

THE FOUR GOSPELS

A STUDY OF ORIGINS

TREATING OF
THE MANUSCRIPT TRADITION,
SOURCES, AUTHORSHIP, & DATES

BY

BURNETT HILLMAN STREETER

READER IN CHRISTIAN ORIGINS IN THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD
FELLOW OF THE QUEEN'S COLLEGE, OXFORD ; CANON OF HEREFORD
FELLOW OF THE BRITISH ACADEMY
HON. D.D. EDIN. ; HON. D.D. DURHAM

FOURTH IMPRESSION, REVISED

MACMILLAN AND CO., LIMITED
ST. MARTIN'S STREET, LONDON

1930

COPYRIGHT

First Edition 1924

Second Impression 1926

Third Impression 1927

Fourth Impression, Revised, 1930

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN
BY R. & R. CLARK, LIMITED, EDINBURGH

In Memoriam

GULIELMI SANDAY, S.T.P.

**INSIGNISSIMI APUD OXONIENSES
HORUM STUDIORUM FAUTORIS**

The inquiry of truth, which is the love-making or wooing of it; the knowledge of truth, which is the presence of it; and the belief in truth, which is the enjoying of it—is the sovereign good of human nature.

BACON.

Quis nescit primam esse historiae legem ne quid falsi dicere audeat, deinde ne quid veri non audeat.

CICERO.

Men disparage not Antiquity, who prudently exalt new Enquiries.

SIR THOMAS BROWNE.

PREFACE TO FOURTH IMPRESSION

FRESH discoveries, and the kindness of friends in pointing out errors, have necessitated numerous alterations—so numerous that, had not many of them been already made in the second and third impressions, this might not improperly have been styled a Revised Edition. The alterations, however, are all concerned with points of detail; on no large question do I wish to withdraw from, or substantially qualify, any position taken up when the book was first published in 1924. On the contrary, subsequent research has in important respects tended to substantiate the views then put forward.

In the field of textual criticism the basis of evidence for the importance and antiquity of the text underlying the Koridethi MS. Θ and its allies has been notably widened; and my identification of it as the text current in the third century at Caesarea has been confirmed. (1) In 1926 I myself discovered, in time to add an Appendix to the second impression of this work, that for Mark v. 31-xvi. 8 the Washington MS. W (approximately dated A.D. 400) belongs to this family of MSS. (2) The provisional hypothesis (cf. p. 90 f.) that the Old Georgian version was based on a Greek text of this type has since been verified by the joint labours of K. Lake, R. P. Blake and S. New, published in an enlarged number of the *Harvard Theological Review*, Oct. 1928. They also make out a strong case for the view that this same text lay behind the oldest Armenian version. (3) Finally, the researches of these scholars not only confirm my discovery that Origen used this text—shortly, though not immediately, after he

reached Caesarea in A.D. 231—but have also proved that it was the text of Eusebius, the historian bishop of that Church.

Recent German scholarship has been concerned to investigate the history of separate incidents and sayings in the Gospels *before* they were brought together into the written documents Mark and Q. It is the fundamental assumption of this *Formgeschichtliche* school¹ that each incident (and most sayings) had its own history—having at one time circulated *by itself* in oral tradition. This school marks an extreme reaction from the position of men like Oscar Holtzman thirty years ago, who believed that in the Gospel of Mark there can be traced a definite evolution not only in the historical situation but also in the mind of Christ Himself. In protest against the Holtzman attitude I wrote, in 1910, in the *Oxford Studies in the Synoptic Problem*, “Mark is a collection of vignettes—scenes from the life of the Master. . . . The traces of a development which have been noticed . . . show that the author has some knowledge of the correct order of events, but far too much has been made of this. In the last resort Mark is a series of roughly-arranged sketches or reminiscences exactly as Papias describes it.” In this matter the pendulum of German scholarship has by now, I venture to think, swung too far—in the direction towards which I was myself at that time looking. To the extent, however, that scholars of the *Formgeschichtliche* school have substantiated their contention that stories and sayings must have circulated separately in oral tradition, and also that the exigences of practical teaching must have early created a demand for accounts of the Passion and Resurrection, they have considerably strengthened the case for the views put forward in this volume in the chapters entitled “A Four-Document Hypothesis” and “Proto-Luke.” When stories or sayings circulate in oral tradition, it is inevitable that they should be current in more than one version. Where, therefore, Matthew and Luke give *widely divergent* versions of the same item—*e.g.* of the Beatitudes,

¹ Important work along this line has also been done in the United States, *e.g.* by H. S. Cadbury, *The Making of Luke-Acts* (Macmillan, 1927), and B. S. Easton, *The Gospel before the Gospels* (Scribner, 1928).

the Lord's Prayer, the Parable of the Lost Sheep—it is unscientific to explain this divergence on the theory of manipulation by the respective editors of the common written source Q; it is far more likely to be due to the currency of divergent traditions. The same thing applies whenever the account of an incident given by Luke exhibits really striking differences from the version found in Mark, as for example in the Call of Peter, the Rejection at Nazareth, the Anointing, and the Passion narrative.

I take the opportunity of this reprint to call attention to certain phenomena, of which the significance had previously escaped me, but which I now see constitute an additional argument for the theory of a Proto-Luke.¹

In oral tradition it is very easy for details which properly belong to one story to get connected with another. In the passages I am about to quote, it will be noticed that the Lucan account combines details from events which in Mark are quite separate in a way most naturally explicable on this hypothesis. They are not equally explicable as arbitrary recombinations by Luke of material in Mark; for there is no obvious motive for the rearrangement, as there is for the bringing together by Matthew (and to a less extent by Luke) of sayings of Christ which deal with the same topics.

¹ My attention has been called to the fact that a hypothesis very similar to what I have called "Proto-Luke" was put forward as long ago as 1912 by Mr. E. R. Buckley in his *Introduction to the Synoptic Problem* (Arnold). I recollect reading the book at the time and telling in my lecture that I thought it an excellent book but mistaken on this point. When several years later a re-reading of one of Sir John Hawkins' Essays set me thinking out the problem afresh, I quite forgot Mr. Buckley's theory. It may well be that an unconscious recollection of his theory contributed something to the direction of the investigations I then began; had the recollection been conscious, I should have been proud to acknowledge my debt to such an acute and original student of the subject. The theory has by now met with considerable acceptance from scholars and has been notably defended by Dr. Vincent Taylor in his *Behind the Third Gospel* (Clarendon Press, 1926). I may mention here that the "Four-Document Hypothesis" has been applied in further detail to the Sermon on the Mount by Prof. A. Pinchere of Rome in *Ricerche Religiose*, March 1926. My suggestion (p. 525 f.) as to the date of the acceptance at Rome of the Gospel of Matthew is supported by Prof. B. W. Bacon in *Harvard Theological Review*, April 1929.

(1) Luke's account of the Call of Peter (v. 1 ff., cf. Mk. i. 16 ff.) embodies the incident of Christ teaching from a boat, which in Mark (iv. 1) is the occasion of the Parable of the Sower, and which Luke omits when he reproduces that parable at the same point as in Mark's narrative. It also includes an account of a miraculous draught of fishes, similar to that in John xxi., along with a protest by Peter, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man." This protest would gain much in force if we suppose that the story in which it occurs was originally told as an event subsequent to Peter's denial of his Master, and is, in fact, another version of the "second call of Peter" appropriately connected in John xxi. with a post-Resurrection Appearance. I argue below (cf. p. 355 f.) that John xxi. is based on a tradition substantially identical with that embodied in the lost endings of the Gospel of Mark and of the Apocryphal Gospel of Peter.

(2) In Luke's version of the Anointing (vii. 36 ff., cf. Mk. xiv. 3 ff.) there is included a pronouncement by our Lord of forgiveness, which evokes from His opponents the protest, "Who is this that forgives sins?" which Mark connects with the healing of the paralytic (Mk. ii. 5 ff.). There is also included—though this is less significant—the saying which occurs elsewhere in Mark: "Thy faith hath saved thee, go in peace" (in Mk. v. 34 addressed to the woman with an issue of blood)—though the Greek word used for "go" is not the same. The words, "Go, thy faith hath saved," occur also (addressed to Bartimaeus), Mk. x. 52.

(3) Luke's account of the Great Commandment (x. 25 ff.) would seem to be derived from a tradition independent of Mark xii. 28 ff., in that the formulation of the summary, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God . . . and thy neighbour as thyself," is made by the lawyer and approved by Christ, not *vice versa*. The point, however, to which I would call attention is that it is introduced not, as in Mark, by the question, "What commandment is the first of all?" but by the question, "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?" which occurs in Mark, but in connection with a different incident (cf. Mk. x. 17).

(4) Luke's account of the Last Supper—if, with WH, we accept the shorter text in Lk. xxii. 19-20—reflects a tradition (found also in the *Didache*) which reverses the order of the Bread and the Cup. The saying in Lk. xxii. 15-16 implies that the Last Supper was not the Passover, in which case it derives from a tradition which supports John against Mark in regard to the date of the Passion. Obviously, then, Luke got this incident (wholly, or in part) from a source other than Mark. Luke also appends to his account of the Last Supper a saying (about the Kings of the Gentiles and the greater acting as servant) which in substance corresponds to the reply given by Christ in Mark's story of the ambitious request of James and John (x. 42 ff.)—an incident which Luke omits. Where actual sayings of Christ are concerned, Luke usually reproduces fairly closely the wording of Mark; hence, the verbal differences being here very great, it is more probable that his version in this case comes from another source than that it is a rewriting of that in Mark.

In each of the four passages discussed above the combination of fragments from different incidents is of a kind more likely to have originated in oral tradition rather than in editorial ingenuity on the part of Luke—the more so because Luke in general avoids conflation even when it is the obvious thing to do. Thus, whenever Mark and Q give parallel versions of the same item, Matthew conflates the versions; Luke hardly ever does so (cf. p. 186 f.). In the first three passages discussed above Luke gives the story in a context far removed from that of the parallel in Mark (the fourth, the Last Supper, could only stand at one point in the story); he does the same thing with the three other considerable items of which he gives a version notably different from that of Mark, viz. the Rejection at Nazareth, the Beelzebub Controversy and the Parable of the Mustard-seed. As regards the last two we have positive evidence that the version which Luke gives is *not* obtained by a free editing of Mark; for comparison with the parallels in Matthew (cf. p. 246 f.) enables us to see that what he gives is the version which stood in Q. This evidence creates a

presumption that in other cases, where Luke's version differs strikingly from Mark's and also occurs in a context remote from Mark's, he is not rewriting Mark but drawing from another source. Moreover, the most reasonable explanation of his desertion of Mark's order (to which elsewhere he closely adheres) is that he reproduces these items in the order and context in which they stood in the source in which he found them.

This preference of the non-Markan to the Marcan context is found both where the item is traceable to Q and where it is peculiar to himself; again, this preference would be unnatural unless the source from which he drew was a substantial document comparable to Mark in scale and importance. Thus it would seem probable that the Q material and the material peculiar to Luke (or most of it) lay before the author of the Gospel already combined into a single document.

Luke gives an account of the Resurrection which places the Appearances in Jerusalem, and therefore cannot have been derived from the lost end of Mark, which seems to have placed them in Galilee; we have already seen that he had an account of the Last Supper other and different from that in Mark. The presumption is strong, then, that the deviation from Mark in his account of the intervening events—which include no less than twelve changes of order¹—is due to the influence of an account of the Passion in the same source as that used for the Last Supper and the Resurrection. In this part of his Gospel Marcan and non-Markan elements are inextricably blended, and the departures from the Marcan order would be explained if he were conflating a non-Markan account with that of Mark; usually he avoids conflation, but in this case it would have been impossible to keep the two strands apart. Of course, Luke may have found the account of the Last Supper, Passion and Resurrection in one source, and the bulk of his other non-Markan material in another; no one can deny this possibility. Nevertheless, Luke's general preference of his non-Markan source, both as regards context and

¹ Cf. *Oxford Studies in the Synoptic Problem*, p. 81 ff.

version, as well as the considerable omissions which he makes from Mark, are more readily explicable if all (or practically all) of his non-Markan material stood in a single work, which in that case would be so substantial that he would naturally regard it as an authority of equal or greater value than Mark.

It has been objected by certain scholars that Proto-Luke would be an "amorphous" document, not sufficiently like what we call a "Gospel" to be conceivable as a work having an independent existence. The objection overlooks the fact that the Jews were not in the habit of writing the biographies of Prophets or Rabbis; they preserved sayings and parables, interspersed with a few incidents, with the smallest attempt at systematic arrangement. "Amorphous" would be a most appropriate adjective to describe the book of Jeremiah (the Prophet about whom we have most information) or the traditions about the Jewish Rabbis which were written down some little time after the Christian Era. Again, the document Q—the oldest written account of our Lord that criticism can isolate—seems, so far as we can reconstruct it, to have been quite amorphous. The *Formgeschichtliche* school point to the evidence in 1 Corinthians (xi. 23 ff., xv. 3 ff.) that, at least in Gentile churches, primitive Christian teaching included a summary account of the events from the Lord's Supper to the Resurrection Appearances; and they argue that the exigencies of missionary teaching must soon have called into existence more detailed stories of this series of events. We should expect, then, that the first addition made to Q would have been an account of the Passion. That this expansion of Q would have been accompanied by the addition of other sayings and parables, interspersed with a few interesting stories from floating tradition, is antecedently probable. Such a document is the Proto-Luke which remains if we deduct from our third Gospel the Infancy narratives and the material derived from Mark. What the historian has to explain, in a community of Jewish origin, is not the existence of amorphous collections—which was the normal thing—but the emergence of a non-amorphous bio-

graphy like Mark. This, I suggest (p. 496), was due to the demand of the Gentile world, especially at Rome with its interest in biography. The document Proto-Luke is not yet a Gospel in the biographical sense; but being, as it is, a kind of half-way house between Q and Mark, it is the natural intermediate stage in the evolution of the biographical type of Gospel; it represents a groping after, and is the next step towards, the satisfaction of this Gentile demand which was more clearly perceived and first adequately met by Mark.

Luke gets the greater part of his narrative material from Mark and he is writing a biography more or less according to Greco-Roman models; he is, therefore, bound to some extent to adopt the Marcan framework of events; but he does this in a way which suggests that Proto-Luke was *the document with which he started*, and which he preferred to Mark where they differed. For that reason I have styled Proto-Luke his "primary," Mark his "secondary" source. Luke's preference was, I imagine, mainly due to the relative poverty of Mark, and the incomparable richness of Proto-Luke, in regard to the teaching of our Lord. In the early church the biographical interest is subordinated to the didactic. This clearly holds good of Matthew, and is the natural explanation of his complete disregard of the order of events for the first half of Mark; his drastic rearrangement of events is evidently determined by the desire to reach as soon as he possibly can the great block of teaching collected in the Sermon on the Mount. This desertion of Mark's order suggests that even the editor of our first Gospel regarded as in a sense "primary" his non-Marcan material (most of it perhaps being already combined into a single document); and if, as is probable, the name of Matthew was attached to this, so did the Christian community which named the Gospel after this source.

The only weighty objection to the Proto-Luke theory that I have come across arises from the fact that, where Mark and Luke give widely divergent accounts of the same item, the Marcan version usually looks decidedly the more primitive. The fact I

concede; but not the inference that the Lucan version is a literary manipulation of the Marcan, nor yet that it is later in date. If the Gospels were (as I have argued) written by the persons to whom tradition assigns them, Mark had more opportunities of hearing the story first-hand than had Luke.¹ Mark's mother resided in Jerusalem (Acts xii. 12); Luke had been there less than a fortnight (Acts xxi. 17-xxiii. 31). Mark had a special connection with Peter; there is no reason to believe that Luke had ever met him. Mark's account, then, of an event like the Call of Peter ought to be superior to Luke's, even if Luke had written his down long before Mark conceived the idea of composing a Gospel. Stories which pass from mouth to mouth rapidly change their form; but the change is due, not to the lapse of time as such, but to the number of intermediaries through whom the tale has been transmitted. The superiority of Mark's version is to be attributed, not to the date at which he wrote—which was more than thirty years after the event—but to the fact that so much of his story comes from persons who had first-hand knowledge of the facts.

B. H. STREETER

Feb. 14, 1930.

THE QUEEN'S COLLEGE,
OXFORD.

¹ For some new arguments for the Lucan authorship of the Acts cf. *New Solutions of New-Testament Problems*, E. J. Goodspeed (Chicago, 1927). There are mediaeval analogies to the "we" sections in the Acts (pointed out to me by Mr. A. S. L. Farquharson) in *Gesta Henrici Quinti*, 1416, and the *Record of Bluemantle Pursuivant*, 1471-2. Cf. *English Historical Literature*, by C. L. Kingsford, p. 47 f. and p. 381. In both cases the author drops naturally into the first person in describing events of which he himself was an eye-witness.