
A table of contents for the *Journal of Theological Studies (old series)* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_jts-os_01.php

pdfs are named: [Volume]_[1st page of article]

The Journal
of
Theological Studies

JANUARY, 1909

HISTORICAL INTRODUCTION TO THE TEXTUAL CRITICISM OF THE NEW TESTAMENT.

II. THE CONTENTS OF THE CANON OF THE NEW TESTAMENT: (A) THE FOUR GOSPELS.

OF what books, then, or groups of books, was this New Testament Canon, the origin and developement of which we traced in the last chapter, composed? That is the question to which the present and the next chapter are intended to give an answer, and we shall find that even problems of date and authorship are not without direct bearing on the ultimate object of our investigation, the critical reconstruction of the New Testament texts.

For instance, if the Gospel of St John had been written, as Baur used to maintain that it was written, between the years 160 and 170 A.D., we ought to have been able to restore with almost infallible certainty the *ipsissima verba* of the author, since, as the argument of these lectures will shew us, we can carry back the history of at least three lines of transmission of the Gospel text—in the West, at Edessa, and at Alexandria—to the end of the second or beginning of the third century, that is to say just about a single generation from the time of the supposed composition of the Gospel. But if on the other hand it was written seventy years earlier, in the last decade of the first century, it is obvious that we have the lapse of two more generations to take into account, in estimating the possibilities of textual degeneration, before we arrive at the point where direct and continuous textual history really begins. In other words, the earlier we put the New Testament books, the more difficult we may naturally find the restoration of their original text. The more conservative the

position we adopt as historical critics, the more radical we must be prepared to be as textual critics.

Again, the line of enquiry proposed in this and the succeeding chapter will not be unfruitful of result if it serves to convince us at the start how misleading it is, in the department of Textual Criticism, to think of the New Testament always as one single whole. Even in the Middle Ages it was relatively uncommon for the New Testament to be copied out complete within the boards of a single codex. Still more was this the case with the larger handwriting of earlier centuries: at least four-fifths of our uncial MSS of the Gospels contain the Gospels only. Even the use of the vellum codex itself does not go back as far as the time of the composition and first circulation of the New Testament books: down to the middle of the third century the papyrus roll was the universal form in which books were published, and three at least of the writings which go to make up the New Testament—the Gospels according to St Matthew and St Luke, and the Acts—attain by themselves the average length of a roll (*volumen*, τόμος).[1] It is hardly likely that any of the Gospels was ever written other than on its own separate roll: though of course as soon as the Four were recognized and marked off as canonical, the custom would naturally grow up of keeping them all in a common case or satchel.[2]

And these technical considerations only reinforce a conclusion

[1] A few vellum rolls continued to be written for liturgical purposes during the Middle Ages. I have seen (and with difficulty handled) in the library at Frankfort one of the oldest extant, written under King Hludovic and Queen Hemma—therefore before 876—and probably, since the name of St Nazarius is written in gold letters, for the great monastery of St Nazarius at Lorsch, which lay between Frankfort and Heidelberg. The roll, which is over eight feet long, contains a list in three columns of 534 names of saints, followed by a litany: but as the writing is in continuous columns down the roll, there is space for more matter than if the ancient method had been followed of writing in short columns *across* the roll. The older method was the only possible one if convenience of reading be taken into account: the roll lay along the table before the reader, who unrolled with his right hand and rolled up with his left, while on the system of the Frankfort roll the reader has to unroll it towards himself, and roll it up as best he can.

[2] In the Acts of the Scillitan Martyrs (A. D. 180) both Gospels and Pauline Epistles seem to be already kept together in a single case: 'Saturninus proconsul dixit: Quae sunt res in capsa vestra? Speratus dixit: Libri et epistulae Pauli viri iusti.' An interesting illustration of one boy with a satchel, and another reading from a papyrus roll, occurs among the splendid series of Neumagen sepulchral sculptures in the museum at Trèves (Saal 4, No. 21 a).

to which we are already impelled by what we know of the diversities of origin and acceptance between the various component parts of our present New Testament Canon. Some few of the shorter books, like the Second Epistle of Peter, are of uncertain date, and seem nowhere to have arrived at canonical status before the third century. Others, whose time of writing must indisputably be placed within the limits of the first century, were received into the Canon much sooner in one part of the Church than in another: and it cannot but be of some moment textually—it must affect the grouping, and alter our estimate of the relative value, of the authorities—if we find that the Epistle to the Hebrews was refused admission to the New Testament of the Roman Church till the days of Jerome, or that the Apocalypse was unanimously rejected by the Asiatic Churches, whether Greek or Syriac, during the third and fourth centuries.

But if the textual history of each book is thus not only independent of that of the rest up to the time of its admission into the Canon, but even afterwards is largely independent at least of all groups of New Testament writings other than that to which it itself belongs, there is no need for further apology if we proceed to prefix to our investigations of the text some account of the genesis and early history of the books whose text we are going to consider.

The material already collected in the last lecture offers us some starting-points and sign-posts in the prosecution of the study of the contents of the Canon. We saw in the first place (p. 19), that Christians from the very beginning regarded the Lord's Words and the teaching of His apostles as authoritative: and though both of these were originally conveyed only in oral form, it is obvious that we have here, from the moment when written tradition began to be preferred to oral, the germs of the two groups of Gospels and Epistles. The same classification was even more distinctly adumbrated by the parallelism (p. 21) of Gospel and Apostles with Law and Prophets. As soon as the idea emerges of a written New Testament, it becomes at once natural to conceive it as twofold in the same way as the Old Testament was twofold: as the Law is the foundation of the Old Dispensation, so is the Gospel, or record of the Lord's life and words, the foundation of the New, while to the messages of the prophets of the Christ in the one Dispensation correspond

the letters of the preachers of the Christ in the other. And just as last time we noted (p. 21 n. 8) the antiquity of the terminology of Christian worship in the phrase 'the Gospel', so here again let us note how the double lection in the liturgy, Gospel and Epistle—in the older language 'Gospel' and 'Apostle'—reproduces faithfully the two groups out of which and round which the Christian Canon grew. Gospels and (Pauline) Epistles are the invariable nucleus, the essential contents, of the primitive New Testament.[1]

But Gospels and Epistles, though they are the central and most important element of the Canon, are yet not the whole. We shall perhaps be able to account better for all the various constituent parts of the New Testament, if we approach it from a different point of view, namely from a consideration of the various forms in which the literary activity of the apostolic and sub-apostolic age found expression: for it was by necessity out of these classes of documents that by process of selection the Canon of New Testament writings had to be evolved. Bearing in mind, then, what was said in the last lecture (p. 23) of the relatively late developement of bookwriting as such among the early Christians, we need to distinguish, before the end of the first quarter of the second century, not more than four departments of ecclesiastical literature. (1) It corresponds with what was said, in the passage just referred to, of the transitory character of the age as conceived by the first generations of Christians, that their literature was more than anything else epistolary: it was evoked by, and was intended to satisfy, the immediate needs of the moment, without any thought of a wider horizon or a more permanent meaning. Not only the epistles of St Paul, but some at least of the Catholic epistles, as well as the epistles of the three 'apostolic fathers', Clement, Ignatius, and Polycarp, are letters in the proper and limited sense of the word.[2] (2) Catechetical instruction in the 'traditions' held a foremost place, as we have seen, in the system of St Paul's provision for his converts: and as these traditions consisted of the sayings and doings of the Lord, they partook in some degree of the nature of a Gospel as we mean it. As the Christian movement spread to the Gentiles, that is to men less trained in retentiveness

[1] Compare the quotation from the Scillitan Acts, p. 162 n. 3 *supra*.

[2] See chapter I p. 19.

of memory than were the Jews, it was almost inevitable that attempts should be made, whether by preachers or by converts, to commit the traditions to writing. 'Many' had experimented in this direction before our third Gospel was composed: and it is not impossible that the earliest Gospels or collections of Sayings may have been written down at a date previous to even the earliest of the epistles of St Paul. (3) One of these writers of Gospels, gifted beyond the rest with literary sense and historical insight, and responding (it would seem) to the wants of a convert of the second Christian generation, to whom the early fortunes of the Church were no more matter of contemporary knowledge than the life and teaching of Christ Himself, appended to his work a sequel, in which he described the preaching of the Gospel by the Apostles and the extension of the Church from the capital of Judaism to the capital of the world. Regarded as a history of the Christian Society, the book of Acts remained isolated and unique till the work of Eusebius of Caesarea at the beginning of the fourth century: regarded, however, as the story, or 'Acts', of individual Apostles, Peter or Paul, it found, like the canonical Gospels, numerous imitators, and new Gospels and Acts—books professing to be by Apostles, and books professing to be about Apostles—followed one another in quick succession all through the second century. (4) Lastly—and with this fourth class we practically exhaust all the directions in which Christian activity is known to have taken literary shape during the first century after Pentecost—there appeared sporadically in the Church, and especially in Jewish-Christian circles, specimens of that characteristic product and expression of contemporary Judaism, the Apocalyptic vision; in which the seer both depicts the sufferings of the present moment, and foretells the triumphant retribution which in the near or immediate future is to compensate for them.

Material for the Canon lay ready to hand as soon as ever the Christian consciousness demanded a New Testament: but in each department a process of selection was a necessary preliminary. There were books to reject as well as books to accept: books that could be accepted without question, and books that were only accepted after doubt and hesitation. And all these different experiences may be expected to leave their mark, in one way or another, upon the purity of the texts.

A. The Gospels.

Whatever else may be obscure about the Canon of the New Testament, this much is certain, that it contained always and from the first four Gospels, neither more nor less. There is absolutely no trace anywhere, from the time that the conception of the Canon matured at all, of any inclination either to add another to the canonical Four or to omit any one of them. It might almost be said, in spite of the paradox, that the canonization of the Four Gospels was earlier than any formulation of the conception of the Canon itself: almost by the middle of the second century—so far we may argue back on the joint evidence of the old Latin and old Syriac versions, of the Alexandrine Clement, Irenaeus, and Tatian—these Four Gospels had become the official documents of the Church. To question any of them was itself an indication of heresy. We cannot, in fact, get back to a period which reveals a stage of growth of these particular Gospels in public estimation: as soon as the feeling of the need of authoritative writings grew up, Christian sentiment took to the Four as instinctively as a child to its mother's milk. This undesigned and unargued agreement as to what Gospels were the Gospels of the Church—or in later phrase 'canonical'—is surely one of the most striking things in early Christian history.

For it was not that there were no other Gospels in circulation during the second century. The *Protevangelium* of James was certainly known to Origen and possibly to Justin Martyr. The Gospel according to the Egyptians was used not only in Gnostic writings like the *Acts of Judas Thomas*, the *Excerpta* of Theodotus, or the *Exegetica* of Julius Cassianus, but by Clement of Alexandria and, half a century before him, in the so-called Second Epistle of Clement of Rome. The simple-minded church people of Rhossus were reading the Gospel according to Peter in the days of bishop Serapion of Antioch at the end of the second century: and Justin Martyr apparently made use of the same book. The Gospel of Marcion owes its existence, as its name implies, to the great Gnostic teacher, and its composition may be placed in the decade 140–150 A.D. Perhaps more primitive than any of these was the Gospel according to the Hebrews, which was employed by

Hegesippus and may well have been the literary source of some of the best known non-canonical Sayings of our Lord.

Here then are five Gospel documents, all of them presumably older than the middle of the second century, and yet we know that not one of them, whatever sporadic use may have been made of its contents, was ever a serious rival to the canonical Four. Either in date or in authorship or in character, there was something in each which distinguished it sharply enough from the Gospels of the Church. The majority of them were produced in Gnostic circles, and betrayed more or less obvious and systematic traces of their origin. Even the slender fragments of the Gospel according to the Egyptians indicate clearly its connexion with the Encratite revolt against marriage. Of two others we know quite enough to estimate with some certainty their dogmatic prepossessions. The Gospel of Marcion is described to us in considerable detail both by Tertullian and by Epiphanius, and we see it to be an arbitrary recension, from a point of view which denied both the reality of Christ's humanity and the dependence of the New Dispensation upon the Old, of that one of the canonical Gospels which seemed least unfitted for the purpose. The account of the Passion and Resurrection in the Gospel according to Peter is among the most striking of the *trouvailles* which the retentive soil of Egypt has at length yielded up to the spade of the explorer: and Serapion turns out to be amply justified in accusing it of an underlying Docetism. If we had as much left of the Gospel according to the Hebrews, we could doubtless give the reason why it too was set aside. As it is, we can only conjecture that, if it really was a genuine product of the first century, it was the absence of a name to guarantee its apostolic origin which proved fatal to its recognition by a society which was founded upon the 'apostles' doctrine and fellowship'.

Thus from whatever external aspect we treat the question, we find more and more striking evidence of the unique reception accorded to the Four, and we can only account for it as resting upon a combination, in each case, of primitive date and competent authorship. Let us conclude this section of the enquiry by looking at our Gospels for a moment at an earlier stage of their history, not as Four making a single whole accepted by the Church, but as individual documents of separate age and circumstance.

The first element of distinction within the Four is obviously that between the Synoptists and St John: and in no respect have we of the present generation so marked an advantage over our immediate predecessors as in the matter of the Synoptic problem. Critical theories about documents needed to be, and have been, simplified. The complicated webs which the fertile ingenuity of the professorial brain evolved, like the spider, out of itself, have been remorselessly brushed aside. Common sense has reasserted its rights, and has justified them by reaching a conclusion which has been truly called 'the one solid contribution of the nineteenth century towards the solution of the Synoptic problem'.[1] We no longer need 'Ur-Marcus' theories, for it was the Gospel of St Mark itself which lay before our first and third Evangelists. It goes without saying that this conclusion is of supreme importance for the historical criticism of the Gospels: it is not so self-evident that it is important also for the purposes of textual criticism, and some pages will be devoted to the elucidation of this point later on in the present chapter (p. 177).

But if this Gospel was already in the hands of Matthew and Luke, no more need be said about its antiquity: nor is there now any inclination to deny the substantial truth of the tradition of the early Christian generations, which attributed the authorship of it to Mark, and to Mark in the character of interpreter or disciple of St Peter. It is hardly likely that the Gospel should have been written down so long as the Apostle was alive to preach his 'good news' by word of mouth: we shall rather find its origin in the desire of the Apostle's converts to compensate for his removal from among them by the acquisition of a permanent record of his teaching; and as St Peter fell a victim to the early days of the Neronian persecution in A.D. 64, St Mark may have written out his Gospel in the years immediately following—probably before the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. That it was published in Rome is suggested by its relation with St Peter, by the evidence of its Latinisms, and by the absence of arguments in favour of any alternative locality. It might indeed be urged that if the Gospel were brought into connexion not with Rome, but with the

[1] *The Gospel History and its Transmission*, by F. C. Burkitt (London, 1906), p. 37. Further references to this unequal but fascinating book will be found below, p. 177 seqq., and in the next chapter.

later scene of St Mark's labours at Alexandria, we could account in this way for the comparative neglect into which it fell almost from the first: for Alexandrine Christianity, during more than a century and a half after Christ, stood almost as completely aloof from the main current of Church life as it has in the centuries which followed the triumph of Mohammedanism. But while one aspect of the fortunes of this Gospel would thus be satisfactorily explained, it would be certainly less easy to account for the deference which St Matthew and St Luke independently pay to it by making it the basis of their own work, if it had been put into circulation at Alexandria, rather than at so prominent a centre of Christian intercourse as Rome.

One peculiar feature of this Gospel, as it was known to later scribes, and even (it would seem) to the first and third Evangelists, is so important for textual history that it merits notice at once. The end of the roll containing it was—accidentally, no doubt—torn off and lost either from the autograph itself or from some copy which became in fact the ancestor of all those copies which have survived. No direct trace remains of the original conclusion. Some few of our most ancient authorities represent faithfully the second stage of the text, and are content to let the Gospel break off with the words *ἐφοβοῦντο γάρ*. One or two preserve what is obviously a makeshift, written merely to give an appearance of a proper termination, and containing no new facts. All the rest append twelve additional verses—the recently discovered Freer MS of the Gospels expands them into fourteen—the *provenance* of which was unknown until Mr F. C. Conybeare discovered in an Armenian MS a title separating these verses from the rest of the Gospel under the words 'Of Ariston the Elder'. Ariston, or Aristion, was, it will be remembered, one of those personal disciples of the Lord whose recollections formed the main subject-matter of Papias's book (p. 24): and there is now no reason to doubt that either he himself, or some one else out of the material left by him, filled up the missing conclusion of St Mark's Gospel at so early a date that his supplement has found its way into almost all codices that have come down to us. It may be assumed that Aristion lived in Asia Minor; and the presence of his supplement is so far an indication of Asian influence, the more valuable because certain traces of any Asian text are few and far between.

Irenaeus is the oldest certain witness to any part of the twelve verses; and Irenaeus may have brought them in his copy of the Gospels from his original home in Asia to his later home in the West.

Not only the authorship of the Second Gospel but that of the Third as well belongs to the category of ecclesiastical traditions long disputed but at length, it may almost be said, established and admitted. Until lately agreement only existed over the common authorship of the Third Gospel and the Acts, and over the genuineness of the 'We' sections of Acts as the real diary of a travelling companion of St Paul. Now, those of us who have always believed that the 'We' sections proceed from no other author than the rest of the book, and that that author was Luke the physician, see our persistence justified at the bar of critical opinion. It follows, from this view of the authorship, that both books must fall within the lifetime of one who joined St Paul as his companion and medical attendant somewhere about the year 50 A.D.: and as these conditions are satisfied only by a grown man, the limits of St Luke's literary activity can hardly be extended beyond the end of the century. Of the *terminus a quo* we know that the earlier of the two books is not only later than St Mark, but later also than the fall of Jerusalem, which seems to be unambiguously indicated in Luc. xxi 20–24. These *termini*, 70–100 A.D., would be, at least for the Acts, sensibly narrowed down if it could be shown that St Luke made use of Josephus's *Antiquities*, since that work was only published in 93 or 94. But so strong and overmastering an impression of exquisite literary skill and craftsmanship is left upon the reader of St Luke, that it is hard to believe that his writings—at any rate the Gospel, which Renan, no mean judge in such matters, called 'le plus beau livre qu'il y ait'[1]—were not produced during the heyday of his maturity, and therefore not much later than A.D. 80. Where the Gospel was written is less easy to say than in the case of St Mark; there is something to be said for Rome, and something also for Antioch or the East.

St Luke's Gospel, we have already had occasion to note (p. 167), was the basis of the Gospel which Marcion, shortly before the

[1] *Les Évangiles*[2] p. 283.

middle of the second century, set himself for his own purposes to compile. The Churchmen who refute Marcion delight to point out, section by section, his variations from his model, wherever the canonical record lay special emphasis on the reality of the human conditions of Christ's life, or teach with more than usual clearness the divine authority of the Old Testament. But some of his alterations appeared to them purely arbitrary, and no wonder; for they were not really alterations at all, they rather represented the Gospel text as Marcion inherited it. The Gospel as it lay before Marcion, and the Gospel as it lay before Tertullian or Epiphanius, were not quite the same thing, and the text of Marcion has at least the advantage of superior antiquity. Marcion's evidence, where we can disentangle it, is, in fact, almost the earliest evidence we possess: it is of primary importance to estimate its bearing on the problem of New Testament textual criticism, and some attempt to arrive at such an estimate will be made at the end of this chapter.

With regard to the First and Fourth Gospels, the divergences of criticism from tradition are more acute; but they touch rather questions of authorship than questions of date, and it is possible to arrive at sufficient certainty about the latter without formulating any rigid conclusions as to the former.

St Matthew's authorship of the First Gospel is, with some approach to consent, rejected by modern critics; nor can it be denied that that Gospel contains, as in its story of the Resurrection, what seem, by comparison with the other Gospels, to be secondary features. Papias's statement, that the Apostle composed some form of Gospel in the Aramaic tongue, will come before us at a later point, when we try to gather up and focus the *data* which concern the varieties of language in the early Church. For the present we have only to do with the Greek Gospel as we have it, and its *terminus a quo* has been already fixed in the use it makes of the Gospel according to St Mark. Allowing time for the knowledge of that Gospel to spread to the East—for we cannot, of course, place our First Gospel at Rome—we may take A.D. 70–75 as about the earliest possible date. The *terminus ad quem* must be fixed by considerations less direct than in the case of St Luke, but leading in the end to a very similar result. For the First Gospel is of all the Four *the* Gospel *par excellence* of the

early Church. During the slow period of growth of the New Testament Canon, it is this Gospel of which we find the most frequent and the clearest traces; it is used to the comparative exclusion of the rest both by St Justin in the middle, and by St Ignatius[1] at the beginning, of the second century, and it is noteworthy that, in whatever order the Gospels are arranged among themselves by early authorities, St Matthew comes all but invariably first. Now this predominance of St. Matthew's Gospel is not at all what one would *a priori* have expected. (i) While the Gospels were being 'canonized', the two most influential Churches of the Christian world were unquestionably Ephesus and Rome—Rome, the birthplace of St Mark's Gospel and possibly of St Luke's also, Ephesus the birthplace of St John's; yet it is to neither of these, but to St Matthew's, that the place of prominence in the collection is given. (ii) Or take another point of view: the two great apostles to whom Christian tradition, from Clement and Ignatius onwards, looked back as the twin foundations of the Church, were Peter and Paul; but it is not the Gospel of St Peter's disciple, nor the Gospel of St Paul's disciple, but the Gospel of the obscure publican—of whom, apart from his call, no facts are related in any one of the evangelic narratives—which the early Christians preferred in honour. (iii) Lastly, if there is one characteristic more than another which we can predicate with confidence of the Church of the second century, it is its profoundly anti-Judaic feeling; Justin even tells us that many of his contemporaries refused the name of Christian and the fellowship of the Church to any who observed the Law, however sound their faith in Christ—so completely were the tables turned since the days of St Paul. Yet it is the most Jewish of the Gospels of which this anti-Judaic community took first and most account.

There is only one explanation possible of these phenomena: the First Gospel, as we have it in Greek, must have been very early written, very widely known, and very universally credited with apostolic authorship. It is certain that its date must fall within the first century, and the facts of its reception cannot reasonably be reconciled with any date much later than A.D. 80.

In spite of all the dust of controversy raised over the Fourth

[1] Prof. Burkitt, *op. cit.* p. 276, is quite decided on this point.

Gospel, there is not really, for the questions which specially concern the textual critic, more uncertainty attaching to it than to the other Gospels. The evidence connecting it with Ephesus is more cogent than the evidence of place for any one of the three Synoptists. Even with regard to date, no sane criticism, of whatever school, will nowadays stray far in either direction from the decade 90–100 A.D. Once place and date are granted, it does not, for the limited purposes of textual criticism, matter very much who was the writer. It has become fashionable of late to substitute the authorship of John the Elder for that of John the son of Zebedee. As a problem of the Johannine tradition of Ephesus, the distinction has its own interest: as an element in the fundamental questions which the Fourth Gospel evokes, its importance may be easily exaggerated.[1]

This rapid sketch of what seem to be the present tendencies of the saner sort of criticism of the Gospels justifies us in believing that each and all of these had been written before the end of the first century: St Mark about A.D. 65, St Matthew about A.D. 80, St Luke A.D. 80–90, St John A.D. 90–100—St Mark and possibly St Luke in Rome, St John in Ephesus, St Matthew in Palestine or Syria. Not much, if at all, later than the middle of the second century they came to be regarded as constituting a single *corpus*, a collection of the Church's authoritative records of her Founder's life on earth: and the formation of the collection must be ascribed, not so much to the initiative of a single individual or a single community—for in that case the Gospels would always have been arranged in the same order—as to the common instinct of Christians working in different quarters on parallel lines. But

[1] In what way is any of the really serious issues affected by this substitution of 'another gentleman of the same name'? If John the son of Zebedee was an eye-witness, John the Elder, according to Papias, was *μαθητὴς Κυρίου*, a personal disciple of the Lord. If John the son of Zebedee was one of three apostles singled out for special intimacy with their Master, John the Evangelist was the disciple whom Jesus loved, who lay next Him at the Supper. If John the son of Zebedee is brought, in the Acts and in the Galatian epistle, into closest connexion with Peter, Peter is in the Fourth Gospel the special friend of the beloved disciple: they hold a whispered conversation at the Supper, they follow together to the Trial, together they run excitedly to the empty tomb: Peter, on hearing his own martyrdom foretold, turns at once to ask about the future of his friend, while conversely the Evangelist misses no opportunity of emphasizing the leadership of Peter among the apostles.

between the writing of the Gospels and the date when the evidence accumulates in sufficient mass to enable us to construct thenceforward the history of the transmission of their text, a period of about a century elapses—rather more for St Mark's Gospel, rather less for St John's—and it is just during this century, of which we know so little, that the most serious divergences arose between one manuscript copy and another.

Although, however, we cannot claim to push back the commencement of the direct and continuously traceable history of the Gospel texts behind the beginning of the last quarter of the second century, the summary account of the preceding pages has indicated possibilities of penetrating, at two earlier points, a little way within the obscurity which conceals the first developement of *variae lectiones* in the Gospels. The evidence of Marcion will tell us something about the form in which he was reading St Luke's Gospel before the middle of the century. More novel, and perhaps more far-reaching, are the deductions which can be drawn from recent advances in the investigation of the Synoptic problem.

The starting-point of this problem is the fact that there is a large amount of matter common to the first three Gospels. Where the three agree exactly, their agreements prove nothing as to their mutual relations. But besides these exact agreements we have also, in the matter which is common in substance to all three, a vast number of coincidences in detail between St Mark and St Matthew against St Luke, and a large number of similar coincidences between St Mark and St Luke against St Matthew. If now there were no coincidences between St Matthew and St Luke against St Mark, the conclusion would be obvious: no one would doubt, the moment that the mutual relations of the three were pointed out to him, that one of two things followed: either the First and Third Gospels lay before St Mark as he wrote—an hypothesis which on other grounds is excluded—or the Second Gospel lay before St Matthew and St Luke, writing independently of one another. In fact, however, there are coincidences, not many, but still real and tangible, between St Matthew and St Luke against St Mark: and the conclusion ordinarily drawn from this state of things by enquirers of the last generation was that a fourth document, an *Ur-Marcus*, a something like St Mark yet not St Mark, lay

behind the work of all three Synoptists. But it is a sound rule of criticism, a rule of which the value impresses itself on one more and more, that if ninety-nine per cent. of the evidence points one way and the remaining one per cent. another way, then the one per cent. must not only be severely tested to see if it admits of some alternative explanation, but may, on occasion, even if it survives all the tests that we can apply, be safely neglected—on the ground that there must be some other explanation, although we ourselves have failed to find it.

In the case before us, agreements between our First and Third Gospels against our Second may be explained, consistently with their independent use of the work of the evangelist St Mark, in any one of three ways. (1) The agreements may be accidental: Matthew and Luke may both have hit upon the same modification of their exemplar. This explanation will apply especially in the case of some stylistic peculiarities of St Mark, where the two other evangelists when writing out his material in their own words might naturally wish to avoid his turn of speech, and if they avoided it would naturally make the same substitution. 'The two most constantly recurring causes of the agreement of Matthew and Luke are two preferences of Mark,' viz. his preference (i) for the historic present instead of a past tense (especially λέγει as against εἶπεν), and (ii) for καί instead of δέ.[1] Other instances of linguistic improvements common to both Matthew and Luke are ἀνεῳχθῆναι for σχίζεσθαι of the heavens opening, and κλίνη (κλινίδιον) for κράβαττος, 'a bed.'[2] And the same consideration might account for the fact that when St Mark says that the new wine will burst the old wine skins, 'and the wine perishes (ἀπόλλυται) and the skins,' the other two both avoid the zeugma and speak of the wine being 'spilled' (ἐκχεῖσθαι) and only the skins 'perishing'.[3] (2) Or again it may be the case that both St Matthew and St Luke knew St Mark's Gospel in a form which gave from time to time different readings from those which have come down to us in our copies of St Mark. The chances against accurate reproduction of Gospel texts must have been greatest in the earliest years after they were written, before professional copyists were employed, before any special

[1] See Sir John Hawkins *Horae Synopticae* pp. 113–122.
[2] *Op. cit.* p. 106.
[3] *Op. cit.* p. 174.

between the writing of the Gospels and the date when the evidence accumulates in sufficient mass to enable us to construct thenceforward the history of the transmission of their text, a period of about a century elapses—rather more for St Mark's Gospel, rather less for St John's—and it is just during this century, of which we know so little, that the most serious divergences arose between one manuscript copy and another.

Although, however, we cannot claim to push back the commencement of the direct and continuously traceable history of the Gospel texts behind the beginning of the last quarter of the second century, the summary account of the preceding pages has indicated possibilities of penetrating, at two earlier points, a little way within the obscurity which conceals the first developement of *variae lectiones* in the Gospels. The evidence of Marcion will tell us something about the form in which he was reading St Luke's Gospel before the middle of the century. More novel, and perhaps more far-reaching, are the deductions which can be drawn from recent advances in the investigation of the Synoptic problem.

The starting-point of this problem is the fact that there is a large amount of matter common to the first three Gospels. Where the three agree exactly, their agreements prove nothing as to their mutual relations. But besides these exact agreements we have also, in the matter which is common in substance to all three, a vast number of coincidences in detail between St Mark and St Matthew against St Luke, and a large number of similar coincidences between St Mark and St Luke against St Matthew. If now there were no coincidences between St Matthew and St Luke against St Mark, the conclusion would be obvious: no one would doubt, the moment that the mutual relations of the three were pointed out to him, that one of two things followed: either the First and Third Gospels lay before St Mark as he wrote—an hypothesis which on other grounds is excluded—or the Second Gospel lay before St Matthew and St Luke, writing independently of one another. In fact, however, there are coincidences, not many, but still real and tangible, between St Matthew and St Luke against St Mark: and the conclusion ordinarily drawn from this state of things by enquirers of the last generation was that a fourth document, an *Ur-Marcus*, a something like St Mark yet not St Mark, lay

behind the work of all three Synoptists. But it is a sound rule of criticism, a rule of which the value impresses itself on one more and more, that if ninety-nine per cent. of the evidence points one way and the remaining one per cent. another way, then the one per cent. must not only be severely tested to see if it admits of some alternative explanation, but may, on occasion, even if it survives all the tests that we can apply, be safely neglected—on the ground that there must be some other explanation, although we ourselves have failed to find it.

In the case before us, agreements between our First and Third Gospels against our Second may be explained, consistently with their independent use of the work of the evangelist St Mark, in any one of three ways. (1) The agreements may be accidental: Matthew and Luke may both have hit upon the same modification of their exemplar. This explanation will apply especially in the case of some stylistic peculiarities of St Mark, where the two other evangelists when writing out his material in their own words might naturally wish to avoid his turn of speech, and if they avoided it would naturally make the same substitution. 'The two most constantly recurring causes of the agreement of Matthew and Luke are two preferences of Mark,' viz. his preference (i) for the historic present instead of a past tense (especially λέγει as against εἶπεν), and (ii) for καί instead of δέ.[1] Other instances of linguistic improvements common to both Matthew and Luke are ἀνεῳχθῆναι for σχίζεσθαι of the heavens opening, and κλίνη (κλινίδιον) for κράβαττος, 'a bed.'[2] And the same consideration might account for the fact that when St Mark says that the new wine will burst the old wine skins, 'and the wine perishes (ἀπόλλυται) and the skins,' the other two both avoid the zeugma and speak of the wine being 'spilled' (ἐκχεῖσθαι) and only the skins 'perishing'.[3] (2) Or again it may be the case that both St Matthew and St Luke knew St Mark's Gospel in a form which gave from time to time different readings from those which have come down to us in our copies of St Mark. The chances against accurate reproduction of Gospel texts must have been greatest in the earliest years after they were written, before professional copyists were employed, before any special

[1] See Sir John Hawkins *Horae Synopticae* pp. 113-122.
[2] *Op. cit.* p. 106.
[3] *Op. cit.* p. 174.

sanctity attached to the records, and while personal recollection and oral tradition were still disturbing influences. Just the fifteen or twenty years which separate St Mark's Gospel from St Matthew's and St Luke's will have been more critical years than any that followed, since the chief elements of danger to the texts tended to disappear with time. It is the opinion of one who has long presided over these studies among us that St Matthew's text of St Mark was a more corrupt one than our own. Now if St Matthew had what was in a certain degree a retouched copy of St Mark, it is not impossible that some of its alterations may have been present in St Luke's copy as well. Thus, in the instance given above, the insertion of ἐκχεῖσθαι may perhaps have been derived by both Matthew and Luke from a text of St Mark in which the correction had already been made, though it is not (fortunately) the text of St Mark which has come down to us. (3) Lastly, and here we approach the point which immediately interests us as textual critics, the supposed agreements between Matthew and Luke against Mark may not be real agreements at all, but may be due to later assimilation by scribes of the text of the First Gospel to that of the Third, or *vice versa*. St Jerome, whose critical insight was only exceeded by his robust common sense, long ago pointed out in the preface to his revision of the Latin Gospels that the cause from which more than any other the purity of the Gospel texts had suffered was the desire to supplement one Gospel from the parallel passage of another, and to alter the language of the less familiar into conformity with that which was better known. And since there can be no doubt that St Mark's Gospel was the least read of the three, it follows that the other two were very likely to be contaminated from one another, but not so likely to be contaminated from him. If we took as our standard the unrevised texts that St Jerome found in the Old Latin or that we ourselves have at hand in the *Textus Receptus* of the Greek Testament, we should certainly find a much longer list of agreements between Matthew and Luke against Mark than Sir John Hawkins has drawn up:[1] for many of the false assimilations between the First and Third Gospels have already been displaced from the critical editions,

[1] *Op. cit.* pp. 174, 175.

and it is on Westcott and Hort's text that his calculations are based. And we have now to see—following on the lines of Prof. Burkitt's book[1]—whether some of the remaining agreements against Mark will not disappear, if we carry the process of textual revision to a further stage than even Westcott and Hort have reached. As a matter of fact, we shall find that several of them vanish if we allow more weight than has hitherto been given to the Old Latin and Old Syriac evidence: 'multarum gentium linguis scriptura ante translata doceat falsa esse quae addita sunt.'

a. Marc. iv 11 ὑμῖν τὸ μυστήριον δέδοται τῆς βασιλείας τοῦ θεοῦ
= Matt. xiii 11 ὑμῖν δέδοται γνῶναι τὰ μυστήρια τῆς βασιλείας τῶν οὐρανῶν
= Luc. viii 10 ὑμῖν δέδοται γνῶναι τὰ μυστήρια τῆς βασιλείας τοῦ θεοῦ.

Here we have two agreements of Matthew and Luke against Mark: the insertion of *γνῶναι*, and the plural *μυστήρια* instead of the singular *μυστήριον*. In the first case scribes have done their best to confuse the evidence, for they assimilated the text of Mark to that of the other two Synoptists, and credited him also with *γνῶναι*: but the critical editions rightly omit it with half a dozen of the great uncials and a few cursives, and these are now reinforced by the Sinai Syriac and by St Jerome's Vulgate.[2] Here it is easy to suppose that St Matthew and St Luke made independently the same obvious simplification of a rugged phrase. In the other case the editions, earlier and later alike, are wrong. That St Mark wrote *μυστήριον* and St Luke *μυστήρια* is indeed certain: in the original conception the 'mystery' is single, as the 'Gospel' was single; and just as *τὸ εὐαγγέλιον* became *τὰ εὐαγγέλια*, so, though much earlier, *τὸ μυστήριον* became *τὰ μυστήρια*. And if St Matthew too wrote *μυστήρια*, as all the Greek MSS witness, we should have again to account for the agreement of Matthew and Luke against Mark as the accidental coincidence of independent correctors. But many Old Latin MSS including *k*, the most important of them, and among Fathers Irenaeus and the Alexandrine Clement, have the singular in St Matthew[3]: and their evidence must be accepted, for assimilation of an original singular to St Luke's plural is much more likely than assimilation of an original plural to St Mark's singular.

[1] *Gospel History and its Transmission* pp. 42–58.

[2] The St Gall fragments (Sangall. 1395) give 'datum est mysterium', and the other MSS are divided between 'scire', 'nosse', 'cognoscere'.

[3] I do not add the Old Syriac, since it has the singular in all three Gospels.

β. Marc. v 27 ἥψατο τοῦ ἱματίου αὐτοῦ
= Matt. ix 20, Luc. viii 44, ἥψατο τοῦ κρασπέδου τοῦ ἱματίου αὐτοῦ.

But neither in Matthew nor in Luke are the words τοῦ κρασπέδου above suspicion: in the former they are omitted by *k*, in the latter by the Greek of the codex Bezae and the three best Old Latin MSS here extant. The enlarged phrase may even be genuine in one Gospel and an assimilation in the other: or its ultimate source in both may be the parallel language in Matt. xiv 36 (= Marc. vi 56) ἵνα μόνον ἅψωνται τοῦ κρασπέδου τοῦ ἱματίου αὐτοῦ.

γ. Marc. x 30 ἑκατονταπλασίονα, 'a hundredfold'
= Matt. xix 29, Luc. xviii 30, πολλαπλασίονα, 'manifold.'

In Matthew all authorities except B L, the Sahidic, and Origen, give 'a hundredfold' with Mark: in Luke D and the Old Latin (including *e* Cyprian) give 'sevenfold', and the Old Syriac again 'a hundredfold'. It would seem then either that Matthew and Mark wrote 'a hundredfold', and Luke 'manifold'—in which case 'manifold' in Matthew is an Alexandrine assimilation to Luke, and 'sevenfold' in Luke is an arbitrary 'Western' attempt at precision: or that each evangelist used a different term, Mark 'a hundredfold', Matthew 'manifold', and Luke 'sevenfold'—in which case the desire to increase the number is the dominant factor, and the scribes of Luke advanced one step to the 'manifold' of Matthew, while the scribes of Matthew advanced in turn another step to the 'hundredfold' of Mark.

δ. Marc. xii 28 καὶ προσελθὼν εἷς τῶν γραμματέων . . . ἐπηρώτησεν αὐτόν
= Matt. xxii 35 καὶ ἐπηρώτησεν εἷς ἐξ αὐτῶν νομικὸς πειράζων αὐτόν
= Luc. x 25 καὶ ἰδοὺ νομικός τις ἀνέστη ἐκπειράζων αὐτὸν λέγων.

In the critical texts of this passage there are two agreements between Matthew and Luke against Mark, νομικός and πειράζων (ἐκπειράζων) αὐτόν. In the *Textus Receptus* there were three, for the words καὶ λέγων stood in Matthew after πειράζων αὐτόν. But the addition καὶ λέγων was absent from the texts of ℵ B L 33, the best Old Latin MSS and the Vulgate, the Sahidic and Origen, and even its reappearance in the Sinai Syriac cannot rehabilitate it. And the critical texts of the future will, it may be prophesied with confidence, remove one more agreement: for νομικός, though given by all the Greek uncials of Matthew, is otherwise an exclusively and characteristically Lucan word, and it is omitted in the first Gospel by the Sinai Syriac, the African Latin, and the translator of Origen, as well as by the important Greek cursive 1 and its family. There remains a third agreement, πειράζων αὐτόν: it is too striking to be accidental, but the evidence at our disposal does not enable us to say which of the explanations open

to us should be adopted. It is possible that the phrase comes from the second common source of Matthew and Luke, now cited as Q.

ε. Marc. xiv 72 *καὶ ἐπιβαλὼν ἔκλαιεν*
= Matt. xxvi 75, Luc. xxii 62, *καὶ ἐξελθὼν ἔξω ἔκλαυσεν πικρῶς.*
But the whole verse is omitted in St Luke by six of the best Old Latin MSS here extant, and should no doubt be regarded as an assimilation to Matthew. Even Westcott and Hort place the words within (single) brackets.

It will be part of the argument of these lectures that the chief modification which modern criticism has to make in the principles on which Hort constructed his text is that the versions not infrequently enable us to restore the true reading against the consensus of the leading Greek uncials, and sometimes even against all Greek MSS: and it is significant therefore to note, at this early stage of our enquiry, that cases such as those which we have just examined do indicate that the best recent work on the internal problems of the Gospels tallies with the conclusions which will be found to recommend themselves on quite other grounds of textual history.

These preliminary investigations into the transmission of the Gospel texts before 175 A.D. will be fittingly concluded with some discussion of the evidence of Marcion. In citing Marcion's testimony to *variae lectiones* in the Gospel of St Luke, only such instances are adduced as find him in the company of other witnesses, so that there is good reason to believe in all the cases —with perhaps one exception—that he inherited the reading rather than invented it.[1]

1. Luc. v 14 'ut sit vobis in testimonium' Marcion-Tert. (*ἵνα ᾖ μαρτύριον τοῦτο ὑμῖν* Marcion-Epiph.): with D and some Old Latin MSS. The Sinai Syriac and the African Latin MS *e* give the same reading, save that instead of 'to you' they read 'to them': conversely another good Old Latin MS *l* has 'vobis' with Marcion, but not 'ut sit'. The ordinary reading, found in all Greek MSS except D, is *εἰς μαρτύριον αὐτοῖς*, words which recur without variant in the parallels Marc. i 44, Matt. viii 4. There can hardly be any doubt that the Greek MSS of Luke have suffered from assimilation to the other two Gospels,

[1] The cases adduced are selected from the somewhat longer list given in Dr Sanday's *Gospels in the Second Century* pp. 231, 232. A text of the whole of Marcion's Gospel and Apostolicon has been as far as possible restored by Dr Theodor Zahn *Geschichte des neutestamentlichen Kanons* ii 455 seqq.

certainly in the omission of *ἵνα ἥξῃ*, probably also in the substitution of *αὐτοῖς* for *ὑμῖν*.

2. Luc. xi 2: Marcion read the Lord's Prayer with some special petition for the Holy Spirit in connexion with, or in place of, 'Hallowed be Thy Name': traces of a similar but not identical mention of the Holy Spirit survive in two Greek Fathers, Gregory of Nyssa and Maximus Confessor. Further, Marcion apparently omitted the petition 'Thy Will be done on earth as in heaven' with B L 1 and Origen among the Greeks, ff and the Vulgate among the Latins, as well as the Old Syriac. Here Marcion is clearly right, but the Old Latin evidence is for the most part on the other side.

3. Luc. xii 14 *τίς με κατέστησεν κριτήν* (or *δικαστήν*) *ἐφ' ὑμᾶς*; so Marcion-Tert. with D 33, one or two MSS of the Old Latin (but not the African Latin), and the Old Syriac. All other authorities have two nouns as alternatives with *ἤ*: *κριτὴν ἢ μεριστήν* a smaller group headed by ℵ B; *δικαστὴν ἢ μεριστήν* the main body of Greek MSS with A; *κριτὴν ἢ δικαστήν* a single cursive. The variation is very complicated: but it is impossible not to believe that, if not St Luke himself, at any rate some of the scribes who copied out his Gospel, had in mind the words of Exod. ii 14 (cf. Acts vii 27) *τίς σε κατέστησεν ἄρχοντα καὶ δικαστὴν ἐφ' ἡμῶν*; and the variation will therefore fall to be discussed in a later lecture, when the disturbing influence of the LXX on the text of the New Testament comes up for consideration. Meanwhile it may be well to point out that, as between variant readings, a certain suspicion will attach to any reading introduced with *ἤ*, since it may suggest a correction originally placed in the margin and subsequently incorporated as an alternative with the reading of the text.

4. Luc. xii 38: the 'evening watch', *ἑσπερινὴ φυλακή*, is substituted for 'the second and third watch' by Marcion-Epiph. in agreement with the Old Latin MS *ó*. It is perhaps more likely that Epiphanius has blundered, and that Marcion with D 1, the best Old Latin MSS and Irenaeus, the Curetonian (but not the Sinai) Syriac with the Acts of Thomas, really had both the 'first' or 'evening' watch and the 'second and third' watch: at any rate this latter reading would seem to be older than that which simply substitutes the 'evening' watch for the others. It is attractive to think that the fullest reading is original, and that omission by *homoeoteleuton* may account for the disappearance from the ordinary texts of the clause relating to the *ἑσπερινὴ φυλακή*: but the last word about it has not yet been said.

5. Luc. xvi 12 *εἰ ἐν τῷ ἀλλοτρίῳ πιστοὶ οὐκ ἐγένεσθε, τὸ ἐμὸν τίς δώσει ὑμῖν*; is the reading of Marcion-Tert. supported by three of the best Old Latin MSS *e i l*. *τὸ ἡμέτερον* Westcott and Hort with

B L Origen. *τὸ ὑμέτερον* ℵ and all other authorities, including Cyprian and the Old Syriac. The reading *τὸ ἡμέτερον* would best explain the genesis of the other two: but it is certainly also the most difficult reading of the three.

6. Luc. xvii 1, 2 *οὐαὶ δι' οὗ ἔρχεται· λυσιτελεῖ αὐτῷ εἰ λίθος μυλικὸς περίκειται περὶ τὸν τράχηλον αὐτοῦ κτλ.*: Marcion-Tert. adds (after *λυσιτελεῖ αὐτῷ*) 'si natus non fuisset aut' with all the best Old Latin MSS save the African *e*. The insertion is clearly an erroneous assimilation to Matt. xxvi 24 = Marc. xiv 21, and it serves to shew how soon processes of conflation between the Gospels began to affect the texts, even in passages that are not really parallel.

7. Luc. xxi 18 *καὶ θρὶξ ἐκ τῆς κεφαλῆς ὑμῶν οὐ μὴ ἀπόληται.* The whole verse is omitted (with Matthew and Mark) by Marcion and the Curetonian (but not the Sinai) Syriac. Assimilation to the other Gospels will hardly account for excision: it is more likely that Marcion was moved by the dogmatic motive of omitting a verse that might be misunderstood as a falsified prophecy of Christ.

8. Luc. xxi 27: *μετὰ δυνάμεως πολλῆς καὶ δόξης* is the reading of Marcion-Tert. and substantially of D, of the Old Latin and Vulgate, and of the Old Syriac. It is certain that a reading in St Luke which agrees with St Mark (xiii 26) is to be preferred to one which agrees with St Matthew (xxiv 30): for assimilation to St Matthew is infinitely more probable than assimilation to St Mark.

9. Luc. xxiii 2: Marcion-Epiph. adds (after *διαστρέφοντα τὸ ἔθνος ἡμῶν*) *καταλύοντα τὸν νόμον καὶ τοὺς προφήτας* with the best Old Latin MSS, except apparently *a*; and (after *κωλύοντα φόρους Καίσαρι διδόναι*) *ἀναστρέφοντα τὰς γυναῖκας καὶ τὰ τέκνα*, which words appear with other new matter in two only, but those the best, Old Latin MSS in verse 5. It would be difficult to suppose that any of our Old Latin MSS had been influenced by Marcion's Gospel; nor indeed have we elsewhere any reason that I know of for convicting Marcion of additions to his Gospel exemplar as well as excisions from it. The readings must be pre-Marcionite: they are not in the Old Syriac, and perhaps are real specimens of what we used to call the licence of interpolation in the (strictly and geographically) Western text.

In all these readings Marcion is found in company with Western and especially with Latin witnesses. He is generally supported by Old Latin MSS,[1] not infrequently by the Old Syriac, against the great Greek uncials: he is never on the side of the

[1] But it is noteworthy that he is often nearer to the other Old Latin MSS than to the African Latin of *e*: unfortunately *k*, our best representative of the African Latin, is not extant for St Luke.

uncials against both the versions. If Hort is right, Marcion in all these cases is wrong: the separate examination of each instance has led us to the conclusion that Marcion is both sometimes right (nos. 1, 3, and 8), and sometimes wrong (nos. 6 and 7; but the latter is perhaps a reading introduced by Marcion himself), while sometimes the verdict must be held in suspense. From the faults of his text we learn that erroneous readings were established, in Rome if not in Asia Minor also, before his time, and we see how early the process of degeneration had begun and how deeply it had penetrated. From its better elements we are adding to the material, and helping further to establish the accumulating presumptions, which, in opposition to the hitherto accepted theories of the best known textual critics, suggest that the true text of the Gospels will never be restored by the help of our Greek MSS alone.

C. H. TURNER.