

# 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>

### III. THE INTERNAL EVIDENCE

#### A. LANGUAGE

NEITHER the evidence of tradition nor of dissemination can be decisive of the question of provenance if unsupported by the internal evidence. In the case of Mark modern criticism finds many data to corroborate the results already attained. Those which are naturally first to be considered are those of language.

The Gospel is written in Greek, the language employed by Paul in writing to the Roman church in 55 A.D., and employed by its own great writers throughout the century following, Clement, Hermas, Justin. This represents only the transparent *prima facie* fact. Much more deeply significant is the phenomenon of the Bible quotations, which are made from the Septuagint.<sup>1</sup> We have, indeed, one instance of a quotation borrowed from the Second Source (Mark 1, 2; cf. Matt. 11, 10 = Luke 7, 27), one whose origin Redactor Marci did not recognize, erroneously ascribing it to "Isaiah," and two other cases of Old Testament language reflecting the Hebrew rather than the Septuagint text, which are probably due to the same cause. These exceptions are of the type which "prove the rule." Habitually the evangelist uses the Septuagint and is affected by it in his style and vocabulary. As a rule his references are memoriter, and less pains are taken than in Matthew's transcription to make the wording agree exactly with the Septuagint text. All the more certain is it that the Bible used by this evangelist and the circle for whom he wrote was the Greek Bible.

<sup>1</sup> The phenomena of the Scripture employments and quotations of Mark belong properly to another phase of the problem. It may be stated that the necessarily brief account here attempted rests upon independent personal study of all the passages. The general result had been stated by other investigators. Mark uses, and is influenced by, the LXX. He does not use, nor is he directly influenced by, the Hebrew. Quotations which seem to show such influence are 1, 2, of which mention is made above, and 15, 34 = Psalm 22, 1 (Heb.). In addition 4, 29 shows influence from Joel 4, 13. The possible tinge from the Hebrew in this case should be accounted for as in that of 1, 2, viz., derivation from the Second Source. On 15, 34 = Psalm 22, 1, see below.

These outstanding phenomena of the Gospel of Mark already prove that in its present form it was put first in circulation among the Greek-speaking churches north and west of the Taurus range, rather than in Syria; but they do not exclude the possibility of translation, whether of the work as a whole, or of the material underlying it.

1. In point of fact the Greek of Mark is so unmistakably tinged by a Semitic basis as to make it practically certain, in the judgment of competent scholars such as Wellhausen and Torrey, that the material is largely translated from a written Aramaic document, or documents. But the most convincing proof of translation would carry no weight against Roman provenance unless it could be shown to involve the Gospel as a whole, editorial building as well as basic material. No exception, therefore, need be taken by advocates of the view for which we are here contending to the idea that the Gospel of Mark consists largely, perhaps almost exclusively, of Aramaic documentary material, preserved in the archives of the church in Rome; for such material must have been carried everywhere from Palestine by primitive evangelists. More or less stereotyped oral tradition would soon give place to written anecdotes and memoranda; for even the synagogue translator was permitted to put his targums in written form for private use and elaboration, though forbidden to bring such documents into the pulpit. Aramaic notes and memoranda of this sort in homiletic form would certainly be preserved and translated at Rome; for in Rome, as elsewhere, the earliest church-teachers were necessarily converted Jews. Such as had most to tell of gospel story would naturally be those from Palestine.

For reasons based on the internal structure of the Gospel of Mark, particularly evidences of its dependence to a limited extent upon the Second Source, it is more probable that an intermediate stage of preliminary translation and agglutination lies between the Gospel in its present form and certain earlier groupings of preacher's anecdotes of the kind described, corresponding to Jewish religious story. For its ultimate data nothing less than the entire historical content of the Gospel

must of course go back to that Aramaic which it so freely quotes, and with such manifest satisfaction.

The advocate of Roman provenance may, therefore, welcome proofs almost ad libitum that the Greek of Mark is "translation Greek." Its own compiler, he who introduces in transliteration, wherever the narrative furnishes good excuse, the actual Aramaic words used by Jesus, would be the first to take pride in the fact. So would the original sponsors for the Gospel, those readers for whose benefit the Aramaic words are introduced. They would undoubtedly claim that the Aramaic material translated had belonged to John-Mark the "son" of Peter; and as regards some of the most important historical elements their claim would probably have real basis in fact. All this, however serviceable and interesting, a contribution of real importance from the side of grammatical philology, has no bearing against the fact that the Gospel as we know it, and as it was known to the remotest attainable antiquity, was and is a Greek document, compiled and annotated for a Greek-speaking community. This community, like the evangelist himself, recognized and used not the Hebrew but the Greek Old Testament, and was ignorant, to a considerably greater degree than those addressed by Matthew and Luke, not only of the Jewish language, but (as we shall see) of its customs, conditions, institutions, politics, history, geography, and environment.

The mass of Mark may very well prove to be "translation Greek." Its Greek is at all events cruder and more uncouth than that of either Matthew or Luke; for both our later Synop- tists make hundreds of grammatical and stylistic corrections of the Greek of Mark, even while at the same time in their own translated material (and sometimes on their own account) they retain, almost ostentatiously, certain favorite Semitisms of "biblical" type which are avoided by Mark.

It would perhaps be possible to explain this curious anomaly by supposing that between the publication of Mark and its later satellites "translation Greek" had been raised to the standing of a literary fashion, the example of the Septuagint giving currency in ecclesiastical circles to certain favorite "biblicisms" not as yet in vogue when Mark was written. A more

probable explanation is to be found in the vastly greater use of the Second Source made by Matthew and Luke than by Mark.

The material independently employed by Matthew and Luke which does not appear in Mark is commonly designated Q, and is derived from a Second Source, which when employed by them was (like Mark) in the form of a Greek document translated from the Aramaic. Both in its original and its translated form this Second Source was a document of far higher literary pretensions, and in much more artistic style, than Mark. Its Greek is also "translation Greek," but of a type more free than Mark's from crude solecisms, while highly affected by the author's fondness for Septuagint phraseology. Matthew and Luke sacrifice its order to the Markan, and probably suppress, or at least subordinate, most of its narrative — a course hardly compatible with belief in its Apostolic authorship. They use it for its teaching material, and are demonstrably influenced by its literary superiority. Now Q delights in "biblicisms," as the modern school-boy delights to compose in "King James" English by frequent interlardings of "and behold," or "and it came to pass." If, then, the "translation Greek" of Matthew and Luke displays the same difference from that of Mark, using "biblicisms" even in some cases where we have no reason to believe they are directly incorporating the Second Source, this is no more than we should expect from the far greater consideration they show for its language.

Familiar examples of such "biblicisms" are the endless cases of *καὶ ἐγένετο* (an Old Testament idiom whose Aramaic equivalent is doubtful) in Luke, their monotony only partly relieved by variation. These are almost always avoided by Mark. Matthew also avoids them; but with a curious exception. For his five-fold colophon, closing each of his five great "Sermons," Matthew stereotypes the formula found at the close of the first <sup>1</sup> in Q (Matt. 7, 28 = Luke 7, 1,  $\beta$  text) *καὶ ἐγένετο ὅτε ἐτέλεσεν κ.τ.λ.* One other case occurs in Markan material (Matt. 9, 10), where Matthew overlooks the correction of this biblicism so willingly

<sup>1</sup> This Discourse on the Righteousness of Sons (corresponding to the so-called Sermon on the Mount) is the only one derived as a whole from the Second Source. The other four are based on Mark.

and copiously admitted by Luke. Elsewhere he prefers more idiomatic Greek connection.

The biblicism *καὶ ἰδοὺ* (= Heb. וְהִנֵּה, Aram. וְהִרִי) is freely employed by both later evangelists, though excluded by Mark (cf. Mark 1, 40; 5, 22, with parallels). On the other hand the connection by *τότε*, especially in the phrase *τότε ὁ Ἰησοῦς*, seems to be a mannerism of Matthew. Other instances will doubtless appear in the special study to be devoted to this aspect of our problem. The explanation here proposed may not be the true one. If not, the grammarians must furnish a better. Meantime it may suffice to note the following difference between the Semitic tincture of Mark and that of the two later Synoptists: the "translation Greek" of Mark seems to be naïvely and crudely Semitic; whereas that of Matthew and Luke has been reduced to a literary type of its own, with Septuagint Greek for a model. Zahn well expresses the general nature of the phenomena in his Introduction (§ 53, English translation, II, 487):

Mark reproduces in his Greek book with apparent pleasure the Aramaic form of Jesus' words and those of other persons, although it is always necessary to append a Greek translation for the benefit of his readers. (This is not always the case in either Matthew, Luke, or John). . . . It is also to be noticed that Mark's Greek shows Hebraic colouring more strongly than any other of the Gospels and almost beyond that of any other New Testament writing. Although Mark does not exhibit as many flagrant errors against grammar, conscious or unintentional, as does the Book of Revelation, he has more genuine Semitic idioms.

We may leave to the philological specialists particularly concerned with this aspect of the problem the question whether the difference thus noted can be accounted for by the influence of the Second Source. Meantime it is needless to transcribe the details of evidence appended by Zahn (I, 502) to his general statement. Careful statistics are furnished by Wernle, Hawkins, and Stanton. In particular, Swete, after a characteristically thorough and careful study of Blass' theory of an Aramaic original for Mark, reaches the following conclusion:

An examination of St. Mark's vocabulary and style reveals peculiarities of diction and colouring which cannot reasonably be explained in this way. Doubtless there is a sense in which the book is based upon Aramaic originals; it is in the main a reproduction of Aramaic teaching, behind which there probably lay oral or written sources, also Aramaic. But the Greek Gospel

is manifestly not a mere translation of an Aramaic work. It bears on every page marks of the individuality of the author. If he wrote in Aramaic, he translated his book into Greek, and the translation which we possess is his own. But such a conjecture is unnecessary, as well as at variance with the witness of Papias.<sup>1</sup>

To disprove the theory of Roman provenance it is not enough to show evidence for the "Aramaic originals" referred to by this eminent authority, either as respects the "Aramaic teaching" which it reproduces, or the "oral and written sources, also Aramaic" which "lay behind" this. Such material was doubtless available in the archives of the Roman church after the death of Peter, and indeed of Mark as well. To disprove the origin of Mark at Rome it would be needful to show not only that the material shows marks of translation (whether before the work of compilation, or by the evangelist himself as part of his undertaking), but that the Gospel as such, inclusive of the editorial framework, was current in Aramaic. Considering the necessity every editor is under of adapting his own language more or less to that of the material he edits, it is safe to regard this feat as beyond the grammarian's powers. Curious indeed would be the paradox if ecclesiastical tradition had so long cherished the mistaken belief that the first Gospel is a translated work, while erroneously maintaining the contrary belief regarding the second.

2. From the Aramaic coloration of Mark's Greek we may turn to the well-known phenomenon of this evangelist's large use of Latinisms. As the case is often overstated, we prefer to present it in the cautious and well chosen language of Zahn:

The fact that Mark uses more Latin technical terms than the other evangelists has only comparative value, since such words were in common use everywhere in the provinces, even among the Jews in Palestine. The use of such terms instead of the Greek expressions indicates difference of taste, not the author's nationality. Still it must have been very natural for an author writing in Rome for Romans to employ Latin names for Latin things.

Of these Latinisms a striking example is *κεντυρίων* Mark 15, 39, 44, 45; in the parallel passages of Matthew and Luke, and everywhere else in the New Testament, we have only *ἐκατόν-*

<sup>1</sup> Op. cit., p. xlii.

ταρχος or ἑκατοντάρχης (Matthew, four times, Luke, three times, Acts, fourteen times). Other instances of Latinisms found only in Mark among New Testament writers (though occasionally employed elsewhere) are σπεκουλάτωρ (6, 27) and ξέστης (7, 4, 8) = *sextarius*. Mark also uses φραγελλοῦν = *flagellare*, and κήνος (for which Luke in 20, 22 prefers the Greek φόρος). We also find κοδράντης (= *quadrans*) in 12, 42, and πραιτώριον in 15, 16. All these expressions had passed over into the current speech of Jews throughout the empire, so that their mere occurrence in Mark cannot prove anything as to its origin in a Latin-speaking region. Even their greater proportion in Mark is merely suggestive. But Zahn does not hesitate to call it "decisive" that in two instances Mark "explains Greek by Latin." The two examples of this, the explanation of αὐλή by πραιτώριον, in 15, 16, and of λεπτό δυά by κοδράντης in 12, 42, will be discussed presently.

Swete<sup>1</sup> tells us, apropos of συμβούλιον ποιήσαντες = Vg. *consilium facientes* in 15, 1, that "the late and rare word συμβούλιον was used as a technical term to represent the Latin *consilium*." The word is certainly "late and rare" and may be (as Mommsen avers) "formed in the Graeco-Latin official style to represent the untranslatable *consilium*." But this hardly distinguishes it from the other Latinisms. Matthew uses συμβούλιον λαμβάνειν, whose precise equivalent in English is "take counsel," but only in passages which are probably influenced by Mark. We may leave to others the question whether συμβούλιον διδόναι (3, 6 = *edere*?), φαίνεται (14, 64 = *videtur*?), ραπίσ-μασιν αὐτὸν ἔλαβον (14, 65 = *verberibus eum acceperunt*?), ἐπιβαλὼν (? 14, 72), and ποιῆσαι τὸ ἰκανόν (15, 15 = *satisfacere*?) are properly to be reckoned as Latinisms, and if so what bearing they have on the provenance of Mark. It will be more serviceable if at this point we turn from evidences purely grammatical and linguistic to evidences of a more general type, beginning with the explanations offered by the evangelist to his readers of things Jewish, Palestinian, or Oriental. Under this head must be included not only the valuation of the com-

<sup>1</sup> Commentary, on Mark 15, 1. The authority on which Swete rests is Mommsen as cited by Deissmann, *Bible Studies*, p. 238.

mon Greek coin, the *λεπτόν* in 12, 42, and the attachment in 15, 16 to the common Greek term *ἀλή*, meaning "court," of the Latin *πραιτώριον*, but several dubious explanations of Aramaic words and phrases.

## B. EDITORIAL GLOSSES AND EXPLANATIONS

It is noticeable that in Mark we have explanations to the reader of things Jewish and Oriental. These usually take the form of parenthetical notes, obiter dicta, or of glosses superficially attached. These last may be termed "editorial," because they appear (so far as textual evidence avails) to be an authentic part of the original work. We have observed (with Zahn) that Red.-Marc. reproduces "with apparent pleasure" the Aramaic words of Jesus on great occasions such as the raising of Jairus' daughter (5, 41), the healing of the deaf-mute (7, 34), the prayer in Gethsemane (14, 36), and the parting cry from the cross (15, 34). This in itself would carry small weight, were it not that, unlike other evangelists who make less display of their linguistic attainments, Mark seems to consider an accompanying translation necessary for his readers' benefit in all cases save the most commonplace.<sup>1</sup> Even "abba" (14, 36) he finds it needful to translate as *ὁ πατήρ* (with Paul, Rom. 8, 15; Gal. 4, 6); while Matthew and Luke are content with the simple Greek equivalent, omitting the Aramaic (Matthew 26, 39 = Luke 22, 42; cf. Matthew 6, 9 = Luke 11, 2). How pedantic it would have sounded in Jerusalem or Antioch to translate *abba*!

It might be "decisive," as Zahn maintains, and at the same time more definite geographically, were it the fact that Mark

explains Greek by Latin: 12, 42, *λεπτά δύο, ὃ ἐστὶν κοδράντης*; and 15, 16, *ἔσω τῆς ἀλῆς, ὃ ἐστὶν πραιτώριον*. . . . The discussions between Blass and Ramsay (*Expository Times*, X, 232, 287, 336) have only made it evident that it could not possibly occur to one who was writing for Greeks to explain the common expression *δύο λεπτά* by the word *κοδράντης* — a word to them much less familiar, to say the least. This is just the situation in Mark 15, 16. To support his assertion — which has no support whatever in the tradition —

<sup>1</sup> Only the Ephesian evangelist finds it necessary to translate *ραββί* and *ραββουλί* (John 1, 38: 20, 16), "the Messiah" (1, 41), and significant proper names such as Siloam (9, 7), Gabbatha (19, 13), Golgotha (19, 17). Luke often uses *νομοδιδάσκαλος* instead of *γραμματεὺς*, and *ἀληθῶς* for "amen."