

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

PayPal

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

A table of contents for *The Expositor* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_expositor-series-1.php

*THE "FIVE BOOKS" OF MATTHEW AGAINST
THE JEWS.*

DR. RENDEL HARRIS is unflinching in his supply of interesting new data interestingly, sometimes even romantically, interpreted. One of his most recent lines of inquiry is that of collections of "Testimonies," i.e., chains of proof-texts which are transmitted from one Christian writer against the Jews to another down through the second and third centuries. Dr. Harris would carry back the fundamental Christian *Book of Testimonies* to a period so remote as to antedate all the extant writings of the New Testament. Not only Mark, our earliest evangelist, but even the writer of 1 Peter, and Paul himself, according to Dr. Harris, would have borrowed their proof-texts from this primitive Christian collection.¹ In short "the original author of the *Book of Testimonies* was Matthew the Apostle." What antiquity (and in this case "antiquity" means Papias with those whom he represents and those who follow him) has to say about Matthew having composed the *logia* in the Hebrew tongue has real reference (Dr. Harris believes) not to a "Hebrew," or Aramaic, original for our Matthew, nor to a "Second Source," from which our Matthew and Luke have borrowed the collection of discourses they employ to supplement the story of Mark. Dr. Harris is now convinced (though previously he had rejected it) by a theory advocated in 1894 by an anonymous writer on *The Oracles ascribed to Matthew by Papias of Hierapolis*, and subsequently supported by Professor Burkitt in his *Gospel History and its Transmission*. Papias referred to nothing else, Dr. Harris now holds, than the *Book of Testimonies*.

¹ *Testimonies*, Pt. I., 1916.

This is one of the cases in which we are compelled to believe that the romantic interest of Dr. Harris' interpretation of his data far outstrips its validity. Neither the books of *Testimonies against the Jews* of Cyprian and Gregory of Nyssa, nor their predecessors of the age of Justin's *Dialogue* and the *Dialogue of Jason and Papiscus*, nor even still earlier collections gave rise to the scriptural arguments of Paul and the apostolic age. It is more nearly the opposite which is true. 1 Peter is not uninfluenced by Romans, Hebrews rests on Paul, and Mark as well as Matthew unquestionably borrows some of his quotations from the Second Source. This known dependence is a better explanation of the coincidences than the conjectural work. It is a great overstraining of the evidence to seek to prove the existence of a particular *Book of Testimonies* from such loans as these, or from such dependence on proof-texts in current oral circulation, as when Paul in 1 Corinthians xv. 25-28 builds his argument on a combination of Psalm viii. 6 with Psalm cx. 1, repeats the combination in Ephesians i. 20-22, and finally transmits it for full elaboration to the author of Hebrews ii. 5-vii. 25.

Even more violent is the attempt to secure evidence for the *Book of Testimonies* from the statement of Papias as to the source of those *logia of the Lord* which he had made it his task to interpret. If they were not the "commandments delivered by the Lord to the faith, and derived from the truth itself," sayings of Jesus on which Papias sought light from the "living and abiding voice" of authentic tradition, then we are at a loss for a connexion between his preface (*προοίμιον*), and the work itself. If his interpretation (*ἐξηγήσεις*) of the *logia* is not intended to meet the irresponsible talk of "those who have so very much to say" and to refute the teachers of "alien commandments," like Basilides, with his twenty-four books of

ἐξηγήτικα on the Gospels,¹ then his apparent coincidence with his "colleague" (ἑταίρος) Polycarp is strangely misleading; for Polycarp also warns against the false teachers who "pervert the oracles of the Lord (τὰ λόγια τοῦ Κυρίου) to their own lusts," and Polycarp also urges his readers to forsake "the vain talk of the many" and Polycarp also bids his readers avoid the false teachings, and "turn to the word handed down to us from the beginning." Perhaps Irenaeus, too, who studied Papias and who called himself a disciple of Polycarp, may throw some light on what Papias meant by λόγια τοῦ Κυρίου and their true and false "interpretation" when he also denounces the heretics as "perverting (ραδιουργοῦντες) the oracles of the Lord (τὰ λόγια Κυρίου), becoming bad exegetes of things nobly spoken."

It is indeed high time some attention were paid to the protest of Zahn,² and the much earlier protest of Hilgenfeld³ against putting Papias on the rack to extort testimony he cannot and will not give. Surely even great scholars must temporarily have lost their faculty of historical imagination when they discover mysterious references to unknown writings in the simple statement (not purporting at all to be a "tradition") of a Greek ecclesiastic of the period of Justin (ca. 150 A.D.) concerning the work of "Matthew." Papias merely says that the precepts, or oracles (λόγια), of the Lord which he proposes to interpret will be found in the well known Gospel which all Christians then received as *the* Apostolic Gospel *par excellence*. He adds that even in this case (as well as the preaching of Peter translated by Mark) the *logia* were (of course) in translation. How can any scholar familiar with the use of Matthew

¹ He seems, however, like Marcion, to have used only the Antiochian Gospel of Luke.

² *Einleitung*, § 54.

³ *Einleitung*, pp. 53-65 and 456-7.

from Ignatius to Justin, and aware also of the absolute ignorance of all the fathers, whether in that age or subsequent ages, of any other writing of Matthew than our own first Gospel (which all assume to be translated), imagine that Papias would go anywhere else for "the sacred oracles of the Lord"; or that if he really had spoken of another writing by Matthew the innumerable early borrowers from his pages would not have rung all conceivable changes upon the statement? In reality "the famous *λόγια* of which Papias speaks" are not a book at all. They are "the commandments (*ἐντολαί*) delivered by the Lord to the faith" which Papias set himself to interpret with aid of properly authenticated tradition. Like every other church writer of his time he takes for granted that "Matthew compiled them"; of course "in the Hebrew tongue" spoken by Jesus and the Apostles. This, and the fact that Matthew had found no such authorized translator as Mark, Peter's *ἐρμηνευτής*, makes Papias' own "translations" (*ἐρμηνείαι*) necessary. The fact that the Gospel of Matthew presents these "commandments" in a narrative framework makes no more difference to the interest of Papias and his age than it does to Paul when he declares that *τὰ λόγια τοῦ θεοῦ* were entrusted to Israel.¹ These also in the Five Books of Moses are contained in a narrative framework. Both Paul and Papias disregard the framework because what they (and their readers) are concerned with is "the oracles." And both are quite justified; for to lawgiver and evangelist alike it is the *torah* (literally "teaching") the "commandment delivered" (cf. Matt. xxviii. 20) which is the main concern.

We cannot therefore for a moment admit the reasoning of Dr. Harris when he tries to identify his supposed *Book of Testimonies* with "the famous *Λόγια* of which Papias

¹ Rom. iii. 2.

speaks." But we are deeply interested in his data ; for among them are some which throw new and important light upon the early history of the Gospels, and of Matthew in particular.

Among the obscurer medieval writings to which Dr. Harris introduces the reader is a paper MS. of the sixteenth century in the monastery of Iveron on Mount Athos " filled with all kinds of theological extracts." Dr. Lambros, who catalogues it, ascribes it to " Matthew a monk " (*Ματθαίου μονάχου*) and calls it " an anonymous compend in five books against the Jews " (*Συγγραφή κατὰ Ἰουδαίων ἀνεπίγραφος ἐν λόγοις έ.*). Both description and ascription appear to go no further back than Lambros himself ; for both the first book and the whole treatise are said to be " anonymous " (*ἀνεπίγραφος*). What seems to be Lambros' ground for his ascription of the work to " Monk Matthew " will appear presently. The first book (*λόγος α̂*) has four chapters (*κεφ. α̂, β̂, γ̂, δ̂*) of much the same sort of " testimonies " as Cyprian and Gregory of Nyssa, and Dr. Harris finds among the succeeding four books many chapters which remind him strongly of the writings of the second century apologetists against the Jews. But who is " Matthew the Monk " ? and why does Dr. Lambros call this very miscellaneous five-volume treatise a treatise " against the Jews " and attribute it to this entirely unknown personage ?

Apparently because of the following verses prefixed to one of its sections : ¹

*Ματθαῖος εἴργει τῶν Ἰουδαίων θράσος
 Ὡσπερ χαλινοῖς πέντε φίμωσας λόγοις
 Ὅστις δὲ τούτων τὴν ἐπίρρητον πλανηγν*

¹ Which section is meant by Dr. Harris in the words " the section we have been discussing " (p. 109) is not easy to discover.

Πλάνην ἀτέχνως, ἐξελέγξει τῷ λόγῳ
 Ἄρδην ἀπάσας συγκαθειλεν αἱρέσεις.
 Μήτηρ γὰρ αὐτῶν ἡ θευκτῶνων ἔρις.¹

Dr. Harris is quite justified in saying that the author of these verses was "not a monk lauding a monk." He appropriately compares the verses in which the second century "Elder" quoted by Irenaeus attacks the *πλάνη* of the Gnostic Marcus,² and pronounces the style, while similar, as "somewhat superior." It is perfectly certain that "the person who wrote them really thought he was honouring a person of distinction, and that he was doing it in a distinguished manner." But was he really intending this honour for the Apostle Matthew? Dr. Harris thinks this cannot reasonably be doubted; and we fully agree with him. He takes pains to show that not merely the style but the ideas embodied are those of the second century. It is a commonplace with the *malleoli hereticorum* from Justin to Epiphanius that "The strife of the deicide people (the Jews) is the mother of all the heresies," as the closing line maintains; for the Jewish heresies are by common consent represented as giving rise to the Christian. On the other hand, this "can hardly be the product of an unknown monk's reflections at some late period in the Church's history. . . . The versifier of our MS. depends upon the stratum of Christian thought represented by Hegesippus" (160-170 A.D.).

Whether, then, it be Lambros (as we suspect), or some much earlier scribe, who takes the ancient verses as applying to the unknown author of the Athos MS., the coat is in

¹ Matthew curbs the audacity of the Jews
 Checking them in five books as it were with bridles.
 Now whoever the infamous error of these
 (Pure error it is) shall in argument refute
 Destroys at a stroke all the heresies together;
 For the mother of these is the strife of the deicide people.

² *Haer* I. xv. 6;

reality many sizes too large. The Matthew originally meant is no other than Matthew the Apostle and Evangelist, as Dr. Harris clearly sees.

But why imagine the verses as framed to fit any other writing than the Gospel which every apologist of the second century—yes, and of later times—regards as written with especial reference to the Jews? For the Palestinian origin of the Gospel of Matthew was an even more generally accepted belief in ancient than in modern times; and if any one be in doubt as to the evangelist's sentiments regarding unconverted Judaism let him read Matthew xxiii. 1–33. Why indeed should Lambros, or anybody else, invent an unknown "*Monk Matthew*" to be honoured by these verses, except that the Gospel of Matthew is not divided into "five books" whereas the Athos MS.—and we may add Irenæus' treatise *Against all Heresies*, and Hegesippus' *Memorabilia*, and Papias' *Exegesis*, and the Psalms of David, and the Law of Moses, besides an indefinite number of other treatises Jewish and Christian—is composed "in five books"?

Dr. Harris thinks he has found reason to believe that the original *Book of Testimonies* was in five books. We must give his argument entire, italics and all, to do it justice:

Our author, as he appears in his latest dress (i.e., the Athos MS.), is divided into *five books*. We remember that Papias wrote *five books* on the *Dominical Oracles*; now whatever these Oracles were, sayings of Jesus or words of the Prophets about Jesus, *five books of commentary imply five books of underlying text*. Is it a mere coincidence that we find five such books extant in the Athos MS.? and ascribed to Matthew?

In the conjunction of an author named Matthew with five such books, have we not gone a long way towards establishing Prof. Burkitt's conjecture that the *Book of Testimonies* is the missing *Dominical Oracles* written by Matthew and commented on by Papias?

The skeptically disposed may be inclined to point out that nothing in the world is less "missing" than "the Dominical Oracles commented on by Papias," whereas the alleged five-volume *Book of Testimonies* is still very decidedly "missing." It might also be pointed out that it does not yet appear that anybody of higher authority than Dr. Lambros ascribes the Athos MS. to "Matthew," and even he does not mean the Apostle. In view of some weaknesses such as these in Dr. Harris' logic it might be pardonable to ignore the italics in which he emphasizes the declaration "*five books of commentary imply five books of underlying text,*" and to answer his question as to coincidence by a reference to the frequency of the adoption of this favourite division.

If the skeptically inclined should venture thus to disregard the argument from the five books of Papias' commentaries, they would in our judgment be wrong. True, the five books of commentary do not *necessarily* imply five books of underlying text; but they do make it so probable, that *the presence of corroboratory evidence* would go far to establish the case. Now in spite of the great industry of Dr. Harris in search of evidence for a five-volume Matthaean *Book of Testimonies*, still circulating within the recollection of the men of Papias' time (*ca.* 145), and not in Aramaic (or Hebrew?) only but also in Greek (!), the result must be pronounced disappointing in the extreme. To begin with the alleged evidences are to say the least highly precarious. On the division into five books Dr. Harris cites *nothing* save that the Mount Athos MS. has five books, and two of these are very hard to bring within the definition of "testimonies." But even if such a work had been attributed to the Apostle Matthew by Papias, whose *Exegesis* was the chief storehouse for all later inquirers as to Gospel origins, it is simply incredible that *everybody* should have

understood him to be speaking of the perfectly well known Gospel of Matthew, and *nobody* understood that he had reference to a great unknown work by the same Apostle. Are we to understand, then, that Papias in citing his authority for the "commandments delivered by the Lord to the faith" made no mention of that standard apostolic Gospel which every Christian writer since the time of Ignatius (112 A.D.) regards as a systematic "compend of the Lord's words" (σύνταξις τῶν κυριακῶν λόγων, var. λογίων),¹ and which his earlier contemporary in the *Teaching of the Twelve* quotes as "*the Gospel*"?²

Fortunately the corroboratory evidence which Dr. Harris vainly labours to supply for the supposititious Matthean *Book of Testimonies* lies ready to our hand in the case of the well known Gospel. It is no new discovery which is so well brought out by Sir J. C. Hawkins in his admirable contribution to the volume of *Oxford Studies in the Synoptic Problem* (1911) edited by Professor Sanday, where he speaks of

the fact that the special formula about Jesus ending His discourses, which Matthew subjoins to his five most important bodies of sayings (vii. 28; xi. 1; xiii. 53; xix. 1; xxvi. 1), has in this one case (the first) a substantial (though not verbal)³ parallel in Luke vii. 1, "After He had ended all His sayings in the ears of the people."⁴

The colophon, marked by striking peculiarities of grammatical form,⁵ is well known, and the fact is recognised in such standard commentaries as Allen's in the "International" series that it is one of the many phrases which

¹ Papias fragment. Papias is contrasting the work which Peter in his discourses πρὸς τὴν χρείαν did *not* undertake, with the work of so me other Apostle who (we must assume) *did* undertake it.

² Διδ. xv. Ἐλέγγετε ὡς ἔχετε ἐν τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ.

³ In the B text it is verbal.

⁴ *Op. cit.* p. 121.

⁵ The Semiticism καὶ ἐγένετο with which the formula begins is elsewhere avoided by Matthew and (usually) by Mark. It appears in a Markan paragraph in Matthew ix. 10. Elsewhere only in the colophon. See *Hor. Synopt.* 2nd ed., p. 37.

our first evangelist borrows from the Second Source and stereotypes into a formula. As Allen properly notes it is only the first of the five great discourses (or *Peregs* to use the felicitous expression of Sir J. C. Hawkins) which is derived (in the main) from a corresponding discourse of the Second Source, the other four being built up on a Markan basis.

But critics hitherto have overlooked the fact that the colophon is not so much a rounding-off of the preceding discourse, as *a link by which the narrative which follows is coupled on*. For this reason the chapter divisions of the modern versions make it begin chapters xi., xix., and xxvi. In other words, the evangelist in framing his work had in mind not merely the five great discourses which supremely characterise his work as indeed a *σύνταξις τῶν κυριακῶν λόγων* (or *λογίων*), and which stand in line with his final word of command "teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you"; he had also in mind the introductory *narrative* which in every case appropriately leads up to the discourse and furnishes its historical setting, precisely as with the successive "codes" of the Pentateuch. The first of these narrative introductions (Matt. iii.-iv.) cannot, of course, be coupled to the preceding by the formula

Now it came to pass when Jesus had ended these words, etc., because there are no preceding utterances of Jesus. Per contra the last occurrence (xxvi. 1) leads over to a narrative Epilogue (xxvi.-xxviii.) which relates the departure of Jesus to His heavenly throne, as the Prologue (cc. i.-ii.) had related His advent. The fifth colophon therefore takes the appropriately variant form.

Now it came to pass when Jesus had finished *all* these words.

It closes the *fifth book* of the Doings and Sayings of Jesus, and leads over to the story of His passion and resurrection which constitutes the Epilogue.

What, then, may we conclude as to the evangelist's structural plan? Had he, or had he not in mind a compend of the Lord's commandments (*σύνταξις τῶν κυριακῶν λόγων*) under the already established division of "things said and things done"?¹ Was it, or was it not, his intention to give his work this symmetrical, typically Jewish form of a five-fold *torah* of Jesus, a double pentad of the sayings and doings of the ministry, preceded by a Prologue describing His Davidic birth and Infancy, and closed by an Epilogue relating the Passion and Resurrection?

The answer to this question can only be given after careful and patient study of the editorial groupings effected by the evangelist in his material. It may, however, be of interest in the discussion to which the reader's attention is now invited to know that the present writer, long before the verses from the Mount Athos MS. had come to his knowledge, had laid down as the fundamental fact in the study of the editorial treatment of evangelic material in our First Gospel, that its author intentionally constructed it upon just this plan of "five books," which to writers of the second century might well appear as the great apostolic "refutation of the Jews."

B. W. BACON.

ST. MARK'S ANTICIPATIONS.

THE second evangelist is admittedly our best authority for the chronological order of the gospel story, but it is quite obvious that other interests also have helped to determine the arrangement of his material. Sometimes he groups incidents according to their import, as with the five altercations of ii. 1-iii. 6 and also possibly with the

¹ So Papias ἡ λεχθέντα ἢ πραχθέντα; cf. Acts. i. 1. ποιεῖν τε καὶ διδάσκειν, and Mark vi. 30, ὅσα ἐποίησαν καὶ ὅσα ἐδίδαξαν.