

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:



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



<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

PayPal

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

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]

Τάξει IN PAPIAS.

(THE GOSPELS AND THE RHETORICAL SCHOOLS.)

AMONGST the host of critics who have discussed either briefly or at length the meaning of the statement of Papias that Mark wrote his Gospel οὐ τάξει, no one, so far as I can ascertain, has attempted to connect the words with the technical use of τάξις in the rhetorical schools. Probably this is due to the fact that the subject of ancient rhetoric, which a hundred or two hundred years ago was, I should say, regarded as an indispensable branch of classical learning, has since then been forgotten and ignored by the average classical scholar. It is not now sufficiently understood that behind the many trivialities of the rhetorical schools and the rhetorical exhibitions during the imperial period, there lay a theory of rhetoric which was perfectly sound and scientific. Just as the ancients formulated the laws of *coherent and intelligible* speech or writing into a system of grammar which still holds its own, so they formulated the laws of *effective* speech or writing into a system of rhetoric which has somehow or other become obsolete. At the very foundation of this system of rhetoric lies the division of the processes of composition into εὔρεσις, τάξις or οἰκονομία, and λέξις or φράσις, the processes, that is, of (1) providing the material, (2) arranging and marshalling it, (3) expressing it in suitable language. To these processes have to be added for the speaker ὑπόκρισις (or delivery) and μνήμη; but these do not concern our purpose. When, then, a writer who uses rhetorical terms is found to state that a book is written οὐ τάξει or οὐ κατὰ τάξιν, he may be understood to mean that the matter of the book does not conform to the laws of rhetorical τάξις; in other words, is not so arranged, marshalled, or organized as to make a really interesting, readable, or satisfactory work. We have, therefore, to ascertain (1) whether a rhetorician could or would say this of our Second Gospel, and (2) whether Papias would be likely to use a rhetorical term.

Before, however, attempting to answer these questions, there are two subsidiary matters which require clearing up.

Firstly, as to the dative τάξει,¹ it may be said that if Papias meant what I believe him to mean, he would rather have said οὐ καλῶς τῇ τάξει or something of the kind. Certainly no one could say that a book was

¹ The dative is in any case odd for κατὰ τάξιν or ἐν τάξει. It occurs, however, in Clem. Rom. 40 πάντα τάξει ποιεῖν δφείλομεν.

written οὐχ εὐρέσει or οὐ λέξει, meaning that it was defective in subject-matter or style. But it must be remembered that τάξις differs from εὐρεσις and λέξις, in that it connotes not merely a process but a quality, or perhaps rather a result. That is to say, before the growth of rhetorical terminology τάξις had in other spheres come to mean not only arrangement, but good arrangement, or the result of good arrangement, in other words, order. Thus Xenophon couples it with κόσμος as 'controlling the world'. To put it in another way, τάξις in Papias does mean, as it has always been translated, 'in order'; but, if my view is right, the order is rhetorical order, that ordering which will produce a satisfactory and readable work.

The other point is this. I have already said that the rhetoricians use οἰκονομία as a synonym for τάξις, and some scholars may be inclined to go further, and say that οἰκονομία had by Papias's time superseded τάξις. This was certainly the view of so great an authority as Ernesti, who gives us, *s. v.* τάξις, a quotation from Aristotle, and then adds 'quae alibi οἰκονομία dici solet'. But on examination of the facts as they appear in Volkmann¹ and elsewhere, they do not appear, in my opinion, to bear out this view. Without going fully into the matter, I think the facts are roughly as follows. There are three main uses. In some schools οἰκονομία and τάξις are retained together. In this case τάξις is said to mean 'naturalis ordo' and οἰκονομία 'artificiosus ordo'. The meaning of this is that when you follow the ordinary arrangement you use τάξις, but when for some special reason you depart from it you use οἰκονομία. Thus in oratory there is a normal order, preface, narration, proof, disproof and conclusion, and to follow this is τάξις; but to depart from it, as was sometimes held to be expedient, is οἰκονομία. The *Iliad* has τάξις, the *Odyssey* and *Aeneid* have οἰκονομία. This is the system which Philo presumably follows when he speaks (*de Somniis* I § 35) of the wise man as weaving into one whole the contributions of every science, and says that he derives from rhetoric εὐρεσις, τάξις, οἰκονομία, φράσις, ὑπόκρισις, and μνήμη. In other systems, notably in that of Dionysius of Halicarnassus, οἰκονομία is the general term, while τάξις is a subdivision. I shall have to return to this system later, and need not dwell on it here. But there is also a third usage in which the Aristotelian term τάξις is preserved for the whole department or process, and οἰκονομία is not used. That there was such a usage is shewn by Diogenes Laertius, who says (vii 43) that the Stoic terminology was εὐρεσις, φράσις, τάξις, ὑπόκρισις. This usage appears, I think, in Clement of Alexandria, where he says that the Στρωματεῖς οὔτε τάξεως οὔτε φράσεως στοχάζονται (*Strom.* vii 18. 111). It also appears in an important passage in Lucian,

¹ *Die Rhetorik der Griechen und Römer* pp. 29, 363.

de Cons. Hist. § 48, which may be given in full. After describing how the historian should select his material, Lucian proceeds thus: *καὶ ἐπειδὴν ἀθροίσῃ ἅπαντα, ἢ τὰ πλείεστα, πρῶτα μὲν ὑπόμνημά τι συννφαινέτω αὐτῶν καὶ σῶμα ποιείτω ἀκαλλῆς καὶ ἀδιάρθρωτον. εἶτα ἐπιθεῖς τὴν τάξιν, ἐπαγέτω τὸ κάλλος, καὶ χρωρνύτω τῇ λέξει, καὶ σχηματίζειτω, καὶ ῥυθμίζειτω.* 'When all or nearly all is collected, draw up a rough sketch, a body as yet without beauty, and unorganized. Then introduce τάξις, and then add beauty,¹ the colouring of style and figures and rhythm.' Now it is clear that in this passage Lucian, who was originally a rhetorician, is applying the rules of the schools to history. It is clear that he has in his mind the three processes: εὔρεσις, he tells us, will leave us with a body without organization of material (ἀδιάρθρωτον) and without beauty of style (ἀκαλλῆς). The τάξις will then supply the διάρθρωσις and the λέξις the κάλλος. It thus appears that τάξις rather than οἰκονομία was the term he used for the organization of the material. To these passages may be added the probability that the assonance in -σις would serve to maintain τάξις rather than οἰκονομία in popular use.

Assuming then that these two terms are interchangeable, I return to the question as to what were in the eyes of the rhetoricians the conditions of good rhetorical τάξις, and whether Mark fails to satisfy them. Now, although there is abundant evidence that the rhetoricians considered that history and literature are in general to be judged by the same canons as oratory, the last-named subject occupied so much of their attention that we hear very little of what they thought about τάξις in history or biography. There are, in fact, only two passages of any length which I have come across. One of them is the above-quoted passage from Lucian, which tells us indeed that there were canons of τάξις for history, but does not state what they were. The other is a long passage from the *Judicium de Thucydide* of Dionysius (ch. 10-20) which is in fact the main foundation on which my theory rests. Dionysius, who takes up a very critical attitude towards Thucydides, begins with discussing his εὔρεσις, comparing the nature of his subject and the methods by which he got his information with those of Herodotus and others. He then proceeds to discuss his οἰκονομία which he subdivides into διαίρεσις, τάξις, and ἐξεργασία. The meaning of these terms will become clear as we proceed. Thucydides's διαίρεσις is faulty because he divides his work by summers and winters. Thus, e.g., he gives us a bit of the Plataean story in the second book, and then does not finish it till the third. This

¹ Or, I think, better: 'introduce beauty of style (κάλλος), adorn it with choice diction (λέξει), figures, and rhythm.' In this case κάλλος is the generic term for the third process and it is then subdivided as usual into (1) ἐκλογή τῶν ὀνομάτων, (2) σχηματισμός, (3) σύνθεσις ὀνομάτων, the main importance of which lies in *rhythm*. To use λέξις in a limited sense for (1) is not uncommon.

has not much bearing on my subject, but we may perhaps note that Matthew's well-known fivefold division would constitute in the eyes of a rhetorician a *διαίρεσις* which is absent in Mark. He then proceeds thus:—

αἰτιῶνται δὲ καὶ τὴν τάξιν αὐτοῦ τινες, ὡς οὐτ' ἀρχὴν τῆς ἱστορίας εἰληφότος ἦν ἐχρῆν, οὕτε τέλος ἐφηρμοκότος αὐτῇ τὸ πρέπον· οὐκ ἐλάχιστον μέρος εἶναι λέγοντες οἰκονομίας ἀγαθῆς, ἀρχὴν τε λαβεῖν, ἧς οὐκ ἂν εἴη τι πρότερον, καὶ τέλει περιλαβεῖν τὴν πραγματείαν, ᾧ δόξῃ μηδὲν ἐνδεῖν.

'Some blame his *τάξις* on the grounds that he did not adopt the proper beginning for his history, or give it its proper conclusion. For they say that it is one of the most important elements in good *οἰκονομία* to open at a point which nothing could possibly precede, and to round off the subject with an ending which is felt to leave nothing lacking.' Now, to take the matter of the ending first, if we assume—as is surely most probable—that Papias knew Mark without the last twelve verses, the two cases are really almost identical. For Thucydides also ends his book quite abruptly and in the middle of a narrative. We might have expected so good a critic as Dionysius to have realized this, and to have attributed the abrupt ending to some accident instead of to bad *τάξις*. But he does not do so, and we may safely assume that if he could have seen the Second Gospel he would have said *αἰτιῶμαι τὴν τάξιν· οὐ γὰρ τέλος ἐφήρμοκε τὸ πρέπον*.

The matter of the beginning of the two books does not go quite as well on all fours, for Dionysius's objection to Thucydides on this score is that, after stating that the growth of Athenian power was the true cause of the war, rather than the Corcyraean business, &c., he proceeds to describe the latter first, and then goes back to the former in his lxxxix chapter. But what is wanting here is supplied by an interesting passage in the rhetorician Theon (*Progym.* 190). Theon is discussing the principles which should govern a narrative or an anecdote as opposed to a history or a biography, and points out that in the latter case it is necessary to give information as to the 'ancestry and parentage of the personages, and many other such things'. He proceeds to cite the treatment of the story of Cylon by Herodotus and Thucydides. Theon was probably a contemporary of Papias, and it is not, I think, too much to assume that in his time critical opinion would have declared that the *τάξις* of Mark's Gospel was deficient in that it did not open with an account of the birth and ancestry of the Lord.

It will be seen from the quotation from Dionysius that he appears to use *τάξις* in the limited sense of completeness of scheme, especially at the beginning and the end, and the whole tone of the passage in Papias suggests that the main cause of his dissatisfaction with Mark was due to its incompleteness. It may, therefore, possibly be the case that he

uses the word in the limited sense of Dionysius; but it seems to me more probable that he is following what I believe to be the popular use of the term as an equivalent to Dionysius's *οικονομία*, which includes, besides *διαίρεσις* and *τάξις* proper, a third department called *ἐξεργασία*. This term is perhaps peculiar to Dionysius, but it clearly represents what we may call the balancing of the material, giving due importance to the important matters, and omitting or minimizing the unimportant. This side of *τάξις* or *οικονομία* appears in Julius Victor (19), where speaking of 'dispositio', the accepted Latin equivalent, he says: 'Omnia non solum ordine, sed etiam momento quodam atque iudicio disponenda et componenda sunt.'¹ It appears also in a better-known passage which has been recalled to me by Mr W. A. Cox, in the *Ars Poetica*, lines 40-44. There Horace says—

Cui lecta potenter erit res,
Nec facundia deseret hunc nec lucidus ordo.
Ordinis haec virtus erit et venus, aut ego fallor,
Ut iam nunc dicat iam nunc debentia dici,
Pleraque differat et praesens in tempus omittat.

Here clearly Horace (1) indicates the three processes, (2) for metrical reasons adopts 'ordo' instead of the more usual 'dispositio', and (3) defines it very much in the sense of Dionysius's *ἐξεργασία*. Dionysius criticizes Thucydides's *ἐξεργασία* at considerable length. He shews how Thucydides describes various sets of operations with what he considers disproportionate length or brevity, and then he attacks the supposed trivialities of the preface. Why should he tell us, he asks, that the Athenians wore grasshoppers in their hair, or that the Lacedaemonians smeared fat on their bodies when they did gymnastics? The application of these remarks to such a passage as Mark's description of the Temptation is obvious, nor need I stop to shew that his realistic touches—his fuller, green grass, pillow, and story of the young man in the linen cloth—would have seemed trivialities to Dionysius; for it is a commonplace of criticism that Matthew and Luke definitely set themselves to improve Mark's *ἐξεργασία* (and therefore his *τάξις*) in this respect.

Two other points may be noted here. It seems to me probable, in view of the, I believe, almost universal fact that ancient history is interspersed with set speeches, that a critic of the time would have held that Mark's *τάξις* was faulty through its lack of this element. It may, no doubt, be said on the other hand that ancient taste, to judge from Plutarch, did not demand such speeches in biography. Still, as it has

¹ A somewhat similar conception of 'order' as applied to language or style appears in Augustine *de Ordine* ii 13.

often been said, the Gospels are not mere biographies. Perhaps more importance is to be attributed to the contrast between Matthew and Mark in the matter of grouping. It has been often pointed out that Matthew's preference for triplets corresponds with Jewish literary methods; but I do not think that it has been observed that it also appears to correspond with the methods of the rhetorical schools. I base this statement on a passage from Pliny, *Épp.* ii 20. Pliny is telling his correspondent stories of the informer Regulus. At the end of the second he says 'Sufficiunt duae fabulae, an scholastica lege tertiam poscis?' 'Would you like me to follow the rule of the rhetorical schools and give you a third?' I can see no satisfactory meaning for these words unless there was a principle laid down in the schools that, in illustrating a point, three examples should be given. So far as I know, no such rule is to be found in the extant text-books, but it is not probable that these books exhaust all that was actually taught in the schools.

On the whole then I think it may be laid down with some confidence that if a critic of the second century had been asked to give his opinion on Matthew and Mark, he would have proceeded as follows: In the matter of λέξις, he would have said, the two books are much on a par. In σχηματισμός, in ἐκλογή ὀνομάτων, in σύνθεσις ὀνομάτων (which are the usual subdivisions of λέξις) they are both equally undistinguished. But in τάξις there is a striking difference. Mark, by reason of (1) his abrupt beginning, (2) his incomplete ending, (3) his habit of emphasizing trivial points and occasionally dealing inadequately with important ones, (4) the comparative absence of set speeches, (5) his inferior grouping, presents a complete contrast to the other. In fact, he has practically no attempt at τάξις.

It may be added that such a judgement probably reflects the feeling of Christians at all times. While it is true that the very defects of Mark's ἐξέργασια commend him to those who have the spirit of historical criticism, because they bear the signs of primitiveness and simplicity, it is none the less true that they weigh against him with the general reader. Mark has never been a favourite: note, for instance, his practical exclusion from our series of liturgical Gospels.¹ And if I am not mistaken this is largely because he has the characteristics mentioned above.

The question now arises whether such a view is likely to have been reproduced by Papias.

Now Papias lived in an age in which the atmosphere, partly owing to the abundance of rhetorical schools, but still more to the fact that

¹ In our Gospels if we exclude the last 12 verses, Mark appears five times, and of these two are the Passions in Holy Week, where his presence is inevitable. Another is in Baptism, where clearly he was chosen because he alone records 'how He blamed those that would have kept them from Him'.

rhetorical exhibitions were the one absorbing intellectual interest, was saturated in rhetorical ideas. Then, as now, men formed literary impressions of what they heard and read, but unlike us they also analysed and pigeon-holed their impressions. Their attitude was, as Saintsbury says, a perpetual 'distinguo', and it was so because they had at their back what we have not—a cut and dried theory of rhetoric. An ordinary man now knows whether a speech or a novel is well written and interesting. He can pick out a good phrase or an amusing incident, but he seldom stops to ask whether what he admires belongs to *τάξις* or to *λέξις*. But to people used to analysis of this sort, the classification of literary phenomena under these two heads is really an elementary operation, and it seems to me more than improbable that in the Church of the early second century there should not have been a considerable number of persons capable of performing it. The personality of Papias has not much to do with it. He may or may not have been what we should call of 'very small intelligence'; but if he was, it does not follow that he had not been himself a rhetorician (schoolmasters of all ages have sometimes been men of limited intelligence), or that he had not at some time attended a rhetorical school or rhetorical exhibitions, and heard the criticisms that were passed there. Or again, he may merely have picked up a phrase which was in common use, and one which he may only partially have understood. I do not know whether there is any need to deal with the objection that the words are not, strictly speaking, those of Papias but of John the Elder. It no doubt requires a greater stretch of imagination to suppose that the latter understood the meaning of *τάξις*, but there is no need to suppose that Papias is giving more than the substance of John's criticism, which he has clothed in his own words.

If my explanation of the term has any value it has perhaps this further importance, that it suggests that rhetorical considerations had more to do than we usually realize, if not with the formation, at any rate with the acceptance of our Gospels. When Matthew, finding in Mark, in Lucian's phrase, a mere *ὑπόμνημα*, a *σῶμα ἀδιάρθρωτον*, proceeded 'to add *τάξις*', he was carrying out admirably the precepts of the schools, though it is perhaps improbable that he did so consciously. Luke may very well have had a tincture of rhetoric, but his *τάξις* does not seem to me so good, and perhaps the same may be said of the fourth Gospel. On the other hand, the preference which generally seems to have been given to Matthew may very probably have been largely influenced by the rhetorical training of the readers. To say this is not to say that such readers thought lightly of historical truth. There is no real opposition between rhetoric, as the ancients understood it, and true history. That we should think there was such an opposition is largely

due to our debased use of the term in the sense of speaking *for* effect rather than speaking *with* effect.

F. H. COLSON.

PS.—Since writing the above, I have been pleased to find in Dr Moffatt's *Introduction to the literature of the N. T.* the following note on the passage in Papias (pp. 188, 189):—

'In the light of the well-known passage from Lucian (*de hist. cons.* 16 f) *τάξις* here seems to imply not order or consecutiveness, in the modern sense of the term, so much as the artistic arrangement and effective presentation of the material. The latter, in their unadorned and artless sequence, are *ὑπομνήματα*. Set *ἐν τάξει* they are orderly, harmonious. The criticism passed by Papias on Mark refers to the *style*, then, rather than to the chronological sequence. . . . When *τάξις* is translated "order", therefore, the reference is to "orderliness" rather than to historical sequence.'¹

I deprecate the word *style*, which suggests rather *λέξις*, which I take to be tacitly excluded by the use of the word *τάξις*; but otherwise this expresses substantially, though somewhat indefinitely, my view. Moreover, to connect Papias's use of the term with Lucian's is practically to admit its connexion with technical rhetoric; for no one acquainted with rhetorical terminology can doubt that Lucian is using the language of the schools. As Dr Moffatt does not appear to recognize this, or to be aware that the term has a history, I hope my suggestions, though more anticipated than I had supposed, may still be of value.

F. H. C.

CASSIODORUS'S COPY OF EUCHERIUS'S *INSTRUCTIONES*.

IN the ninth chapter of his *Institutio* Cassiodorus names the 'introductores' to Holy Scripture, whose works he has in his library, and among them appear Tichonius the Donatist and Eucherius. In the JOURNAL for July 1910 (vol. xi pp. 562 f) I was able to shew that one of Cassiodorus's pupils had appreciated his master's recommendation of Tyconius, and had quoted the *Rules* in the commentary on *Second Thessalonians*. The commentary referred to is part of the Anti-pelagianized edition of Pelagius's commentary on the Epistles of St Paul prepared by Cassiodorus and his pupils, and long ago published under the name of

¹ Dr Moffatt's reference does not correspond with my copy of Lucian: but I cannot doubt that he refers to the same passage.