

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>

A table of contents for *The Expositor* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_expositor-series-1.php

THE FAYÛM GOSPEL FRAGMENT.

I.

THE following is a copy of the Fayûm Gospel Fragment as restored by Dr. Bickell. We place in parallel columns the corresponding passages from the Gospels of SS. Matthew and Mark.

Μετὰ δὲ τὸ φαγεῖν ὡς ἐξῆγγον· πάντες ἐν ταύτῃ τῇ νύκτι σκανδαλισθήσεσθε κατὰ τὸ γραφέν· πατάξω τὸν ποιμένα καὶ τὰ πρόβατα διασκορπισθήσονται. Εἰπόντος τοῦ Πέτρου· καὶ εἰ πάντες οὐκ ἐγώ. ἔφη αὐτῷ· ὁ ἀλεκτρυνὸν δις κοκκύξει καὶ σὺ πρῶτον τρις ἀπαρνήσῃ με.

ST. MARK xiv. 26-30: Καὶ ὑμνήσαντες ἐξῆλθον εἰς τὸ ὄρος τῶν ἐλαιῶν.

Καὶ λέγει αὐτοῖς ὁ Ἰησοῦς ὅτι πάντες σκανδαλισθήσεσθε ἐν ἐμοί· ὅτι γέγραπται· πατάξω τὸν ποιμένα καὶ διασκορπισθήσεται τὰ πρόβατα. Ἄλλὰ μετὰ τὸ ἐγερθῆναί με, προάξω ὑμᾶς εἰς τὴν Γαλιλαίαν. Ὁ δὲ Πέτρος ἔφη αὐτῷ· Καὶ εἰ πάντες σκανδαλισθήσονται, ἀλλ' οὐκ ἐγώ. Καὶ λέγει αὐτῷ ὁ Ἰησοῦς· Ἀμὴν λέγω σοι, ὅτι σὺ σήμερον ἐν τῇ νυκτὶ ταύτῃ, πρὶν ἢ δις ἀλέκτορα φωνῆσαι, τρις μὲ ἀπαρνήσῃ.

ST. MATT. xxvi. 30-34: Καὶ ὑμνήσαντες ἐξῆλθον εἰς τὸ ὄρος τῶν Ἐλαιῶν.

Τότε λέγει αὐτοῖς ὁ Ἰησοῦς, Πάντες ὑμεῖς σκανδαλισθήσεσθε ἐν ἐμοί ἐν τῇ νυκτὶ ταύτῃ· γέγραπται γάρ, Πατάξω τὸν ποιμένα, καὶ διασκορπισθήσεται τὰ πρόβατα τῆς ποιμνῆς. Μετὰ δὲ τὸ ἐγερθῆναί με προάξω ὑμᾶς εἰς τὴν Γαλιλαίαν. Ἀποκριθεὶς δὲ ὁ Πέτρος εἶπεν αὐτῷ, Εἰ πάντες σκανδαλισθήσονται ἐν σοί, ἐγὼ οὐδέποτε σκανδαλισθήσομαι. Ἐφη αὐτῷ ὁ Ἰησοῦς, Ἀμὴν λέγω σοι, ὅτι ἐν ταύτῃ τῇ νυκτὶ, πρὶν ἀλέκτορα φωνῆσαι τρις ἀπαρνήσῃ με.

II.

In May last I gave the readers of THE EXPOSITOR an account of the great collection of documents from Fayûm preserved principally at Vienna and Berlin. We may hope before long to have the materials for forming an independent judgment upon them, as we are promised the speedy publication of a *Corpus Papyrorum Renieri Archi-*

ducis, which will enable every competent critic to draw his own conclusions and to test those which have already been drawn. I described in my article some of the Biblical texts which Dr. K. Wessely has published, dating from the fifth century, and mentioned in passing, as I had already in the *Contemporary Review* for December, 1884, that a text of St. Matthew belonging to the third century had also come to light. That document has now been published. The papyrus in question is not a text of St. Matthew or of any Gospel, in the sense of being a full and complete text. It is only a minute fragment, grievously mutilated and shattered, but still of immense interest even in that condition, and raising very important and interesting questions concerning the original sources of the Gospel narrative. The document has been published by a distinguished orientalist, Dr. G. Bickell, Professor of Christian Archæology in the University of Innsbruck, in a Roman Catholic review, the *Zeitschrift für Katholische Theologie*, for 1885, part iii., pp. 498-504, with a discussion which proves that in the University of Innsbruck, and in the Roman Catholic circles wherein that publication circulates, there must exist a very intelligent interest in such inquiries. But the document comes to us guaranteed by the judgment of experts as well; for Professor Karabacek, Professor Krall, and Dr. Wessely, of Vienna, have assisted Dr. Bickell, and fortified him by their decision that the document is certainly to be assigned to the third century, its writing and contractions being all of them characteristic of that period.

I have said that the manuscript is no complete text; in very deed it is only a miserable fragment, measuring not quite two inches each way. The lines are mutilated at each end, but, as restored by Bickell, contain each just twenty-eight or twenty-nine letters, which, as we know from another source (Birt, *Das Antike Buchwesen*, p. 198), was the average length of lines in all ancient papyrus books. The text of

the fragment deals with the narrative of our Lord's discourse after the last supper, and corresponds to St. Matthew xxvi. 30-34, and to St. Mark xiv. 26-30. It agrees much more nearly with St. Mark than with St. Matthew, as perhaps might have been expected in a land where the Church traces itself back to St. Mark, its first evangelist and founder; and yet its divergence from St. Mark is of a very decided character.

The following is an English translation of the fragment, which however cannot exhibit the variations as the original does, as given at the head of this article, with the corresponding passages from St. Matthew and St. Mark :

“ Now after eating, as they marched out¹; You shall all be offended this night according to the Scripture, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered. Peter said, Though all, yet not I. He said to him, The cock shall crow (not the usual word, but a word we might translate ‘cry cuckoo’) twice, and thou shalt previously deny Me thrice.”

Now when we examine this passage, where I have tried to represent in my translation the divergences from our Gospels, we notice (1) a total absence of the mention of the hymn, which is common to Matthew and Mark; (2) a total omission also of the promise by Jesus to precede the disciples into Galilee after His resurrection, which is contained in both Gospels; (3) a different word for cock and for crow from those used in all the Gospel narratives. The word *φωνῆσαι* appears in them all, and expresses in strictness merely the utterance of a sound; while the verb *κοκκύζειν* is derived from *κόκκυξ*, a cuckoo, and signifies “to cry like a cuckoo or a cock,” being a verb formed in imitation of the sound which the bird utters. While lastly Bickell

¹ The verb *εξάγειν*, which I translate as above, is usually transitive; but it is used in an intransitive sense once in early Greek—Hom. *Il.* vii., 336,—and again in the late North African Greek of Synesius. The sense I have given to it is found also in Xen. *Hell.* vi. 5, 18.

notices the literary style as briefer, more energetic and concise, more like that of an eye-witness transferring his impressions to paper without any design of working them into literary shape and style, than the narrative of the canonical Gospels. His theory is this, that here we have traces of a Gospel which was neither canonical nor yet heretical or false, but which may have been one of those early attempts to set forth the life, work, and sufferings of our Lord to which St. Luke refers in the first verse of his preface: "Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us." Of course it is very hard to form any certain conclusions from one small fragment, and from the mass of material to be examined, it may be years before other fragments turn up among these Fayûm documents. One instance indeed, which I lately came across in a Vienna journal, in which the narrative of these discoveries first saw the light, illustrates this point. The number of Greek documents, both at Berlin and Vienna, largely exceeds the Latin. At Berlin they have 2,500 Greek papyri, and only three Latin ones. One would have thought that a Latin document could not have escaped notice in such a case. Yet Wessely, in a visit to the Berlin collection in 1884, discovered a Latin one, which had eluded the keen vision of the Berlin scholars, hidden away among the mass of Greek papyri. Bickell's study of our fragment has been criticised by Dr. Harnack in Schürer's *Theologische Literaturzeitung* for June 13th, in the most searching manner. Harnack is decidedly inclined to accept it as a genuine relic of one of those primitive documents from which in his opinion St. Matthew and St. Mark have been worked up. He is evidently rejoiced at the absence of the prophecy about Christ's departure into Galilee after the resurrection, as it seems to get rid of one supernatural feature of the narrative; though indeed the

gain in this respect is not much, as the prediction about the threefold denial remains as real and supernatural a prophecy as the other. He throws out a suggestion that possibly it may not be a fragment from a Gospel of any kind, but merely a free quotation of the Gospel narrative made from memory, and embodied in a sermon or homily. He admits the possibility of this view, but considers that the overwhelming weight of evidence tends the other way, and establishes the newly found text as a real fragment of a document or class of documents from which both St. Matthew and St. Mark have been constructed. The suggestion is a natural one, that it may have been derived from the Gospel of the Egyptians which Clement of Alexandria so frequently quotes, and which seems to have been abundantly used by orthodox as well as heretics. Harnack puts this aside at once. The Gospel of the Egyptians was in his view derived from our Gospels, and not *vice versa*.¹ In any case, one need only compare the extracts from it which Clement of Alexandria gives us, to see that the tone of it is quite different from that of the text we are now discussing. Compare, for instance, the well known reply which Jesus, according to it, made to the query as to when His kingdom shall come, "When out of two has been made one, and the outward has become as the inward, and the male with the female neither male nor female," with the historical tone and style of our extract, and the vast difference becomes manifest at once. Supposing it however, as Harnack thinks, a portion of one of the original Gospels, we cannot trace any knowledge or use of it among the Fathers. I have searched the early Egyptian writers, Origen, Clement of Alexandria, Athanasius, Cyril, and

¹ Harnack's theories as to the construction of our canonical Gospels and their relation to the Gospel of the Egyptians are rather changeable. Last year, in his edition of the "Teaching of the Twelve Apostles," p. 79, he seemed to think the Gospel of the Egyptians anterior to St. Matthew. This year, in his criticism of our fragment, he speaks of it as posterior to Matthew and Mark.

Nonnus of Panopolis, all of whom deal more or less with St. Peter's denial, without finding a trace of the peculiarities of this extract. Nonnus of Panopolis is a very important witness. He was a good scholar, as his works show. He wrote about the year 400 A.D. a paraphrase of St. John's Gospel, from which some important conclusions as to the text have been drawn; yet neither he nor any of the others I have mentioned apparently know anything of this text.

I have found indeed in Epiphanius, *Ancoratus*, cap. ix., and in him alone, the peculiar word for "cock" which the fragment uses, but nothing else. It must at the same time be remembered that the argument from silence is a very dangerous one. Our ignorance is no measure of human possibilities. Many writers and much criticism must have existed of which we know nothing, and many writers whom we do know have suffered grievous loss in the course of ages. How much of Origen, for instance, is lost for ever! Fayûm too was evidently a great literary and religious centre. Documents may have been preserved there unknown to those Alexandrian writers who have come down to us. The text of the Eighth Book of Thucydides, published by Wessely, belongs to the third century; yet it has never been noticed by any critic of whom history tells. The question may fairly be asked, Suppose that this be a genuine fragment of an early Gospel, what bearing has it on the estimate we now form of the canonical Gospels? Harnack indeed evidently regards it as an original text, and our present Gospels as mere expansions of it. He makes a strong point of the following comparison:

PAPYRUS: Εἰπόντος τοῦ Πέτρου· καὶ εἰ πάντες οὐκ ἐγώ.

ST. MARK: Ὁ δὲ Πέτρος ἔφη αὐτῷ· Εἰ καὶ πάντες σκανδαλισθήσονται, ἀλλ' οὐκ ἐγώ.

ST. MATTHEW: Ἀποκριθεὶς δὲ ὁ Πέτρος, εἶπεν αὐτῷ· Εἰ πάντες σκανδαλισθήσονται ἐν σοὶ, ἐγὼ οὐδέποτε σκανδαλισθήσομαι.

pointing out that the papyrus is evidently much briefer, earlier in tone, while the Gospel text seems worked up with a view to literary effect. Yet, admitting all this, the new fragment only confirms the historical accuracy of our present Gospels, and is but a new witness that in accepting them we have accepted true history and not cunningly devised fables.

GEORGE T. STOKES.

Trinity College, Dublin, June 19th.

The first part of this paper was written early in June, before any notice appeared in English of this discovery. The *Times* has had since that date some paragraphs about it, marked however by several inaccuracies. Thus Harnack has been turned into a devout Roman Catholic from a somewhat rationalistic but very strong Lutheran, while other mistakes prove the writer's want of acquaintance with theological literature. Dr. Hort has also warned the public against hasty deductions from one solitary fragment. I have already remarked that it may be years before any more fragments are found from the very richness of the mine to be worked. I lately came across a statistical table which shows this. The *Oesterreichische Monatschrift für den Orient* is the literary organ through which the Vienna investigations have been communicated to the public. It is edited by Professors Karabacek, Krall, and three other scholars of that city. German savants have been celebrated for their pugnacity since the days of Luther and Erasmus, a quality in which they are even still by no means deficient. Stern lately gave an account of the Fayûm manuscripts at Berlin, completely ignoring the Vienna collection, whereupon Karabacek wrote an article in his own journal, cutting up Stern most unmercifully. Into the merits of this controversy we have no intention of entering, but merely refer to it because Karabacek, in the

course of his argument, gives a comparative table, which illustrates one special point as to the richness of these collections, and the strange revelations which may await us there. Karabacek at any rate triumphantly demonstrates the superiority of Vienna over Berlin in almost every department, as follows :

	<i>Berlin.</i>	<i>Vienna.</i>
Greek papyri	2,500	15,000
Arabic papyri	600	4,000
Coptic papyri	300	1,000
Pehlvi papyri	100	300
Græco-Arabic papyri	50	200
Demotic papyri	40	10
Hebrew papyri	22	23
Copto-Arabic papyri	10	6
Tachygraphic papyri	7	200
Latin papyri	3	34
Syriac papyri	3	2
Hieratic papyri	1	5
Hieroglyphic papyri	0	1
Æthiopic papyri	0	200
Pap. Fragments, }	0	163
cents. 8-10)		
Pictures	0	61
Total	3,636	21,204

Dr. Hort's opinion, as given through the *Times* of June 25th, will of course carry very great weight.¹ He stands in the very front rank of Biblical and textual critics, and has therefore special claims upon the attention of those of us who have not his peculiar skill and knowledge. His opinion is a very decided one. In a letter from him, which I have seen, he characterizes Dr. Bickell's discovery as "a mare's nest." Dr. Hort's view is simply this, that the fragment is only an extract from our canonical Gospels made by a good scholar who desired to improve the Greek. It may indeed

¹ Dr. Bickell replied in the *Times* of July 3rd, and in a private note has confidently asserted that Dr. Hort is mistaken. Dr. Bickell is an orthodox Roman Catholic. His teaching is far removed from German rationalism. The *Record* of July 10th seemed alarmed on this point.

be fairly enough retorted, If he wished to improve the Greek, why did he disimprove the literary style, as the Fayûm fragment is most certainly and manifestly inferior in grace and clearness to the canonical narrative? At the same time, I am bound to say that Dr. Hort's view gains support from some remains of Egyptian writers preserved by Eusebius. Dionysius of Alexandria and Phileas, Bishop of Thmuis, in the neighbourhood of the Fayûm, belong to the third century, the very period to which this fragment is referred. The Seventh Book of Eusebius is almost completely occupied with extracts from Dionysius, where free quotations and extremely free criticism of Holy Scripture appear very frequently. Phileas of Thmuis, in Eusebius *H. E.* viii. 10, quotes Philippians ii. 6-8 to a great extent in literal agreement with our present text, but, like our fragment, omits a very important clause, "made in the likeness of men," and then completely alters the eighth verse. Yet one would scarce contend that Phileas had a different text or used quite a different document from our present Epistle to the Philippians.

Without venturing on the vexed field of textual criticism, and writing merely as an ecclesiastical historian, I may venture to throw out two ideas. First, may not the fragment be a portion of a Gnostic recension of the canonical Gospels issuing from Egypt? We know that the Marcionites dealt very freely with the text of the Gospels, and others may have taken similar liberties while as yet the reverence had not gathered round the Gospel text which now encircles it. This would account for the omission of the paschal psalm, which as an Old Testament rite would be distasteful to the Gnostic mind, and also of the promise to precede the disciples into Galilee, which would of course involve that literal resurrection of the flesh which Egyptian Gnosticism rejected. Fayûm may well have been a stronghold of such views. Dionysius of Alexandria,

according to Eusebius vii. 24, had to deal with a Judaizing movement in that neighbourhood about the year 260 A.D. It may have been that such a movement was provoked by the Gnostic or rationalistic teaching of men like Origen, Hieracas, and others like them, on the subject of the resurrection and the resurrection life. Hieracas held and taught, as Origen did before him, a view very similar to that of the early Quakers, "that the future resurrection would be of the soul only, not of the material body; for all who counted it a gain to the soul to be liberated by death from the bonds of matter found it hard to believe that it could be again imprisoned in a body at the resurrection" (*Dict. Christ. Biog.* t. iii., p. 24). This Gnostic view of the resurrection was very prevalent in Egypt all through the second and third centuries. It finds a prominent place in the *Ascensio Esaiæ*, a document apparently quoted in the eleventh of Hebrews, but which in its present shape was worked up in Egypt about the time of our fragment. Again, we have another suggestion to offer. May not the fragment be a quotation from the Gospel to the Hebrews, which we know was very current in Egypt in the second and third centuries, and is often quoted by orthodox and heretics alike, by Clement, Origen, and Dionysius, by the Marcionite Apelles and by the strange Gnostic writing *Pistis Sophia*? Those who are interested in this topic would do well to consult Dr. Salmon's tenth lecture, on St. Matthew and the Gospel to the Hebrews, where the subject is fully discussed (*Introd. to N.T.* p. 194).

G. T. S.

Trinity College, July 11th.
