

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>

IV. CONCLUSION

OUR affirmative answer to the question, Is Mark a Roman Gospel? leaves it almost needless to put the further query, If it is, what of it? The process by which we have sought to confirm on scientific grounds this ancient belief of the Church opens up vistas of light across the dark and baffling period where the narrative of Acts ceases, the critical historian loses the guidance of the great Pauline Epistles, and we are obliged to find the path for ourselves between the apostolic and the post-apostolic age. Certainly the pre-eminent phenomenon of the period for infant Christianity is the transition of the Church from the type of faith and order represented in the Pauline Epistles to that of the Synoptic Writings. The former is a Pauline development displaying scarcely a traceable influence from the ministry of Jesus in precept or mighty work. Of these the record might almost as well be non-existent so far as the faith and order attested by the Pauline Epistles is concerned. In the generation following, contrariwise, almost everything in the faith and order of the churches is based upon Petrine story.

Of the three great centres of influence during this period, Jerusalem, Ephesus, and Rome, that of Jerusalem is at first supreme. The martyrdom of James the son of Zebedee in 44 A.D., of his namesake the Lord's brother, head of the caliphate at Jerusalem, and the martyrdom of John the other son of Zebedee, which we may probably date coincidentally with that of the other "pillar," James, in 62 A.D.,¹ could only strengthen this influence as a "red" martyrdom as well as "white." The destruction of the temple, and (in large part) of the city also, did not prevent the reassembling of the scattered church and its reorganization under leadership of other members of the family of Jesus, to suffer new persecution from the suspicious Domitian. When our third evangelist writes, and even down to the time of Papias and Hegesippus, Jerusalem is still revered as the seat of apostolic tradition, the bulwark of historic ortho-

¹ On this disputed point see E. Schwartz, *Tod der Söhne Zebedaei* (1904), Berlin, and Bacon, the chapter "The Martyr Apostles" in *Fourth Gospel in Research and Debate* (1910).

doxy against Gnostic error, a "pure virgin" untainted by any heresy. The mother church is nevertheless in relative decline. The process was inevitable with the larger growth of Gentile Christianity and the natural disappearance of the eyewitnesses. It was greatly accelerated (unless our interpretation of the data be at fault) by the inherited conservatism of the church of the Apostles and Elders, which led it to rely too exclusively for its boasted tradition of the Lord's words and deeds on unwritten tradition.

The period ended by the second great Jewish revolt, suppressed, after bloody massacres in Mesopotamia as well as in North Africa and Cyprus, by Trajan in the last year of his reign, was a period marked in the Jerusalem church by development of evangelic tradition along the midrashic-apocalyptic lines indicated by the fragments preserved by Irenaeus from Papias' "traditions of the Elders," principally in the fifth Book of his Heresies. The same period witnessed (as Eusebius informs us) the growth among the Greek-speaking churches of a large number of written Gospels, including heretical works as well as orthodox. This period of Trajan seems to have been that of Papias' enquiries, which at the time of composition of his Exegesis was already long past (*ποτέ, καλῶς ἐμνημόνευσα*). Seventeen years later (134-135) the third and most disastrous Jewish uprising under lead of Bar Cocheba brought about the irreparable dispersal of the Church of the Apostles and Elders in Jerusalem. Those who had survived the double pressure of Jewish and Roman hatred were driven into exile by Hadrian's decree forbidding approach within twelve miles of Jerusalem to any circumcised man. Henceforth the succession at Jerusalem (Aelia Capitolina as it was now renamed) is Gentile in both name and fact. Efforts like those of Hegesippus to restore its claim to be the arbiter of orthodoxy are foredoomed to failure.

Obscurity almost as great as that surrounding the history of the Christian caliphate in Jerusalem surrounds the great Pauline centre in Proconsular Asia. Ephesus was even from Paul's own time (Acts 19, 10) the predestined centre of Christianity in the Hellenic world. By 93 A.D. it is chief among seven representative "churches of Asia," which cover all Ionia and make

its sphere of influence contiguous with those which are joined with it less than a decade earlier by that Pauline encyclical to Asia Minor, the writing known to us as First Peter. From the Pastoral Epistles, the Johannine Epistles and Fourth Gospel, and from the Ignatian Epistles and the Epistle of Polycarp, we learn something of the desperate struggle of Ephesus against the foe within, Paul's "many adversaries," the men who, according to the prediction of Acts 20, 30 "shall arise from among your own selves, speaking perverse things to draw away the disciples after them."

The "epistles of the Spirit to the churches" of Rev. 1-3 come a little later to shed light on conditions in Ephesus and its neighbor churches. The author gives closer definition and a name to these "Balaamite"¹ heretics. On the other hand, the apocalyptic visions, of Palestinian origin, demonstrably translated from the Semitic, to which these "letters" are prefixed as a prologue or introduction, should be brought into relation with the acknowledged millenarianism of Papias, known to have been based upon this book. It should be compared with what we learn through Eusebius and elsewhere of the migration from Caesarea Palestinae to Hierapolis of Philip the Evangelist with his four "prophesying" daughters. One of these four prophetesses, who seems to have married a Christian, spent the remainder of her life in Ephesus. At least two of the others settled in Hierapolis, where their "traditions" became (directly or indirectly) accessible to Papias, and are reported by him.

In view of these actual connections with Palestine and of the acknowledged danger from Gnostic heresy, it is not surprising to find in Ephesus another force at work besides the magnificent reincarnation of Paulinism in the "Johannine" Epistles and Fourth Gospel. The references in First Timothy (addressed to Ephesus) and the other Pastoral Epistles to the "pattern of sound words," even "the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, the doctrine which is according to godliness," confirm what we should certainly anticipate, the effort of the church leaders in

¹ Rev. 2, 14. The mention of Balaam by name is new. The comparison is Paul's (1 Cor. 10, 6-8), and is adopted in Jude (verse 11) and 2 Peter (2, 15).

“Asia” to set up authentic gospel tradition as a bulwark against the threatening vagaries of the errorists, who are accused by Polycarp of “denying the (physical) resurrection and judgment, and perverting the sacred oracles of the Lord (τὰ λόγια τοῦ Κυρίου) to their own lusts.” No wonder his later colleague (ἑταῖρος) Papias makes these two lines of teaching his main interest, (a) the doctrine of “resurrection and judgment” set forth in the “Johannine” book of prophecy, and (b) the “commandments delivered by the Lord to the faith,” which Papias believed to have been recorded “in the Hebrew tongue by Matthew.” It was the purpose of his book to give to these logia that authentic interpretation (as against the misinterpretation of the teachers of “alien,” ἀλλοτριίας, commandments). For in Papias’ “well-remembered” youth such authentic interpretation was still to be had from the “living and abiding voice” of Palestinian tradition. No wonder, then, that in enumerating the apostolic sources of these “traditions of the elders” Papias should name last “John” (the author of the “prophecy”) and “Matthew” the author of the “Compilation (σύνταξις) of the Lord’s Oracles.” The one was his supreme authority for the doctrine of “resurrection and judgment,” the other for the “oracles of the Lord.”

At Ephesus, accordingly, we see distinctly two allied, but strangely diverse types of Christian teaching; the one unmistakably Pauline, the other quite as markedly Palestinian, being as largely Aramaic in language as it is characteristically Jewish in type of thought. The Ephesian canon combines the two factors under the common name of “John,” the name first attached by an Ephesian editor to the Book of Revelation. Soon all five writings are ascribed to this Apostle, the Gospel, the three Epistles, and the book of “Prophecy” alike. It remained for a Dionysius, the pupil of Origen, to point out the impossibility of common authorship.

Scarcely less obscure than at Ephesus is the history of post-apostolic Christianity at Rome. Here too, however, the same great forces were at work, though in different proportion. Rome had not the experience enjoyed at Ephesus of a long period of the direct teaching of Paul. The foundations had here been

laid by other hands. Paul could only temper and guide the conflicting tendencies (Phil. 1, 15-18; 3, 1-16). On the other hand the practical disposition of the West gave less opportunity to the Gnostic vagaries so much at home in Ionia. A Pauline Logos doctrine would ultimately make its way to Rome (in spite of conservative opposition from Gaius and the *alogi*), just as the Gnostic heresies made their way thither from Antioch and Alexandria. But the process would be relatively slow. In the period of Clement (96 A.D.) and Hermas (110-130?) Rome is not so much troubled by heresy as by questions of practical administration. Justin (152-160) is her first great *malleus haereticorum*.

The dark period of Roman church history is that which follows the martyrdom of Paul under Nero (60-64). Later tradition brings Peter also thither from Antioch to suffer martyrdom "at the same time." But at least the location of this martyrdom is more than doubtful. Clement's uniting of the two great Apostles as the leaders of a common host of martyrs¹ has no real suggestion of identity of place; and subsequent Roman tradition is too obviously biased, and too open to the suspicion of suggestion from 1 Peter 5, 13 and John 21, 18-19 to inspire any confidence. Even if Peter came late in life a condemned prisoner to suffer at Rome, as is perhaps implied in the (Roman?) appendix to the fourth Gospel, he exerted no direct personal influence on the doctrinal development of the local church.

On the other hand if the traditional Roman provenance of Mark be really established along the lines followed in the foregoing discussion — if we may regard as probable the relations for which reasons have been above adduced on the one side (*a*) between the Gospel and the type of "strong" Paulinism reflected in Romans; on the other (*b*) between the tradition connecting it with "Peter" and the (doctrinally) Pauline encyclical addressed (from Rome?) to the churches of Asia Minor, urging them in the name of "Peter" to stand fast through all the (Domitianic) persecution in the "true grace of God" which they have received from Paul and Silvanus —

¹ 1 Clem. 6.

then very much in this perplexing history becomes most instructively clear.

We learn to know the supreme effort of Paul's closing years as that of the peace-maker. We see him, while preparing for the great adventure at Jerusalem which he hopes may bring together after years of hostility "the apostleship of the circumcision" given to Peter and "the apostleship of the Gentiles" given to himself, imploring the prayers and the co-operation of the "strong" at Rome. When, two years after, a prisoner practically under sentence of death in consequence of his effort at Jerusalem, he finds himself actually at Rome in company with "Mark" and other of his old-time helpers, his voice is still for peace.

Ephesians is the very embodiment of this "catholic" Paulinism. If this great Epistle of the Unity of the Spirit written from Rome under the name of Paul be not actually the product of his own pen, it is the best exposition of the later peace-making Paulinism that was ever composed. On it is based the Asian encyclical written under the name of Peter to plead for worldwide steadfastness against imperial persecution in the purity of a common faith. Here we find commendation of Mark, the companion, first of the Apostle of the circumcision, afterwards of Paul, as Peter's spiritual "son."

From Hebrews, an earlier exhortation of Deutero-Pauline and Alexandrian type probably sent to Rome, and from First Peter, we may infer what new dangers were tending in the West to effect that drawing together of Jewish and Gentile believers in behalf of which Paul's life-blood had been poured out, an "offering of reconciliation" between man and man in worthy imitation of his Master's atonement between man and God. The pressure of imperial persecution under Domitian, first severely felt (it would seem) in Palestine, but soon extended "throughout the world" (1 Peter 5, 9), produced an effect similar to that later produced in proconsular Asia by the peril of Gnostic heresy. The Christians drew together. The Pauline churches sought closer fellowship with the Petrine, and the Petrine with the Pauline. Not mere geographical divisions were overcome, but divergent tendencies co-operated. At Rome

leaders of Pauline stamp and training not only made use of the names of Mark and Peter to encourage churches of Pauline origin, but attached the same names to the surviving records of the sayings and doings of Jesus, which with the appalling mortality in the ranks of the authoritative witnesses experienced under Nero¹ had attained, as it were at a bound, to irreplaceable value.

What tendencies were in control at Rome during this obscure period of the beginnings of catholicity will be judged differently as students interpret the peculiarities of "Markan" evangelic tradition, the western branch of that which by combination with the Second Source obtained pre-eminent currency in East as well as West. The interpretation to which some expression has been given in the foregoing enquiry rests upon a comparison between Mark and the Pauline Epistles, more especially Romans. It differs widely indeed from the famous theory of Baur, though its starting point is the same, the great division attested by Paul (Gal. 2, 1-10) of the missionary field into a Petrine apostolate of the circumcision and a Pauline apostolate of the Gentiles. The reconciliation in catholicity which the Tübingen critics placed in the age of Justin and Irenaeus, we find already attempted (and to a heroic degree accomplished) by Paul. But we distinguish, as Paul himself distinguished, between such as called themselves "of Paul," mainly in the sense of insisting on their liberty, regardless of Petrine "weak brethren," and true imitators of the great Apostle, imbued with his peace-making spirit as well as appreciative of his deeper, more mystical doctrine.

To Baur, Mark was a compromising, Petro-Pauline gospel, a late combination of Matthew and Luke. Few doctrines of criticism have been more completely overturned than this. The restoration of this simple and primitive composition to its true place of precedence over Matthew and Luke is the great

¹ Heb. 10, 32; 13, 7; Rev. 17, 6; Clement ad Cor. 5. The martyrdoms of Paul and Peter (both?) at Rome, of James, (John?), and "others" (Josephus and Hegesippus ap. Eusebius, H. E. ii, 23) in Jerusalem at about the same date, would alone suffice to mark the reign of Nero with an evil pre-eminence. To Clement of Alexandria it marks, as we have seen (p. 5, note 2), the end of the apostolic age.

contribution of our age to the problem of Gospel origins. If the establishment of its post-apostolic date and Roman provenance shall help to exhibit it in what seems to the present writer its true light, a product of that "strong" Paulinism, which at Rome was later brought, through the providence of God and the prevailing spirit of Paul the peacemaker, into sympathy and loyal union with the "weak," the chief purpose of the present enquiry will have been attained.

ADDENDA ET CORRIGENDA

Page 14. To note 2 add: Lightfoot (*Ignatius*, vol. ii, p. 493) had previously expressed the conviction that Papias rested his belief on this passage.

Page 16. To note 1 add: Also κυριακὰ λόγια i. 8, 1.

Page 29, line 27. For "we have seen" read "Zahn believes."

Page 34, line 8. Add this footnote:

To the above exception should be made of 1 Clem. 15, 2, where the Roman author, ca. 95 A.D., quotes Is. 29, 13 exactly as it is given in Mark (Matthew here conforming slightly to LXX), except that he writes ἀπεισιν, where both gospels have ἀπέχει with LXX. Sanday (*The Gospels in the Second Century*, p. 69) approves the verdict of Volkmar that Clement is here affected by Mark. He even considers this passage "the strongest evidence we possess for the use of the Synoptic Gospels by Clement."

Page 43, line 18. For κολυβοδάκτυλος read κολοβοδάκτυλος.

Page 54, line 15. For λεπτό δυνά read λεπτά δύο.

Page 58, lines 4 and 7. For "faulty" and "errors" read "dialectic" and "peculiarities." The imputation of error in transliteration is unwarranted, the obscuration of the vowel (â to ô) being probably only a dialectic peculiarity. On the other hand the disagreement of the explanation: Jesus was quoting Ps. 22, 1, with the phrase: He is calling Elias (*Eliâhu*), is apparent even if with some texts the Hebrew (*Eli*) be substituted for the Aramaic (*Eliâhi*).

Page 87, line 20. Transpose ² to line 33, after "Son of God."

Page 93, line 11. For "verna" read "vernal."