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DUNCAN WILLEY.

*Tôléi* IN PAPIAS.

FIRST let me express the gratification which I feel that Mr Colson has drawn attention, in the last number of this JOURNAL, to the testimony of Papias respecting St Mark. Too many men, I think, are attempting to solve the Synoptic Problem from internal evidence alone. This is exactly the mistake which St Augustine made with disastrous results. The results, I feel sure, will be not less disastrous now if men persist in ignoring the testimony of History.

Next let me suggest that the ancient rhetoricians have not been quite so much neglected by Classical men at Cambridge, as Mr Colson

supposes. When I lectured in Classics, I gave a regular course on the rhetoricians, and my successor does so now. It is not from ignorance that I have consistently maintained that Papias declares St Mark to be defective in chronological and not in rhetorical order.

If Mr Colson, instead of confining his remarks to the two words οὐ τάξει, had examined the explanation of those words which Papias immediately offers, I think that his conclusions would have been different. St Mark (Papias asserts) was deficient in order, because he was not a follower of our Lord, but only of St Peter. That is to say, St Mark got his information second hand, and took no pains to verify and correct it. He attempted nothing more than to copy St Peter. And why was St Peter defective 'in order'? Because (Papias tells us on the authority of 'the elder') he was not composing a formal history of our Lord, but only produced certain lessons, as his disciples required them. Rhetorical order, however, depends upon rhetorical training and not upon first-hand knowledge. If St Mark's Gospel was arranged badly from the rhetorical point of view, why should Papias attribute the failure to St Mark's lack of knowledge, when the fault evidently lay in his lack of skill?

But St Mark's Gospel in my opinion is by no means badly arranged. I do not know any method by which it could be made a more readable book by rearrangement, except in a few short details, such as putting into a climax the list of vices mentioned in vii 21-23. St Mark's Gospel has always been unpopular, as compared with the other Gospels, not because it is faultily arranged, but because St Mark took no pains to collect materials. The fault lies in εὐπειρίᾳ and not in τάξει. St Mark neglected to supply us with an account of our Lord's birth, infancy, and boyhood. He does not give us the Sermon on the Mount, the speeches (except one), the longer Parables, the Lucan 'Stories', the Resurrection Appearances. Fidelity to St Peter has cost him dear. Granted that the early loss of the concluding verses damaged the book, the damage was slight and might have been overlooked, if St Mark had collected new materials which existed in abundance at the time, but have now perished. He might have kept a commonplace book, as St Luke and the redactor of St Matthew probably did. Even if he had made use of the materials which make St Matthew and St Luke so popular, he would have had more readers. At present it is only to a critic that his simple record is invaluable. To our eyes even the embellishments of the 'trito-Mark' have failed to corrupt it.

However 'narrow-minded' Papias was, he was a Bishop of the Church and was compelled by opposition and persecution to defend his treasures. He did not regard St Mark with a critical eye, but had a practical aim. For what was his object in calling attention to

St Mark's defect? Had he any wish to brand St Mark as a failure and advise Christians not to waste time in reading him? Certainly not, or he would not have gone out of his way to declare that St Mark made no mistakes except in the one matter of 'order'.

We must remember that the Harmonists were at work. With mistaken zeal they endeavoured to defend the Gospels by assimilating the readings. When St Mark or St Luke differed from St Matthew, they corrected the text. In Cod. D St Luke's Genealogy is actually changed into St Matthew's with inverted order and gaps filled in. All these changes were evidently made to give the enemy no chance. At a later date Tatian drew up his Diatessaron to reduce the field of controversy. He was only doing what St Matthew and St Luke had done before him—blending into one narrative four Sources, and finally resolving all chronological difficulties.

But although by these questionable methods a 'fence was set about' the Gospels, there remained in the time of Papias one serious discrepancy. The chronology of the fourth Gospel differed very materially from that of the Synoptists. And, if the Synoptists were wrong, as Papias probably believed, the fault lay with St Mark, whom the others had taken as their guide. No paltering with the text could cure this fault. It was fundamental and, if left alone, it would be fatal. The four pillars could not stand unless some explanation were offered. Hence came the anxiety of Papias to explain the exact extent of the difference. He upholds St John by declaring St Mark to be wrong. He explains St Mark's fault by shewing the circumstances under which St Peter worked. If you want chronology, he tells you that you must look to St John: if you want isolated pictures you may look to St Mark.

Whether we agree with this verdict or not, we must admit that it explains the situation. Papias was not a modern reviewer, coldly examining the merits and defects of the Evangelists. It was a matter of life and death to him and to his flock to support them. 'Silly' he may have been, but he knew where danger lay, and he gave his disciples the weapon wherewith to defend themselves.

ARTHUR WRIGHT.