surprising, and a little mortifying to scholarship, to have to admit that this fundamental conclusion is the only assured result of the vast amount of incessant labour which has been expended on the so-called Synoptic Problem in the whole of the past hundred years and more. As to the other main question for the examination of which the material is directly open to students, that presented by the great mass of sayings of Jesus common to Matthew and Luke, but not found in Mark, agreement among scholars is less than it was forty years ago. The widespread idea of a common source, now lost, for these two gospels—the theory of the 'Logia' or 'Q'—has tended to be modified, refined, and complicated to such a degree as, for that reason if for no other, to arouse doubts of its validity. There is a simpler, competing possibility, namely that Luke drew these sayings from our Gospel of Matthew, which has never been shown to be impossible. If this could be made a probability, the hypothesis of 'Q' would lose at least its main ground of support."¹³

This last suggestion of Ropes can scarcely be adopted without qualification. One of the most striking agreements between Mt. and Lk. is the use of *ἐνετύλιξεν* in Matt. xxvii. 59 and Luke xxiii. 53 as against *ἐνείλησεν* in Mark xv. 46; but this passage does not belong to "Q", and this agreement, like others, may be due to later assimilation of the texts of Mt. and Lk. As for the "Q" material, there are many places where differences between the versions of Mt. and Lk. can best be explained as due to independent translations of a common Aramaic original.¹⁴ For this and other reasons a direct dependence of Lk. on our Greek Mt. cannot be regarded as probable. A suggestion which seems to me more probable will be made later on.

Meanwhile we must examine Mk., our point of departure for Synoptic study. The object of Mk. is to narrate "the beginning of the good news of Jesus, Messiah, Son of God". It reflects the Gospel as it was preached in the early days of the Church, in order to secure belief in Jesus as Messiah and Son of God. Therefore it consists mainly of narrative. So far as we can learn from Acts and the Epistles, the Sayings of Jesus played little part in early Gospel preaching (*κήρυγμα*); their place was rather in the apostolic teaching (*διδαχή*). The preaching told how Jesus, from the days of John the Baptist's ministry, went about doing good until the Jewish ruling caste procured His death at the hands of the Roman power, how God raised Him from the dead in token of His Messiahship and Lordship, and how He was to return to earth in glory to inaugurate in its fullness the Messianic Age.¹⁵ This apostolic Kerygma is the subject of Mk. Now, according to Acts, the chief preacher of this message in the early days was Peter. Of his preaching we have summaries in Acts ii, iii, x. Mk. is virtually an expansion of these summaries, and thus we have internal confirmation of the tradition of the Elder whom Papias quotes: "Mark, having become the interpreter of Peter, wrote down accurately all that he [Peter] mentioned, whether sayings or doings of Christ, not however in order . . ." ¹⁶ (Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.* iii. 39). Further confirmation of the Petrine authority behind much of Mk. was given in a series of linguistic studies entitled "Marcan Usage" by C. H. Turner in *JTS* xxv (1924), pp. 377ff., xxvi (1925), pp. 12ff., 145ff., 225ff., 337ff. When Mark is called Peter's "interpreter" (*ἐρμηνευτής*), I see no reason to doubt that the word is to be understood primarily in its literal sense. Peter

must have known Greek, but he may well have been glad of the services of one who had a better command of that language than he had himself, just as the Greek style of 1 Peter is due to Silvanus (1 Pet. v. 12), and not to Peter himself.

It is unnecessary to suppose, as many since the time of Clement of Alexandria¹⁷ have done, that Mark did not begin to write down Peter's Gospel until Peter's unproved visit to Rome. Mark was in Jerusalem when Peter first began to preach there; Peter was a welcome guest in Mark's home. There are grounds for believing that when Barnabas and Saul took Mark as their "minister" (*ὑπηρέτης*) on their first missionary journey (Acts xiii. 5), we are to understand the word in the sense which it bears in the Lukan prologue; Mark was a "minister of the Word" in the sense that he was acquainted with the facts of the Gospel story, and was thus a valuable companion to the missionaries. We may concede, however, that it was in Rome that his Gospel ceased to be used for private purposes only and was published in the form in which we have it; the Latinisms in which it abounds make this probable, and we know that Mark was in Rome about A.D. 60. We need not suppose that Peter was Mark's only source of information; another probable source will be suggested later.

About the time that Mark seems to have published his Gospel in Rome, we find him mentioned as being in Paul's company there along with Luke, the undoubted author of the Third Gospel and Acts (Col. iv. 10, 14). I believe that Luke's twofold work was complete in substantially its present form about A.D. 62, the end of the period of two years mentioned in Acts xxviii. 30. Luke alone of the three Synoptists gives us a statement of the method and object of his work. According to his prologue (Luke i. 1-4), which is intended as an introduction to the whole of his twofold history, many had previously undertaken to draw up a narrative of the beginnings of Christianity, based on the evidence of those who were eye-witnesses of the evangelic events (like Peter) or "ministers of the Word" (like Mark). He himself in turn, he continues, having traced the whole story accurately from the outset, decided to write it down in an orderly form for the benefit of one Theophilus, who had already received some information on the subject.

The narrative of Acts throws considerable light on the opportunities which Luke had for tracing the course of the

Gospel story. From time to time, and especially in the period from Acts xxi. 3 onwards, Luke came in contact with many people who could give him first-hand information about the story of Jesus and the early days of the Church. At Caesarea, both during his stay there with Paul on the way to Jerusalem (xxi. 8ff.), and during Paul's subsequent detention there (xxiii. 33-xxvii. 1), he had access to the household of Philip, who played an important part in the early days of the Jerusalem Church, and whose daughters were well known in later days as authorities on the early history of the Church.¹⁸ At Jerusalem Luke must have had ample access to first-hand information. And in Rome, as we have seen, he met Mark. Now these facts accord remarkably well with the "Proto-Luke" hypothesis first put forward apparently by Paul Feine in 1891,¹⁹ best known in this country through its advocacy by Streeter in the *Hibbert Journal* for 1921 and in *The Four Gospels* (1924) and by Dr. Vincent Taylor in *Behind the Third Gospel* (1926). This hypothesis, briefly, supposes that the first draft of Lk. consisted of the "Q" material together with the material peculiar to Lk., commonly referred to as "L". Whether this first draft, or "Proto-Luke", was ever published separately is very doubtful, but that it had a separate existence in Luke's private possession is probable. After its completion Luke made the acquaintance of Mk., the greater part of which he added to his earlier draft, thus giving us the Third Gospel as we know it. This theory is the more attractive in that it accords well with the data of Acts, from which it is not difficult to conclude that the first draft was complete by the end of the two years in Caesarea, and that the Markan material was added in Rome. Luke recognised that Mark, the companion of the original apostles, was an excellent authority of the events in question, not only for the Gospel story, but no doubt also for the earliest chapters of Acts.

In examining the constituents of "Proto-Luke", we must not assume without good reason that each of these, "Q" and "L", represents one source only. Since Luke knew of many who had undertaken to draw up an account of the Gospel story, he may have been indebted to several of them for his information.²⁰ It is so easy and pleasant a pastime to reconstruct sources which no longer exist that we are apt to forget that perhaps they never did exist in anything like the form that we imagine. There is no ground for supposing that all the material peculiar to Lk.

has been derived from one source.²¹ It is generally agreed, for example, that he was dependent on a special source for his Nativity narratives—perhaps, as Professor Torrey argues, on a little work composed in Hebrew.²² We should, however, pay serious attention to Harnack's ascription of the bulk of "L" to Philip the evangelist and his daughters.²³ This, as we have seen, is antecedently probable from the history of Luke's travels, and it is supported by other considerations. Philip was a Hellenist, whom we first meet in Jerusalem (Acts vi. 5); "L", while composed in "Jewish Greek" and depending, in so far as it contains sayings, on an oral Aramaic original, does not betray a written Aramaic origin as Mk. and "Q" do,²⁴ and it shows an interest in Southern Palestine rather than in Galilee. (For example, the resurrection appearances in Lk. are Judæan, and not Galilaean, as those in Mk. must have been.) "L" also shows special interest in the Samaritans; Philip, we know, was the first to evangelise Samaria. The emphasis on poverty in "L" may be illuminated by the work to which Philip was appointed as one of the Seven. The place occupied by women in "L" gains in significance when we remember the part played by Philip's daughters. Besides, it is pretty certain that Philip was one of Luke's chief authorities for several of the earlier chapters of Acts, and this adds to the probability of his being a chief informant for part of the Gospel as well. But we need not trace the whole of "L" to Philip. For instance, if Luke was a native of Antioch, as Eusebius tells us,²⁵ his special acquaintance with the affairs of the Herod family may have been due to contact with Manaen, the foster-brother of Antipas (Acts xiii. 1).

Luke appears in many points to have preferred the version given by his special source to that of Mk. or of the source whence he derived his "Q" material. Streeter has demonstrated fairly clearly that where Luke already had in "Proto-Luke" an account of something told in Mk., he preferred to keep his original account.²⁶ The outstanding instance of this preference is found in the Passion Narrative. But "L" seems also to have overlapped the source from which "Q" came, a source which Luke probably knew before he came to Caesarea. If we compare the Lukan version of the Sermon on the Mount with the Matthaean, we find that along with verbal identity in some portions (e.g., Luke vi. 41ff. = Matt. vii. 3ff.), there is

elsewhere such diversity of language, in the Beatitudes for example, as to make it difficult to believe that both drew upon a common document. And the distinctive features of the Lukan version of the Beatitudes are similar to features of "L" which seem to betray the influence of Philip. There are signs that Luke knew more of the version of the Sermon that appears in Mt. than he actually used. Such abrupt transitions as in Luke vi. 27, 39f., may show where he omitted passages from his earlier source, or passed from one source to the other.²⁷ The corresponding Matthaean passages (v. 43f., vii. 1ff.) have no such abruptness of transition. Similarly, there is no need to suppose that the Matthaean mission of the Twelve is taken from the same source as the Lukan mission of the Seventy. It is more probable that the latter belongs to "L" (was Philip one of the Seventy?); so also, I have no doubt, do the Parables of the Great Supper (Luke xiv. 16ff.) and the Pounds (Luke xix. 11ff.) as compared with those of the Marriage Feast (Matt. xxii. 1ff.) and the Talents (Matt. xxv. 14ff.). The diversities between these Matthaean and Lukan passages preclude a common written source; the similarities, on the other hand, can be accounted for in terms of form-criticism.

But the crux of the Synoptic Problem is still the enigmatic "Q", which, according to Burkitt, "possesses the fascination of the elusive and the unknown".²⁸ Reconstructions of a hypothetical document "Q" have been frequent, and doubtless we have not seen the last of them, in spite of Burkitt's warning of the futility of such attempts, seeing that "we could not have constructed the Gospel according to S. Mark out of the other two Synoptic Gospels".²⁹ Yet these attempted reconstructions have served a useful purpose; in spite of their limitations, they give us at least some sort of idea of the most important non-Markan source lying behind Mt. and Lk. In particular, there is much of value in Harnack's reconstruction and study in *The Sayings of Jesus*.³⁰ Harnack's conclusion was that "Q" was a document, "dominated by the belief in the Messiahship of Jesus" (p. 243), consisting of Sayings, better preserved in Mt. than in Lk., composed in Aramaic in the apostolic epoch, earlier than Mk., probably by the Apostle Matthew. As usually envisaged, it had no Passion narrative, but its report of the Sayings of Jesus was preceded by a summary of John the Baptist's ministry up to Jesus' baptism. At an early date it appeared in more

than one Greek translation. Wilhelm Bussmann argues in his *Synoptische Studien* ii (1929) that the "Q" material of Mt. and Lk. is derived partly from a single Greek source (his "T", from *Täufer*), partly from two different Greek translations of an Aramaic source (his "R", from *Reden*). I do not think that these should be regarded as quite separate sources; it is enough to say that the Greek versions of "Q" represented in Mt. and Lk. were partly identical or nearly so, and partly divergent. And sometimes, as we have seen, what has been supposed to be the Lukan version of "Q" should rather be assigned to "L".

It is likely that Apollos and the twelve Ephesian disciples of Acts xix. iff. learned the story of Jesus from such a translation; this would account for their knowing the baptism of John only.³¹ Luke was probably already acquainted with one of these translations when he arrived at Caesarea; he has been pictured as approaching his Palestinian informants with his copy and asking them for further information on the subject-matter.³² "Proto-Luke" was thus "Q" amplified by "L", and it seems that Luke sometimes preferred a version which he learned in Palestine to the one he had already.

If it is true that the document "Q" (I should prefer to say, the document from which Mt. and Lk. derived their "Q" material) contained no Passion narrative, we have to account for this omission. Some account for it by seeing in "Q" merely a compendium of our Lord's teaching for converts who already knew the Passion story; the best explanation to my mind, however, is that given by Sir W. M. Ramsay in his *Luke the Physician* (p. 89). Ramsay maintains the impossibility of such a document considerably later than the Crucifixion omitting all reference to the death of Christ or to its importance for salvation, and continues:

"There is only one possibility. The lost Common Source of Luke and Matthew . . . was written while Christ was still living. It gives us the view which one of his disciples entertained of him and his teaching during his lifetime . . . it was a document practically contemporary with the facts, and it registered the impression made on eye-witnesses by the words and acts of Christ."

To suppose that one of the Gospel sources was actually composed within our Lord's lifetime on earth may seem too bold, and yet it is a very reasonable explanation of the facts, if "Q" was anything like what its reconstructors have imagined.

With Ramsay's conjecture we should compare a suggestion of Professor B. S. Easton, to which we shall have to refer again when we come to consider form-criticism:

"We have every reason to believe that the first tradition of the sayings-groups and the parables arose in Jesus' lifetime and under his personal direction; the earliest content of the tradition he himself required his disciples to commit to memory" (*Christ in the Gospels*, p. 41).

Now, if our Lord indeed required the disciples to commit His teaching to memory, what better guarantee of their so committing it could there have been than that it should be committed to writing?³³ This was no unlettered age in that part of the world, but one in which common people could read and write. Although the Rabbis of that day did not consider it proper to have their teaching set down in black and white, Jesus' methods of teaching were in many respects different from theirs. Who then in the apostolic company was most likely to be charged with the duty of committing the Lord's words to writing, or, if there was no such explicit injunction, who was most likely in any case to aid his memory by taking notes? Who but he who had sat at the receipt of custom, Matthew the tax-collector? The mention of his name brings us to the problem of the First Gospel and its relation to "Q".

The problems raised by the First Gospel have not yet found an entirely satisfactory solution, and I do not pretend to have come anywhere within sight of finality. But we may pay attention to some considerations which should be kept in mind when dealing with the problems, and suggest one or two directions in which these indications seem to point. That Mt., like Lk., is dependent on Mk., so far at least as our Greek Gospels are concerned, is one of the few settled conclusions that do seem most clearly to emerge from a century's study of the Gospels. The cogency of this conclusion cannot be conveyed in a sentence or two; the argument is cumulative, and can best be followed by a careful study of the linguistic evidence as presented

in Hawkins' *Horae Synopticae*, with the help of a good Greek Synopsis, such as Huck's, where the material is arranged in a form free from prejudice in favour of any one hypothesis.

The earliest relevant external evidence is the extract from Papias preserved by Eusebius (*Hist. Eccl.* iii. 39), "Matthew compiled the *logia* in the Hebrew [i.e., almost certainly, Aramaic] speech, and everyone translated them as he was able".³⁴ All later patristic statements on the origin of Mt. seem to be simply amplifications of Papias. The crucial word in the sentence is *logia*. What were these *logia*? I cannot agree with the now fashionable view that they were a collection of Testimonies, O.T. quotations characteristic of the First Gospel, despite the distinguished advocates of this view, from Burkitt and Rendel Harris³⁵ onwards. Matthew may have made such a collection, but that is not what the words of Papias refer to. No doubt Papias understood the statement of the First Gospel, as Eusebius certainly did, but the statement almost certainly did not originate with Papias, but rather with the Elder from whom he received his information about Mk.³⁶ It seems most reasonable to understand *λόγια* in the sense which it bears in the title of Papias's own work, *ἐξηγήσεις τῶν κυριακῶν λογίων*, "Expositions of the Lord's Oracles (or Sayings)". That is to say, the *logia* which Matthew compiled were *κυριακὰ λόγια*, "Sayings of the Lord". This is not a new interpretation, of course; it goes back at least to Schleiermacher, who supposed that the statement referred to the lost "Second Source" behind Mt. and Lk. It has been frowned upon of late, but appears to me to be the most likely sense of the fragment, and is supported in our day by the able advocacy of Professor T. W. Manson.³⁷

If we compare this interpretation of Papias with the earlier suggestion, that Matthew was the most likely person to commit our Lord's teaching to writing, we find that the two lines of evidence strengthen each other. But can we make any further suggestion as to what Matthew wrote? Did he compile nothing but Sayings of Jesus and, perhaps, O.T. quotations? These quotations must have been attached to some account of the events in which their fulfilment was found; as for the Sayings of Jesus, it is probable that some idea was given of their setting, in the form of a narrative outline or framework.³⁸ In addition to the "Q" Sayings, those in "M", the material peculiar to Mt., should be regarded as part of what Matthew compiled.

"M", says Professor Easton, "would seem to be nothing more than the portion of the Sayings used by the First Evangelist alone."³⁹ The reason for their omission by Luke is not far to seek if we consider their marked Jewish flavour, which would not suit the purpose and outlook of the Third Gospel. In *The Poetry of our Lord* (1925), C. F. Burney gives strong linguistic arguments for the genuineness of the "M" discourses, the bulk of which he shows to have the same poetical pattern as other Sayings of Jesus. Thus there is reason to credit Matthew with "Q" and the greater part of "M", along with an undefined amount of narrative framework and possibly O.T. quotations in their appropriate context. It would be misleading to call all this material "Q", which had best be reserved as a symbol for the non-Markan material common to Mt. and Lk.; a better name for this Second Source would be "Proto-Matthew". Harnack,⁴⁰ as we have seen, considered that "Q" was better preserved in Mt. than in Lk.; Burney arrived at the same conclusion along quite different lines.⁴¹

While the priority of Mk. seems established so far as our Greek Gospels are concerned, there are indications that Mark knew and used the Second Source in its earliest form. This has been admitted by B. Weiss, Harnack, B. W. Bacon and others,⁴² and new and welcome light has been thrown on this question too by C. F. Burney. Burney argues that the Markan version of some Sayings is less original than the corresponding version in Mt.,⁴³ and that therefore "blind confidence in Mark, as necessarily preserving the most original form of sayings that are supposed to be derived from him, is wrong" (op. cit., p. 85). Where our Mt. depends on Mk., it abbreviates Mk.; on the other hand, the Markan account of John's ministry, followed by our Lord's baptism and temptation (Mark i. 2-13), looks like an abbreviation of Matt. iii. 1-iv. 11. Both Mt. and Lk. place the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount after the passage corresponding to Mark iii. 7-13; a certain roughness has been detected in Mark iii. 13 which may have been caused by the omission of the Sermon.⁴⁴ Mark iii. 23-30 looks like an abbreviated form of Matt. xii. 25-37. (Luke xi. 14-23 is another shortened version of the same incident, to which the Saying about the unclean spirit seeking rest has been added because of similarity of topic.) For this part of his narrative, then, Mark may have been dependent, not on Peter's reminiscences, but on

the narrative outline of "Proto-Matthew". "The other 'discourses' in Matthew all have more or less embryonic parallels in Mark", says Professor Easton,⁴⁶ and he argues that these embryonic parallels are not always the original. "In the case of the eschatology . . . Matt. x contains elements earlier than Mark xiii; similarly the mission charge in Matt. x is partly more primitive than the parallel in Mark vi. The result is of course a problem of great complexity that certainly will always defy final solution; but we should not forget that the problem exists."⁴⁶

Nor is it only "Q" discourses to which Mk. appears to supply embryonic parallels; Mark xii. 38-40 seems to be an abridgement of the denunciatory discourse of Matt. xxiii. 1-39, and the five verses following the Markan version of the eschatological discourse (Mark xiii. 33-37) compress the lessons taught in Matt. xxiv. 37-xxv. 36, and both these Matthaean passages belong to "M". This may strengthen the argument that "Q" and "M" are drawn from one source.

Matthew was not a disciple of the Lord from the very beginning of His Galilaean ministry. But if the Markan order here is chronological, his call (Mark ii. 13ff.) preceded the Sermon on the Mount (which, as we have seen, is inserted by Mt. and Lk. after what corresponds to Mark iii. 13). When he wished to provide an introduction to his compilation, he had easy access to various sources of information. The history of John's ministry was well-known; for the story of the Temptation he must have been indebted to Christ Himself.

Internal evidence supports the Papiian tradition that Matthew's Aramaic work existed in more than one Greek translation. One of these translations came into the hands of Luke about the year 50, and was used by him in the preparation of "Proto-Luke". That Luke largely preserved the original order of Mk. when later he incorporated it into his work does not necessarily imply that he must have preserved the original order of "Proto-Matthew". He may well have felt more free to rearrange what was mainly a collection of discourses than to rearrange a historical narrative.⁴⁷ He omitted from his own work parts of "Proto-Matthew" which did not suit the special intention of the Third Gospel (generally the "M" material), other parts he replaced by the "L" tradition which he learned in Palestine. Even where he retained the version of "Proto-Matthew", he

altered the style so as in many places to obscure the parallelisms and other patterns familiar in Hebrew and Aramaic poetry, which would be strange in the ears of his Greek audience.⁴⁸

Another Greek version of "Proto-Matthew", which had received amplifications during the four intervening decades since its inception, was conflated⁴⁹ towards the year 70 with the substance of the Greek Mk., thus giving us our Greek Mt. This accords better with the evidence than does Zahn's hypothesis, that the Greek Mk. (produced c. 64) was dependent on the complete Mt. which had appeared in its original Aramaic form c. 60, and that the complete Aramaic Mt. was turned into Greek c. 80-90, the translator using the Greek Mk. as an aid in the work of translation. The relation between Mt. and Mk. is too subtle and complicated to be explained in terms of Zahn's theory. Even at that early date, conflation and contamination of texts and other tendencies found in later MSS. were already operating towards uniformity in the language of those passages common to two or more of the Gospels. "In the *Textus Receptus* the Gospels are very much more alike than in any even moderately critically corrected text, and the differences would be even greater, if text criticism were more advanced than it is at present" (Th. Zahn, *Intr. to N.T.*, iii, p. 110).

Whether the Aramaic "Proto-Matthew" continued to enjoy a separate existence after the formation of our Mt. is very difficult to say. A great deal of Palestinian literature must have perished in the national catastrophes of A.D. 70 and 135. It has been inferred from some passages in the Talmud that an Aramaic Gospel was known in Jewish circles in the latter half of the first century and the earlier part of the second, and that some people (presumably Jewish Christians) claimed that it should be regarded as on a level of canonicity with the O.T. books. This was the "Evangelion" whose name was altered to 'Awon-gillayon by R. Yochanan (c. 70), and to 'Awen-gillayon by R. Meir (c. 130), both expressions meaning "Iniquity-margin".⁵⁰ It is also possible that Christian writings are denoted by the books of the Minim ("heretics").⁵¹ Whether the "Evangelion" which aroused the hostility of Rabbis Yochanan and Meir was an original Aramaic Gospel or the Targum of a Greek one we cannot say with certainty, though at that time an original Aramaic work may seem more likely. Even so, there is little to show us whether its contents corresponded with those

of any of our Gospels. Targums of the Greek Gospels did exist as early as the second century; we have, of course, the Old Syriac Gospels, in the Aramaic dialect of Edessa and its neighbourhood, and the relics of Palestinian Syriac texts. A Targum of the Greek Mt. was in use in the fourth century among the Aramaic Christians of Syria, the "Gospel according to the Nazarenes" referred to by Epiphanius (*Haer.* xxix. 9, 4), and by Jerome in his commentary on Mt. and elsewhere. Jerome at first made the mistake of regarding it as the original text of Mt., and it was probably under this impression that he took the trouble of translating it into Greek and Latin (*de uir. ill.* 2, etc.). There are serious grounds for thinking that he made another mistake in confusing it with the "Gospel according to the Hebrews",⁵² which apparently was an Ebionite Gospel current in a Greek dress in Egypt and Transjordan, but probably originally written in Aramaic. This "Gospel according to the Hebrews" is quoted by Clement of Alexandria (*Strom.* i. 9, 45; v. 14, 96) and Origen (on John ii. 12; on Jeremiah, *Hom.* xv. 4), and according to Eusebius (*Hist. Eccl.* iv. 22) it was used by Hegesippus (c. A.D. 170). Whether it may originally have been our posited "Proto-Matthew", edited in an Ebionite sense, there is not sufficient evidence to decide. Though it contained material not found in our Mt., yet it was a shorter Gospel, containing according to the Stichometry of Nicephorus 2,200 lines as compared with 2,480 in Mt.

I know of no adequate reason for dating any of our Synoptic Gospels much, if at all, later than A.D. 70. The arguments of Blass⁵³ and Harnack⁵⁴ for the early dating of Lk. (c. A.D. 62), and of Allen⁵⁵ and Harnack⁵⁶ for dating Mt. about 70 seem to me sufficiently decisive. None of the three necessarily presupposes the Fall of Jerusalem. I do not believe that it is referred to as a past event in the Olivet discourse in any of its three versions, or even in Matt. xxii. 7.

In assessing the reliability of ancient historical documents, it is generally agreed that, other things being equal, their reliability is likely to be greater, the shorter the space of time between the events recorded and the documents recording them. We can apply this criterion with confidence to our Gospels, quite apart from the implications that arise from their claim to divine inspiration. And besides the early date of composition of the Synoptics, I have tried to show that all of them contain material

which took shape at a still earlier time, some of it even before the Passion, and that this material, besides being for the most part first-hand evidence, was transmitted along at least three independent and trustworthy lines, agreeing in their presentation of the basic facts of the Christian faith—a threefold cord not quickly broken.

(To Be Continued)

F. F. BRUCE.

University of Leeds.

¹ *Jesus and the Word* (1935), p. 8. Tr. from the German of 1926.

² *History and Interpretation in the Gospels* (1935), p. 225. The impression we get from such a conclusion is that the Gospels contain a minimum of history and a maximum of interpretation. One is reminded of the story of the old verger at St. Mary's, Oxford, who thanked God that in spite of having listened to forty series of Bampton Lectures "to confirm and establish the Christian Faith", he had not yet lost his Christian faith.

³ *The Historic Mission of Jesus* (1941), pp. 8, 10.

⁴ C. H. Dodd, *History and the Gospel* (1938), p. 109. This book ought to be read by all who are dissatisfied with Professor Lightfoot's treatment of the same subject.

⁵ The event itself is recorded by Tacitus (Ann. xv. 44): *auctor nominis eius Christus Tiberio imperitante per procuratorem Pontium Pilatum supplicio adfectus erat* ("Christ, from whom they [the Christians] received their name, had been executed by the procurator Pontius Pilate when Tiberius was Emperor"). In this sentence by itself there is hardly any interpretation; the title "Christ" was for Tacitus simply a personal name and had no such theological significance as it had for Paul. Paul could not have referred to Jesus as Christ before his conversion.

⁶ Julius Wellhausen is usually credited with the first use of "Q" in this sense; it is explained as the initial of the German *Quelle* ("source"). But Dean Armitage Robinson claimed to have used it earlier when lecturing on the Two Document hypothesis; the Markan source he designated as "P" (the initial of Peter), and the most convenient symbol for the Second Source was "Q", the letter most naturally used along with "P". See Lightfoot, *op. cit.*, p. 27 n.

⁷ "I am in the habit of saying that this Gospel is the key which opens the door for the understanding of the others" (J. Calvin, *Argumentum in evangelium Ioannis*).

⁸ *Readings in St. John's Gospel* (1940), p. xxxii. Though not intended to be a contribution to learning, this work is marked by the sound scholarship and theological insight which we have learned by happy experience to associate with the new Archbishop of Canterbury. Other important contributions to the study of Jn. are the commentaries by J. H. Bernard (1928) and Sir E. Hoskyns (1940), C. F. Burney's *Aramaic Origin of the Fourth Gospel* (1922), W. F. Howard's *The Fourth Gospel in Recent Criticism and Interpretation* (1931), and several others.

⁹ *The Gospel History and its Transmission* (1906 and later), pp. vii, viii (2nd ed., 1907), 222.

¹⁰ E.g., K. L. Schmidt, *Der Rahmen der Geschichte Jesu* (1919); A. E. J. Rawlinson, *St. Mark* (Westminster Comm.) (1925).

¹¹ *Life of Jesus* (1933), p. 400. Tr. from French of 1932.

¹² The chief reason for not treating Jn. in greater detail was because of its excellent treatment at a similar Conference a few years previously by Mr. E. K. Simpson (see his article, "The Authorship and Authenticity of the Fourth Gospel" in *The Evangelical Quarterly*, April 1938).

¹³ pp. 92f.

¹⁴ E.g., *ὄσα ἐάν* (Matt. vii. 12) and *καθώς* (Luke vi. 31) may be variant translations of Aram. *kema de*. Similar Greek forms occur in the LXX of Gen. xlv. 1 and xli. 13 respectively as variant renderings of the corresponding Hebrew term *ka'asher*. The whole question is discussed more thoroughly in the third paper of this series, "Aramaic Origins".

¹⁵ See C. H. Dodd, *The Apostolic Preaching and its Developments* (1936).

¹⁶ The quotation continues: "For he was neither a hearer nor a companion of the Lord; but afterwards, as I said, he accompanied Peter, who adapted his teachings as necessity required, not as if he were making a compilation of the Sayings of the Lord. So then Mark made no mistake, writing down in this way some things as he [Peter] mentioned them; for he paid attention to this one thing, not to leave out anything that he had heard, nor to include any false statement among them." The translation is difficult, as the Greek is ambiguous in some

crucial respects. Thus I have twice inserted "Peter" before "mentioned", though the subject may be "Mark". The verb itself (*ἀπεμνημόνευσεν*) may mean either "mentioned" or "remembered". Any translation, therefore, demands a considerable element of interpretation.

¹⁷ *Apud* Euseb., *Hist. Eccl.* vi. 14. Contemporary with Clement is the anti-Marcionite Prologue to Mk. (c. A.D. 170), the Latin version of which says of Mark: *Iste interpres fuit Petri. Post excessionem ipsius Petri descripsit idem hoc in partibus Italiae euangelium.*

¹⁸ Proclus *ap.* Euseb., *Hist. Eccl.* iii. 31; Papias, *ibid* iii. 39.

¹⁹ *Eine vorkanonische Überlieferung des Lukas in Evangelium und Apostelgeschichte.*

²⁰ See D. M. McIntyre, "The Building of the Third Gospel", in *The Evangelical Quarterly*, Vol. I, pp. 130ff.

²¹ Cf. the Multiple-Document hypothesis advocated by Professor H. Torm of Copenhagen in the *Church Quarterly Review*, July-Sept. 1925. And more attention ought to be paid to Luke's possible dependence on Paul as a source of information. Paul must have had special knowledge about Jesus (cf. Acts xx. 35, and the account of the Last Supper in 1 Cor. xi. 23ff., which has close affinities with Luke's account). Paul spent a fortnight with Peter about A.D. 35 (Gal. i. 18), "and we may presume", says Professor Dodd, "they did not spend all the time talking about the weather". The private information which Paul received from Peter may have covered different ground from Peter's kerygma, written down by Mark.

²² *Our Translated Gospels* (1935), p. ix.

²³ *Luke the Physician* (1907), pp. 153ff. Harnack's series of "New Testament Studies", which appeared in English dress in the Crown Theological Library, still repays the closest study. His theology belongs to pre-1914 days, but his scholarship has not become similarly obsolete. N.T. students of to-day can but stand on his shoulders.

²⁴ "The [peculiar] Lucan matter offers little or no encouragement to the hunter of written Aramaic documents" (T. W. Manson, *Expository Times*, Vol. xlvii. p. 9).

²⁵ Euseb., *Hist. Eccl.* iii. 4 (*Λουκᾶς δὲ τὸ μὲν γένος ὦν τῶν*

ἀπ' Ἀντιοχείας); similarly the anti-Marcionite Prologue to Lk. says ἔστιν ὁ Λουκᾶς Ἀντιοχεὺς Σύρος. Did Luke meet Peter in Antioch?

²⁶ *The Four Gospels*, pp. 209ff.

²⁷ This question is carefully examined by B. S. Easton in *Christ in the Gospels* (1930), pp. 13ff. In these papers I am much indebted to Professor Easton's independent studies in the Gospels.

²⁸ *Earliest Sources for the Life of Jesus* (1922), p. 35.

²⁹ *The Gospel History and its Transmission*, p. 17.

³⁰ Eng. tr., 1908, from the German of 1906.

³¹ See F. J. Badcock, "The Date and Authorship of Q" (*Church Quarterly Review*, July-Sept. 1941).

³² Cf. T. W. Manson, *The Teaching of Jesus* (1931), pp. 39ff.

³³ J. Rendel Harris, in another connection, speaks of the possibility that our Lord's teaching was taken down on the spot by "some reporter or shorthand-writer" (*Expository Times*, Vol. xlvi, p. 186).

³⁴ Ματθαῖος μὲν οὖν Ἑβραΐδι διαλέκτῳ τὰ λόγια συνεγράψατο (al. συνετάξατο). ἡρμήνευσε δ' αὐτὰ ὡς ἦν δυνατὸς ἕκαστος.

³⁵ F. C. Burkitt, *The Gospel History and its Transmission*, p. 127; J. R. Harris, *Testimonies* i (1916), pp. 108ff.

³⁶ Cf. the argument of Professor Manson in *Expository Times*, Vol. xlvi, p. 9: "No one who has pondered what Eusebius has to say about the intelligence of Papias will find it easy to believe that the historian would have wet his pen to record the private opinion of Papias on matters of Biblical criticism. One does not quote as an authority the person whom one has just described as little better than an idiot." (σφόδρα γὰρ τοι μικρὸς ὦν τὸν νοῦν . . . φαίνεται, says Eusebius of Papias.)

³⁷ E.g., in the article just quoted, in *The Teaching of Jesus*, and in Major, Manson and Wright's *The Mission and Message of Jesus* (1937).

³⁸ Cf. B. W. Bacon, *Studies in Matthew* (1930), p. 104; A. H. McNeile, *The Gospel according to St. Matthew* (1915), p. xi.

³⁹ *Christ in the Gospels*, p. 16.

⁴⁰ Harnack, *Sayings of Jesus*, *passim*; on p. xii he quotes Wernle for the same position.

⁴¹ *The Poetry of our Lord*, pp. 87f.

⁴² Cf. B. W. Bacon, *Beginnings of the Gospel Story* (1909), pp. 9ff., *Studies in Matthew*, pp. 107f.

⁴³ E.g., Mark viii. 35 compared with Matt. xvi. 25; Mark x. 27 with Matt. xix. 26; Mark xiv. 7 with Matt. xxvi. 11.

⁴⁴ "And why is Mark iii. 13 so hopelessly obscure?" (Easton, op. cit., p. 19).

⁴⁵ *ibid.*, p. 20.

⁴⁶ *ibid.* It is such considerations as these that form the main plank in the argument of Dom John Chapman's *Matthew, Mark and Luke* (1937), that the Greek Mk. is dependent on the Greek Mt. Cf. the exposition of his argument by J. N. Geldenhuys in *The Evangelical Quarterly*, Vol. xi. pp. 300ff. This position, however, creates more problems than it solves. The problems on both sides are better accounted for by supposing that while Mk. is an important source of the Greek Mt., Mk. in its own turn was partly dependent on "Proto-Matthew".

⁴⁷ Cf. Bacon, *Studies in Matthew*, pp. 99ff.

⁴⁸ Burney, op. cit., p. 87.

⁴⁹ The usual account is, to quote Professor T. W. Manson, "that Matthew conflates his sources, while Luke selects from his" (*Mission and Message of Jesus*, p. 307). So also Bacon says that the text of Mt. "is generally closer than Lk.'s to the original when he transcribes sections of Q, but is also much more apt to be conflated with Mk." (op. cit., p. 104). The extent of the alleged conflation is greatly modified, however, if we are right in contending (a) that Mt. represents the common Second Source better than Lk. does, and (b) that Mk. was also partly dependent on this source, even for some narrative material. Even so, "conflated" seems the best word to describe the process so far as we can judge it. In that case, however, the problem tends to become one of the sort properly tackled in terms of *textual* criticism. According to A. von Harnack, "the first gospel more than any other of the synoptics, and in course of a more considerable period of time, has suffered from serious and repeated interpolation. That the synoptic gospel which was most read should have received the most numerous accretions, and should be latest in date, is nothing remarkable, but only natural" (*Date of the Acts and the Synoptic Gospels* [1911], pp. 134f.). The arrangement of the subject-matter in Mt. is best accounted for by supposing that it circulated originally in a Jewish-Christian community as a new Torah, consisting like

the Mosaic one of five parts: "the sequence of events as described in Matthew corresponds chronologically with the Jewish liturgical seasons" (P. P. Levertoff in Gore's *New Commentary, N.T.*, p. 129). Let me emphasise again the tentative nature of much that I have said here about Mt.; it is only an approach to what I hope will be a more thorough and rewarding examination of the whole problem of the First Gospel.

⁵⁰ Babylonian Talmud, *Shabbath*, 116 a, b.

⁵¹ According to the Tosefta, *Yadaim* ii. 13, "the rolls of the books of the Minim do not defile the hands", i.e., they are not canonical. This seems to imply that there had been some disputation as to their canonicity. The "books of the Minim" are also mentioned in Tosefta, *Shabbath* xiii. 5, and the "books of the law written by the Minim" in the Babylonian Talmud, *Gittin*, 45 b.

⁵² Jerome uses the terms "According to the Nazarenes" and "According to the Hebrews" interchangeably for one and the same Gospel. Readings similar to those quoted from the Nazarene Gospel occur as marginal notes in a group of MSS. of the Gospels, under the caption τὸ Ἰουδαϊκόν. Some of the "Sayings of Jesus" found in Egyptian papyri may have been taken from the "Gospel according to the Hebrews". Cf. Bacon, *op. cit.*, pp. 478ff.; M. R. James, *The Apocryphal New Testament* (1924), pp. 1ff.; A. Schmidtke, *Neue Fragmente und Untersuchungen zu den judenchristlichen Evangelien* (1911).

⁵³ F. Blass, *Philology of the Gospels* (1898), pp. 21ff.

⁵⁴ *Date of the Acts and the Synoptic Gospels*, pp. 116ff.

⁵⁵ W. C. Allen, *International Critical Commentary, Matthew*, pp. lxxxivf.

⁵⁶ *op. cit.*, pp. 133ff. Harnack considered Matt. xxii. 7 to be of special weight in favour of a date after the Destruction of Jerusalem, but would not exclude with absolute certainty an earlier date. "Chap. xxvii. 8 and many other passages are rather in favour of composition before the catastrophe" (p. 134, n.). C. C. Torrey, indeed, asserts that there is no passage in any of the four Gospels which clearly indicates a date later than A.D. 50, or an origin outside Palestine (*Our Translated Gospels*, p. x), but this refers to his postulated Aramaic originals of the four Gospels.