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HOW DOES THE GOSPEL OF MARK BEGIN?

THE reader will answer this question: "Without any possibility of doubt, as all manuscripts and editions give it: Ἀρχὴ τοῦ εὐαγγελίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, the only question being, whether after Χριστοῦ there is to be added υἱοῦ [τοῦ] Θεοῦ or not."

On the latter point Westcott-Hort quote a very interesting passage from Severian, the Syrian Bishop of Gabala about 401, on which they say:

"If the text be sound, his MS. must have had a separate heading, ΑΡΧΗ ΕΥΑΓΓΕΛΙΟΥ ΙΗΣΟΥ ΧΡΙΣΤΟΥ ΥΙΟΥ ΘΕΟΥ, followed by a fresh beginning of the text without υ.θ., and such a reduplication of the opening words in the form of a heading might in this case easily arise from conflation."

Now it occurs to me that just the contrary has taken place in the ordinary MSS.: not the opening words of the text were repeated in form of a heading, but the heading, the title of the book, became the opening of the text. There are good reasons, I believe, for this view.

First of all—what no critical editor has as yet noticed—the *Evangeliarium Hierosolymitanum*, as published by Miniscalchi-Erizzo and De Lagarde, has not ἀρχὴ τοῦ εὐαγγελίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, but merely $\text{ⲁⲣⲭⲏ ⲉⲩⲁⲓⲛⲁⲓⲛⲁ ⲛⲓⲥⲟⲩ ⲛⲣⲓⲥⲟⲩ ⲩⲟⲩ ⲛⲉⲟⲩ}$, i.e. *Εὐαγγέλιον Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ* (ⲛⲓⲥⲟⲩ = *κυρίου*, in this version must remain unnoticed).

Now this is a most natural and, as it seems to me, the original, heading or title of the book.

And very natural, again, it is, that, when the four Gospels were first written into one MS., that then to the end of the first Gospel an *Explicit*, and to the beginning of the second an "*Incipit*" was added, and from this came what we now

read:—*ἀρχὴ τοῦ Εὐαγγελίου* 'I. X., *i.e.* Here begins a new book, the Gospel of Jesus Christ (according to Mark).

The opening of the text, as it seems to me, was clearly: *Καθὼς γέγραπται* or *Ὡς γέγραπται*, and it is quite a mistake of *Tischendorf* to put a comma between *Χριστοῦ* (ver. 1) and *καθὼς* (ver. 2), and a full stop after *αὐτοῦ* (ver. 3). In this respect, Westcott-Hort have shown a much better judgment in printing verse 1 as some sort of heading, and separating it from the following text. We must only go a little farther, as here indicated, and see in verse 1 the original title of the book, and not the opening of the text.

That *ἀρχὴ τοῦ εὐαγγελίου* is an unnatural, and *καθὼς* or *ὡς γέγραπται* a most natural, opening of a book, will be best shown by the list of the *Initia* which Harnack-Preuschen published.¹ Not a single Christian book or treatise begins like the supposed beginning of Mark—with *ἀρχὴ* (for “*ἀρχὴ τελειώσεως γνῶσις ἀνθρώπου*,” quoted there, p. 167, is quite different), but three begin with *καθάπερ*, four with *καθὼς*,² 28 with *ὡς*, 16 with *ὥσπερ*. It is quite the same with the Latin book-beginnings—none with *initium* or *principium*, but 10 with *sicut*, 12 with *quomodo*.

There seems to me no doubt that:—

(1) The original title of the Gospel of Mark was

ΕΥΑΓΓΕΛΙΟΝ ΙΗΣΟΥ ΧΡΙΣΤΟΥ

and its beginning *Καθὼς γέγραπται*.

(2) When the Gospels were gathered into one corpus, the first and second were separated by an *Explicit* and *Incipit*:—

ΑΡΧΗ ΤΟΥ ΕΥΑΓΓΕΛΙΟΥ Ι. Χ. (*κατὰ Μάρκον*).

(3) Still later, these words were taken as the beginning of the *text*, and by some editors and commentators, against

¹ In the *Geschichte der altchristlichen Litteratur bis Eusebius*, I. 1893, pp. 988-1020.

² Among them the First Epistle to Timothy and another piece: *καθὼς Ἡσαίας φησί*.

all grammatical and stilistical rules, forced together with the real beginning—*Καθὼς γέγραπται*.

That the beginning of St. Matthew must be explained in a similar way, and again in the Old Testament the variation between the Greek and Hebrew text of Genesis ii. 4 (*βιβλος γενέσεως*), and Hosea i. 2, is for me not doubtful.

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