

## The Origin and Character of our Gospels.

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### II.

#### ST. MARK AND ST. LUKE.

WHAT, then, can we infer about the origin of the Gospels from the Gospels themselves? We see at once, that of all the four Evangelists Luke alone speaks in the first person, and that only in the short prologue to Theophilus, which he prefixes to his Gospel. In the second portion of his work, the *Acts*, he repeats this, and, in addition, the first person plural occurs more frequently about personal experiences. Professor Harnack has lately proved in a striking manner that these so-called *We-passages* are in every respect similar in construction and origin to their context. It is to be hoped he will convince his party of this, for they have hitherto held a contrary opinion. Few others need convincing; for before the rise of the so-called 'critical' spirit hardly any one thought of doubting that both the Gospel and the Acts were written by the same Luke, that Luke who is mentioned in Paul's Epistles as his fellow-worker and physician (Col 4<sup>14</sup>, Philem 24, 2 Ti 4<sup>11</sup>). By the way, one can read in Harnack's first pages what all this 'criticism' is worth, how every critic is dependent on his teacher, and swears by him. It fills one with shame; yet at the same time it increases one's respect for the man who impartially and firmly does honour to the school of acknowledged truth. Harnack says: 'The history of the criticism of Acts is a sorrowful history.' We classical philologists can only congratulate ourselves with moderation in face of it, as we discover a pretty large number of analogous follies amongst ourselves. But amongst us they are better concealed by a mass of honourable achievements, and we on our wide fields have come back to reason much quicker than even Harnack. What, on the other hand, have Harnack's friends produced that can be looked upon as sure and reliable progress, overturning all previous opinions, in addition to what was known more than a hundred years ago? I speak of the *New Testament*; it may be different with the *Old*.

Now the first person is absent, as I said, entirely from all the Evangelists except Luke; and neither Mark nor Matthew gives us the faintest direct information about his literary motives. There is something of this kind in John, without the first person, but with application of the second person to his readers and hearers, to which I shall refer later. But Luke's preface is by far the most important passage for the origin of the Gospels; indeed, it is the only witness, so we must first consider it carefully. I will only mention casually its resemblance to those of other Greek books, especially with that happily noticed by P. de Lagarde, the *Materia Medica of Dioscorides*, a work that is nearly contemporary with that of Luke, and may have been known to him as a physician, especially as its author was from the same district. Yet the resemblance is not great enough to make the conclusion inevitable, that Luke imitated this very preface, and Lagarde is quite wrong here in holding the imitation to be erroneous and degenerate. Dioscorides begins, as doubtless countless writers before and after him have done: 'As others have written inadequately about this, I will write better about it.' Compare Luke: 'As others have written about these things, I will . . . do so also, as I have, accordingly, been informed about them.' Why should this be illogical? For Theophilus had not got these books, and if Luke was able to send him something more complete, was that not better than furnishing him with copies of the former ones?

What Luke exactly says is this: 'Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to set forth in order the declaration of the events that have taken place among us, (2) even as they delivered them to us, who from the beginning were eye-witnesses and ministers of the word, (3) it seemed good to me also, having had understanding of all these things from the first, to write diligently unto thee, in order, my good Theophilus, (4) that thou mightest know the certainty of those things wherein thou hast been instructed.' This is from Luther's translation;

it is right and good ; and this is the most classical paragraph in the whole New Testament. Here it is testified that Luke had many predecessors ; there may have been three, four, five, or more, we do not know. From these the eye-witnesses of the events and preachers of the Word, that is, the Apostles, are distinguished ; therefore amongst the Gospels that lay before Luke, there was not one that made claim to direct Apostolic authority ; so there was neither one by Matthew, nor one by John. On the other hand, there may have been one by Mark ; very likely there was, and I will speak of this later ; and the origin of the two other Gospels may, without prejudice to these words, be put immediately after the Lucan one, if there are any reasons for doing so.

But the words, 'to set forth in order the declaration of the events,' contain an error of translation, a very pardonable one, as the verb<sup>1</sup> used by Luke is proved to occur only in two other passages in the whole of Greek literature. One of these is in the Church father Irenæus, who wrote towards the end of the second century. 'Ezra,' he says, 'restored from memory the old prophetic writings that had perished in the burning of Jerusalem ;' this 'restored from memory,' or 'reproduced,' being there the clear meaning of the verb in question. The other passage is in the heathen Plutarch, in the writing about the intelligence of animals, and is somewhat amusing. Some one had educated a number of elephants to do all sorts of tricks. Among them was one slow of understanding, but very ambitious, who was observed by the attendant to go out at night of his own accord by moonlight, and 'reproduce' (the verb again) his lessons from memory, and practise himself in them. As it is natural to suppose that with Luke the same verb has the same meaning, so instead of 'set forth in order,' we must put 'set down from memory,' or 'restore from memory.' So the Gospel literature is from its very beginning a reproduction of the oral discourses of the Apostles, undertaken by those who had heard them. There were many of these ; so there may have been many records and books.

As for the phrase, 'from the beginning were eye-witnesses,' the point of departure is John's baptism of Christ, which was immediately followed by His activity in teaching and the calling of His disciples. This is plain from Ac 1<sup>22</sup>, where, when

<sup>1</sup> ἀναράσταται.

the appointment of a substitute for Judas is related, the condition is imposed for the candidate that he has been present the whole time, from the baptism of John until the ascension to heaven. We see from the Gospel of Mark that the Apostolic preaching began from this point, and it could begin no earlier, as the Apostles were appointed for the purpose of witnessing what they had seen and heard (Ac 1<sup>8</sup> 2<sup>32</sup> 3<sup>15</sup> 4<sup>20</sup> 5<sup>32</sup>), nothing else.

Again, in v.<sup>3</sup>, 'having had understanding of all these things from the first.' This is correctly translated ; only the 'diligently' seems to belong to this, and not to the word 'write.' 'From the first,' which in Greek, as in German, is not the same expression as that in v.<sup>2</sup>, must denote another period of time than 'from the beginning,' as we must explain it by what actually follows in Luke ; for, in reality, he goes back far beyond the birth of John, differing in this from Mark, and probably from all Gospel writings that preceded his.

'To write in order.' Does this mean 'in the correct order of time' ? The order of time, as we shall see presently, is not kept by Mark, and just as little by Luke, and I would not expect from Luke an indirect criticism of his predecessors, as he has certainly disdained to compare his work with that of others as something better, in the usual manner of such prefaces, and to seek credit for himself. Perhaps the word only means 'complete, without omission.'

'My good (guter) Theophilus' is wrong ; for the adjective denotes a man of rank, so it ought to be 'noble.' Who Theophilus was, no one knows ; probably we may look for him in Antioch, which tradition says was the home of Luke. He would be a Jew just as little as Luke was ; a Christian probably ; although 'wherein thou hast been instructed' does not quite prove this.

Now, if the oldest Gospels are (and this is the most important thing we have said) the fixture in writing of what had been orally related by the Apostles, the next questions are, *why* and *when* this took place ? So long as the Apostles, or some of them, were in Jerusalem, there was for Jerusalem and Judæa no necessity to fix in writing what had been heard ; or, at least, there were always persons whose duty it would be to do it when it ought to be done. But Luke speaks here plainly as a dweller in Judæa ; 'the events that have taken place among us,' and again, 'even as

they delivered them *to us* ; and it is evident that he is contrasting himself with Theophilus, who was not living in Judæa. From the words 'who *were* (not *are*) ministers of the word,' it follows also that the Apostles were no longer actually in Jerusalem. That they were altogether 'no more,' that is, that they were no longer alive, does not at all follow ; but if they had been still preaching in Jerusalem and Judæa, this would be expressed differently, and we should have 'deliver' instead of 'delivered.' Now we know that the Apostles did not remain constantly in Judæa ; but after they had proclaimed the Word in Jerusalem, and Judæa, and Samaria, they went further, 'to the ends of the earth,' according to the commission they had received (Ac 1<sup>8</sup>). And *Acts* gives a little information about the point of time. As Paul was in Jerusalem for the last time (Ac 21), that is, in A.D. 54, according to the old chronology, which appears to Harnack as well as to me the correct one, no Apostle was left there, but James the Lord's brother stood at the head of the congregation. It had been otherwise on the previous visit (Ac 15) in A.D. 47 ; then Peter had been there as well as James, and also John, according to Paul in Gal 2<sup>9</sup>. Therefore, between A.D. 47 and 54, Peter and John had left Jerusalem. And as the dispute between Paul and Peter, which is told in Gal 2<sup>11ff.</sup> in relation to that visit, must have followed soon after it, Peter must have gone away in A.D. 47 or 48. It must have been very soon after, for Paul set out on his second missionary journey in A.D. 48. But Peter surely did not pay a visit to Antioch, in order to return to Jerusalem. Antioch was a station on the way to the Euphrates valley, where an enormous number of Jews resided, to whom also the message must be brought. 'To the ends of the earth' had been said, not 'to the end of the Roman Empire' ; every one in Jerusalem knew that men, and especially Jews, lived beyond the Roman province of Syria.

Now Peter and Paul had agreed in Jerusalem (Gal 2<sup>9</sup>) that the former should preach to the Jews, and the latter to the Gentiles. The most absurd misuse has been made of this passage, first of all, through the addition of the negative opposite, which is not in the text : Peter to the Jews, and not to the Gentiles ; Paul to the Gentiles, and not to the Jews. Then when *Acts* relates that Paul, wherever he came, did what was sensible and

turned first to the Jews, this, according to these so-called critics, is a proof of the untrustworthiness of the book. I add an illustration : Paul finds in Corinth Aquila the Jew, who has already heard of the Christian doctrine, and has a leaning towards it, but wishes to hear something more explicit from Paul. 'I am sorry ; but as you are a Jew, you must resort to Peter ; I may convert Gentiles only.' 'And where is Peter ?' 'I am not exactly sure, perhaps in the neighbourhood of Babylon.' This sort of criticism condemns itself ; in truth, the agreement (not a binding legal contract) could have only one meaning : Paul should go to the West, to the Gentiles, and, of course, to the Jewish *Diaspora* among them ; but Peter to the East, where the Jews were thickly established, and at the same time to the heathen there. For the people in that quarter spoke Aramaic, which was Peter's mother-tongue ; those in the West, Jews and Gentiles, spoke Greek, like Paul himself. Therefore, too, the First Epistle of Peter is dated from Babylon ; that is, I am convinced, not in any way the Apocalyptic city, otherwise Rome, where Peter had nothing to seek, but the real Babylon on the Euphrates. The interpretation of it as Rome, with its corresponding tradition, is certainly old, but not old enough ; for the oldest witness, who can give evidence about it, Clement of Rome, in the book which he wrote about A.D. 96 to the Corinthian congregation, denies it completely. He speaks pretty fully of Peter and Paul, but only in regard to the latter does he mention his presence in the West and his martyrdom before the central Authority.

To return to our subject. If Peter left Jerusalem for good in A.D. 47 or 48, and the other Apostles at the same time or earlier, the need for written Gospels would immediately arise there in order to renew and fix for all time the oral proclamation. Therefore we may date the first written records for Judæa about A.D. 48 ; and for other districts probably yet earlier ; for the first missionaries, those, for example, who went to Antioch just after Stephen's death, being men with a Greek education, who converted Gentiles there in great numbers, without having themselves seen and heard the Christ (Ac 11<sup>19ff.</sup>), must surely have made or procured written records to strengthen their memories, as a great deal of writing went on at that time. Paul himself was certainly in possession of some kind of records. All these,

however, would be only Gospels in a nutshell, short and informal. But as the need had arisen for the congregation in Jerusalem, something more had to be done.

According to the indirect evidence of Acts something more *was* done immediately. As Apollos (his full name was Apollonios) came to Ephesus (Ac 18<sup>24</sup>), he was already a Christian, not only a very zealous, but also a well-instructed one, for he 'taught accurately' the things of Jesus; but he knew only the baptism of John, not Christian baptism; so he had not himself been baptized by Christian baptism. Now he came from Alexandria in Egypt; and according to one redaction of *Acts*, the more detailed one, which I call the Roman one, he had learned to know the Gospel in his home. Was it through a missionary? Ac 11<sup>19</sup> names, indeed, countries and towns to the north, to which the Evangelists travelled, Phœnicia, and Cyprus, and Antioch; but it is quite silent about Egypt. The chief point is that a missionary would have converted and baptized Apollos at the same time; so that, as the case stands, there is no other possibility except conversion by means of a book, that is, of a written Gospel, and certainly of one that mentioned the baptism of John, but did not mention Christian baptism. That is the case with Mark, and even with Luke, and it may have been the case with many others. The chief point is, that a copy of a tolerably complete Gospel, at least nearly as long as that of Mark, had come to Alexandria about A.D. 49. It *may* have actually been the Gospel of Mark.

In a fragment of Papias, whom we mentioned above, a fragment that is very good and reliable, which Eusebius has preserved, it is told on the authority of 'John the Elder,' from whom the author had personally heard it, that Mark had been Peter's interpreter, and had recorded what he had heard of his discourses accurately and conscientiously, only not in historical sequence, for Peter did not observe that, but related here and there without regard to sequence, so that Mark could not know anything about it. 'Peter's Interpreter.' Probably Peter was not quite master of Greek, and preached in Aramaic (for his letter he may have used the services of Silvanus, whom he mentions); if further hearers were wanted, then an interpreter would be required, as one is nowadays when Americans or English give lec-

tures in Germany. Now Mark the Jerusalemite, of a good and wealthy house (Ac 12<sup>12</sup>), was very suitable for the post, and Peter speaks of him as 'Marcus, my son' (1 P 5<sup>13</sup>).

But who is 'John the Elder'? Must we, like Eusebius, admit an Elder John besides the Apostle, both of whom lived at Ephesus? We greatly mistake Papias' mode of speech, if we oppose 'Elder' and 'Apostle' as different from one another; for he does not generally say 'Apostle,' but 'Elder' instead of it, 'one of the elders, Peter or Thomas, or James,' etc. With him this is not merely a general title of older and respected teachers; but when he goes on to say, 'It was important for me to hear what Aristion and John the Elder relate,' the title is denied to Aristion, which is given to John; and yet Aristion was an old disciple of the Lord, though not one of the Twelve Apostles; for the author puts 'the disciples of the Lord' to the names of both together. Now we can add to this, that John in his second and third letters designates himself by this very title instead of by his name, and it is to be found also in 1 P 5<sup>1</sup>. 'The elders who are among you I exhort, who am a fellow-elder.' According to this, Papias had been a personal disciple of the Apostle John, and Irenæus designates him as such, with the addition, 'a man from the old times of the Church, a friend of Polycarp.' The latter suffered martyrdom at Ephesus, probably A.D. 155, at the age of 86. He was born in 69, and Papias may have been a little older; so that it is not in the least improbable that, as a young man, he may have listened to John in the eighties. But if we admit that, then serious things follow, which do not suit some people; so there is an endless dispute about Papias and his sayings, and nothing can put an end to this dispute but the rediscovery of his writing. Along with it, as we see, a good deal of nonsense would be rediscovered; but on account of other things, such a discovery would be quite epoch-making, even if we found only a translation.

Let us return to Mark. In the year 48 he had not yet accompanied Peter to Babylon, although he was there at the time of the First Epistle of Peter, but had gone with his cousin Barnabas to Cyprus (Ac 15<sup>39</sup>), simultaneously with Paul's second missionary journey. He may quite easily have written the little Gospel beforehand, for he needed no further study to do so; its only source

being countless and oft-repeated discourses of Peter. No one was more capable of this task than he, the former interpreter. It is a late and not at all a credible tradition, that he wrote the book in Rome and for the Romans, although his temporary presence with Paul in Rome is very possible (Col 4<sup>10</sup>, Philem 24 [from Rome?], 2 Ti 4<sup>11</sup>).

In regard to Luke, his Gospel, if we interpret correctly, must have been written at a time when Luke belonged to the community of Judæa, and have gone out from there; for 'among us' and 'to us' demand this meaning. After Luke had come with Paul to Jerusalem (Ac 21<sup>15ff.</sup>, with 1st pers. plur.),—that is, in the year 54, and before he had embarked with him for Rome, in the year 56,—he had plenty of time and little to do, and there was nothing more natural for an educated man, who knew how to go about with his pen, than to remedy the very pressing need that had arisen, owing to the spread of the gospel over so many cities, for an easily accessible permanently written account about Jesus. For this was the centre of the new religion, as all the Epistles of Paul, etc., show; it was therefore impossible to continue to know nothing about what He had done and spoken, and about His entrance into the world and His exit from it, but what A. had heard and preserved from B., and B. from C. Therefore I believe, with all confidence, that Luke wrote his Gospel in these years.

There is another proof. The Book of Acts cannot be put elsewhere than at the time of Luke's sojourn in Rome, during Paul's first imprisonment, else why should it conclude at a point where all is in suspense, if more had really happened and Paul had been set at liberty? It has been alleged, to be sure, that Luke meant to write a third part to his work, about Paul's last fortunes, etc.; and attention is drawn to the fact that at the beginning of *Acts* we have 'the first treatise' and not 'the former.' But while it is true that classical Greek and Latin distinguish 'the former' when there are two, and 'the first' when there are several,<sup>1</sup> yet we know by this time that this distinction does not exist in New Testament Greek. A third part would hardly have corresponded to the first two in the importance of its contents; and, in fact, no third part was written.

<sup>1</sup> Πρώτερος, prior; πρώτος, primus.

The scope of Luke's Gospel is different from that of Mark and somewhat broader, especially when it is looked at in connexion with *Acts*. First, Luke had no personal recollections of Apostolic discourses; so he could give none, but only what he had got from strangers, whether what was already recorded, like Mark's Gospel, which it is generally agreed that he used, or what came to him orally, for there was no want of oral instruction in Jerusalem and Palestine. James, too, the Lord's brother, knew much, even though he had not believed till after the Resurrection. It may also have been possible to find here and there one of the Seventy in person, if not even one of the Twelve. But when Luke prefixes the first chapters, to which nothing in Mark corresponds, and when at the beginning of the third chapter he gives an exact date for the appearance of the Baptist, which had certainly never come into any discourse of an Apostle, he becomes in some degree a historian, and remains so throughout *Acts*. Indeed, what is related in the latter is, in the author's idea, likewise an account of the deeds of the exalted Lord; but whereas in the Gospel all refers directly to Him, this is not the case in *Acts*—not in the twenty-first chapter, about Paul's imprisonment, etc. We can understand that a man like Theophilus would have an interest in knowing not only what Christ had done on earth, but also how He, through His messengers, had founded His community; religious interest remains always the ruling one, and everything else is very secondary.

Harnack has found out another aim of Luke, namely, to extinguish Mark, which he has certainly not succeeded in doing. To be sure, he relates in *Acts* something to Mark's disadvantage—according to Harnack needlessly, therefore maliciously. This 'needlessly' is, however, only Harnack's opinion. Paul had made the first missionary journey with Barnabas; as he was preparing to undertake the second, principally with the object of encouraging the newly instituted communities (Ac 15<sup>36ff.</sup>), the comrades separate, chiefly on account of Mark, whom Barnabas wished to take, but Paul did not, because he had returned too soon the first time. So Barnabas travels with Mark to Cyprus, while Paul chooses Silas and goes with him to Lycaonia, etc. If this separation were not to be passed over, and it was a surprising one, the cause of it required to be told.

According to Harnack's method, Peter's denial

also must have been related by all the Evangelists out of malevolence towards Peter, for it could have been quite well suppressed; and also the foolish and haughty request of the mother of James and John, and of these two themselves, would be related by Matthew and Mark out of malevolence towards them; and whatever else any one may infer who does not know the spirit of Scripture.

But why do theologians so generally put Luke's Gospel much later—after the great year 70, when Jerusalem's fate came upon her? In reality, this great event comes into none of the Gospels, nor into any New Testament writing, as one that had already happened. It does come in as an event prophesied by Christ—not in John, nor in Paul, but in the three first Gospels. And yet many place Mark and Matthew before 70, who will not do so with Luke, although in Mk 13<sup>2</sup>, Mt 24<sup>2</sup> (Lk 21<sup>6</sup>), occurs the prophecy about the temple, that 'not one stone should remain on another.' That was the most terrible thing for the Jews—worse than the destruction of the city; and of course the temple could not be destroyed without the city, though the city might be destroyed without the temple, which Titus really wished to preserve. Those, therefore, who do not deny the prophecies altogether (as Harnack, to be sure, usually does, though he does not always carry the denial all the way), can find no grounds for a chronological argument in what Luke says in the Lord's prophetic address about the siege and capture of Jerusalem. The temple is not destroyed without the city, nor the city without a previous siege, and the subsequent slaughter or captivity of its inhabitants; all these features are common, none special, as the naming or marking of Titus would have been.

Those who make dates here presuppose that the author, namely, Luke, has falsified what he had received in accordance with subsequent events. I, for my part, would not credit Luke with the insolence of imputing to his Lord words which He

never uttered. One must not compare him with Socratists like Plato, who imputed much to Socrates. Socrates was not the subject of their gospel, but only its first herald; that makes an enormous difference. I believe that the Evangelists occasionally do not relate things that Christ said, for they surely could not report all (Jn 20<sup>30</sup>). For instance, what Christ says in Lk 19<sup>41st</sup>, when He first came in sight of Jerusalem, would have given great offence to the Jews, even to the Jewish Christians, when read publicly in the congregation, on account of its candour (for though the prophecy about the temple contains the same thing, it is only implied, not expressed). For that reason, I think, the Jews, Matthew and Mark, who were also writing for Jews, left out what the Gentile Luke, who was writing for Gentiles, had no scruple in relating. And yet, even the former give a hint of it, not only in the verse we have mentioned, but also by quoting a passage in Daniel with a certain summons to read it, where in connexion with the 'abomination of desolation,' the destruction of the city stands clearly out, even that it will take place through 'the people of a prince' (Mt 24<sup>15</sup>, Mk 13<sup>14</sup>, Dn 9<sup>26th</sup>).

With regard to prophecies in general, I drew attention ten years ago to the fact that Hieronymus Savonarola in Florence, in A.D. 1496, foretold with great exactitude the capture and plundering of Rome, which happened in 1527, and this can be verified from his sermons printed in 1497, even with particulars like this, that the churches should be used as stables for horses. Yet that is supposed to be different from Luke's speaking of the armies, and the siege, and the captivity, etc., and of an event which even a politician could foresee (cf. Jn 11<sup>48</sup>), and which had happened previously under Nebuchadrezzar; whereas the taking of Rome by the mercenary hordes of the Constable de Bourbon was beyond any one's reckoning, and nothing like it happened before or has happened since.

(To be concluded.)