

ART. IV.—ST. LUKE'S GOSPEL AND MODERN
CRITICISM—II.

I AM now going to examine a quantity of other fresh detail which St. Luke has contributed to the Gospel story. My conviction is that his source is often shown to be oral. That he had opportunity of consulting first witnesses in Judæa in A.D. 58-60, and at Rome before Peter's death in A.D. 64, is quite probable. But the troubled state of Palestine, and the dispersal and deaths of first witnesses, rendered such historical research impracticable between the years A.D. 70-80, even if Luke himself still survived. For those who admit some connection with first witnesses, but think with Dr. Ramsay that Luke, having long ago accumulated his facts, yet delayed till A.D. 80 publishing them in a Gospel, I shall also point out that hopeless difficulties arise if we suppose Luke to have written at a time when Matthew's and Mark's Gospels were in general circulation.

To clear the way, let us see what dates the critics who postdate Luke's Gospel assign to the other two Synoptics. In the case of Matthew they find a *terminus ad quem* in his great judgment discourse (Matt. xxiv.). It is not my purpose to discuss the passage; but it appears that the critics agree that the writer could not have witnessed the fall of Jerusalem, because Matt. xxiv. 29, 31 apparently makes the fearful signs of the final consummation occur "immediately" after that event. Therefore this Gospel is not made later than A.D. 70.¹ Mark's Gospel is for various reasons set somewhat earlier, *circa* A.D. 69-70 (few admirers of German criticism following Weizsäcker's absurd inference from Mark iv. 29 that he wrote after the fall of Jerusalem). I am convinced that these dates for Matthew and Mark are some seven years too late, and that both Gospels fall within the period A.D. 60-65, but let us assume their accuracy for present purposes.

I proceed to the question, Who and what were the sources of the third Gospel? Let the book tell its own story. St. Luke, after a preface in which he claims both to have learnt from those who "from the beginning were eye-witnesses and ministers of the word," and to have "traced all things in order from the first," introduces us forthwith to a number of Jewish persons otherwise quite unknown—Zacharias, Elizabeth, Simeon, Anna, the Shepherds of Bethlehem. He records their sayings and doings in two chapters marked by Hebrew idioms, and contrasting strikingly with the purer Greek of his own preface. Hymns are given which are obviously translations of Hebrew

¹ See Hastings' Dictionary, *s.v.* "Gospel": "Matthew."

originals. A genealogy follows in iii. 23-38 which must have come from written Palestinian sources. But more than this, in relation to the two births which are his subject, he gives details which only the Blessed Virgin could have communicated, and which we gather had not been freely published in writing. He relates not only the Divine Generation of Jesus, and such details of the most private character in regard to Elizabeth and Mary as we have in i. 34, 41, 44, but the growth of Jesus in wisdom and stature, and with the comment, "Mary kept all these things in her heart," the one authentic story of His boyhood. The obvious inference here is that he had access not only to Aramaic documents, but, as Dr. Ramsay sees, to the oral information of Mary herself.¹ There is no reason why such privileges should not have been attainable by Luke during those full two years in Palestine, A.D. 58-60. How either of them could have been attained after the effacement of Jerusalem and the dispersal of the Apostles, including John (who had provided a home for St. Mary as long as she lived), it is hard to imagine. There is no good tradition on the subject of the later life of Mary. What early legends there are certainly point to a general belief that she did not survive the destruction of Jerusalem.

But if we now pass *per saltum* from these opening chapters to the close of Luke's story it seems to me we are compelled to carry our inference yet further. Luke gives us such peculiar details in regard to the Cross and Passion as the Saviour's speech to the weeping daughters of Jerusalem, the story of the penitent malefactor, the words "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Few besides St. Mary and St. John could have given testimony at all for these details of the Crucifixion story; and remembering that Luke in i. 2 professes to have information both from those who had been "eye-witnesses" and those who were "ministers of the word," we are at once reminded that if he ever met St. Mary he could hardly have failed to meet St. John too. Now, there is absolutely no reason why both should not have been accessible to Luke in A.D. 58-60. And it is an undeniable

¹ Dr. Ramsay ("Was Christ born at Bethlehem?") well says: "This account must have been either a part of a complete life of Christ . . . or an independent narrative, ranking with the authority of origin from Mary, and describing just so much as she was best able to tell. The existence of such an independent narrative, and the utter oblivion into which it fell, if it ever existed, seem alike most improbable" (p. 82). "It therefore seems unlikely that the first two chapters of Luke depend on an older written narrative. The quality in them is too simple and natural, they give too much of the nature of Mary expressed with the art of Luke, to have passed through the mind of an intermediate writer" (p. 85).

fact that often where Luke is independent of the "common source" he introduces John's name, or confirms some statement of the fourth Gospel. I will not press as instances Luke's knowledge of our Lord's repeated appeals to Jerusalem (xiii. 34; perhaps, too, iv. 4), or of the Resurrection appearance to the assembled Christians in xxiv. 36-43 (*cf.* John xx. 19-23). These may well have been matters generally known. But when we find Luke records the "running" of Peter to the Saviour's tomb, and his "stooping and looking in" and seeing the "linen cloths by themselves" (xxiv. 12; *cf.* also 24), we are at once reminded of a story told in similar phraseology, but in fuller detail, by St. John. When we find Luke recording, as John does, the petty detail that it was the "right" ear of the High-Priest's servant that was cut off on the occasion of Christ's apprehension, there is another indication of Luke's source. And when we find this Gospel alone relating a story to the disparagement of St. John—how the sons of Zebedee petitioned for the destruction by fire of the churlish Samaritan villagers, and sustained a rebuke—the evidence goes further still. Other instances could be given, but the crowning proof (if Luke xxii. 43, 44¹ be an integral part of the Gospel) is Luke's peculiar description of our Lord's night of agony before His Crucifixion. It is in some respects a defective story when compared with that of Matt.-Mk.² On the other hand, it contributes two new incidents—the appearance of the angel, and the sweat of blood. Now, only two persons could have been primary recorders of that scene after the beheading of St. James. It can scarcely be doubted that the version of Matt.-Mk., with its special allusions to Peter, came primarily from that Apostle's lips. Nor can one suppose that Peter, whatever his contributions to this Gospel, supplied Luke with this very variant form of the story of the "Agony." There remain only two alternatives—either that Luke has embellished a most solemn scene with worthless romance, or that his authority was, primarily at least, St. John who, more wakeful than Peter, could attest the incidents Luke here supplies. I do not believe that even in A.D. 80 such embellishments were readily tolerated. That John gave his authority to a now lost document containing his version of

¹ This passage is omitted in several early MSS., but its absence is accounted for in the age of Arianism. Doubtless the explanation is that controversialists, more orthodox than scrupulous, expunged it as likely to weaken belief in our Lord's perfect Divinity and superiority to angels. Certainly no Arian or Nestorian would gain much by inventing such incidents.

² I use this abbreviation where the two first Gospels tell practically the same story.

the story seems most improbable. Therefore I claim the passage as a proof that Luke had here the oral testimony of the first witness, John. But, again, how are we to bring the Evangelist in contact with that Apostle, save on the assumption that he met him in those years, A.D. 58-60. It is easy, of course, to extend Luke's life and Luke's travels indefinitely, and imagine he visited Asia Minor, and encountered St. John in A.D. 70-80. But as a fact there is at least as much reason to believe that Luke himself did not survive the martyrdom of Paul in A.D. 68.¹ And no one unprejudiced with those theories about "post-dated prophecy," which I have already mentioned in my first paper, would doubt which is the more reasonable hypothesis for bringing Luke in contact with the evidence of St. John.

But Luke's claim to have learnt from first witnesses may have had yet fuller authorization. Besides the reasonable assumption that other Apostles were still at Jerusalem in A.D. 58-60, there is fair evidence, as Dr. Chase shows, that Peter was at Rome from the winter of A.D. 61 to his martyrdom in A.D. 64.² If so, the Christians at Rome were necessarily in constant intercourse, and it would be strange indeed if a man, designing to write a Gospel, did not avail himself of the presence at Rome of another eye-witness and minister. It may well be that Luke had not so much opportunity of learning from Peter as had Mark, for Peter's contributions to the second Gospel are, I think, undeniable, though, of course, not sufficient to justify us in calling that Gospel "Petrine Memoirs"³ with Mr. A. Wright. But I think, in that "suspected" account of the Miraculous Draught of Fishes and a few other passages, possible indebtedness may be conjectured on Luke's part too to Peter.

Here, first, is another episode to which only Peter and John could give testimony. In the Transfiguration story Luke

¹ Appendix, Note A.

² Hastings' Dictionary, *s.v.* "Peter."

³ Papias, Clement, and Irenæus are mutually contradictory as to the character of Peter's connection with the second Gospel. But the most significant passages are those (Eusebius, "Hist. Eccles.," ii. 15, vi. 14) which indicate that Mark had already written before Peter was apprised of his design. It is most unlikely that this account of the matter should be a later conjecture. On the other hand a loose connection with Peter would naturally be exaggerated. Peter's ignorance of Greek and need of Mark as a Greek "interpreter" is so constantly assumed nowadays that I may remind the reader that we have an "undisputed" Epistle of Peter in almost classical Greek, not in the least suggestive of the second Gospel. Yet at the time of writing Mark was with Peter. Did Peter in his old age learn to write better Greek than his own dragoman? Papias mentions his own *ἐρμηνείαι*. And *ἐρμηνευτής* in Papias and Irenæus may after all mean no more than "interpretes" in Jerome's "habebat ergo [Paulus] Titum interpretem."

strikingly qualifies the ideas we should have had we only the record of Matt.-Mk. I cannot pretend to say which Apostle is here Luke's informant, but his narrative here ought, in any case, to be a serious crux to the critics who make him write his Gospel in A.D. 80. Two Gospels had, on their assumption, given an identical account of a sublime vision vouchsafed to three favoured Apostles. Is it likely that, when Peter was a revered martyr and John the most venerated living Apostle, a man with no credentials but an ancient association with St. Paul, and the possession of some now lost document, should venture to introduce into the story the modifications we find in this third Gospel? For Luke gives us details which, if not discreditable to the Apostles, are certainly very far from enhancing the dignity of the scene, as presented in Matt.-Mk. He tells us that Jesus had ascended the mountain "to pray," and that the Apostles, on this occasion of high privilege, had simply fallen asleep. The whole scene is, in fact, elucidated for us by this presumed late Gospel, for we usually gather from it that the Transfiguration took place at night. It suggests possibly the inference that Peter spoke, not as a man entranced with the glories he witnessed, but simply as one half awake, and therefore "not knowing what he said," when he proposed to make three tabernacles for Moses, Elias, and the Lord. Sceptics would obviously be tempted to go further still and say that the whole transaction was but a dream. Surely this is a strange sort of embellishment for the Gentile Christian to introduce into the "Petrine Memoirs." Indeed, I wonder that our "higher" critics do not make bold to "suspect" it as a replica of that other occasion of privilege just mentioned, when the Apostles were bidden to "watch and pray," and were found, as Luke tells us, "sleeping for sorrow."

The possibility of associating Luke with Peter is more distinctly suggested in that remarkable passage (xxii. 31-33), where the Apostle is specially warned that "Satan should sift him as wheat," told that his Master had "prayed for him," and urged "when he has turned again to strengthen his brethren." This passage seems to mark again the dividing-line between the two schools of criticism. If the words are authentic, the rational account of them is that Luke received them from an Apostle, and possibly from Peter himself. If they are merely a free embellishment of the familiar prediction of Peter's threefold denial (which prediction Luke also gives), then the Evangelist will, by most plain persons, be held disqualified to write a Gospel at all. It is interesting to note that it is only Luke who names Peter and John as the two disciples who were sent into Jerusalem to prepare the Paschal meal.

Probably, however, Luke's authority here is not Peter, but, as in the story of the Passion, John. On the other hand, in xii. 41, we may perhaps conjecture that Peter is the source of information. The case here is this: Matthew gives in a later context the charge to "watch as against a thief," and continues without break with the Parable of the Faithful and Unfaithful Stewards. Luke, besides giving the discourse a different occasion, interpolates between these two parables a somewhat obscure question on Peter's part, "Lord, speakest Thou this parable to us or to all?" Bearing in mind how frequently Matthew has ranged our Lord's discourses by subject, not occasion, we may perhaps claim that Luke's setting is the right one. But certainly that obscure question could not in any case have been invented by St. Luke. Where did he learn of it? How was he able to interpolate it so curiously between two sayings which Matthew is assumed to have recorded ten years earlier in a different context? The obvious answer is that Matthew and Luke are quite independent works, and that Luke records these matters with some help supplied by a first hearer, and perhaps by Peter himself.

I shall hereafter show how this minute interpolation of detail is observable all through Luke's Gospel. The impression it conveys is not that of an author who merely transcribes various documents now lost, but of one who has consulted living witnesses, and, as Luke states, tried to trace the course of all things accurately.

There appears, then, to be good reason for associating Luke's story with St. Mary and St. John, and some reason for thinking he had also the testimony of St. Peter. If we assume him to have also the written accounts of our Lord's Galilæan ministry, which are termed the "common Synoptic source," and which he may well have procured in Palestine in 58-60, we shall probably not find much more occasion to multiply "documents" in the case of a writer who has living testimony. St. Luke, is thus found in A.D. 62 completely equipped for the story he has given us. He has also a quantity of other precious material gathered in his travels with St. Paul, which is to be worked into the story of the Acts. What possible inducement could a man have in those dangerous days for delaying the publication of matter of such value in the form of a book, of which transcripts might be easily made? Horace, it is true, has given the advice in the matter of publication *nonumque prematur in annum*. But that was in the case of juvenile poetical effusions, not records of speeches, and accounts of historical events of supreme importance. Dr. Ramsay's assumption, however, is that Luke now makes a halt of not nine, but twice nine years, and that,

too with a third¹ volume in his mind—one on the doings of Peter and Paul till their deaths at Rome.

In view of this assumption, let us recall that admission of the critics that the Gospels of Matthew and Mark had been written as early as A.D. 70. It is certain that within half the time between the dates A.D. 70 and A.D. 80 both Gospels must have been widely circulated. The Churches were in constant intercommunication. It is inconceivable that a man proposing, in A.D. 80, to publish a complete life of Christ, should not have known that men of high authority had long ago anticipated his design. It is certain that any laborious student, even if he had not for many years been working in the same field, would have procured, as soon as possible, MSS. of these Gospels, if only to insure the success of his own book. Whether in such a case a man, known chiefly as a fellow-traveller of Paul many years back, would not have been held guilty of some presumption in traversing at all that ten-years-old Gospel with the Apostolic name Matthew, and what the critics call the "Petrine memoirs" of Mark, I will not stay to determine. But, at all events, any careful historian would have used these authoritative Gospels to supplement deficiencies in his own knowledge, and to correct his own inaccuracies in detail. That Luke did not do this is, I think, apparent; and therefore I am convinced that all this post-dating of Luke is a quite gratuitous hypothesis, which would never have been broached but for the modern view that Christ's predictions in Luke xix., xxi., must necessarily be prophecies after the event. Take, for instance, the different order of Christ's three Temptations in Matthew and in Luke. Few dispute that it is Matthew, the Apostle and hearer of Christ, who here presents to us the true sequence. Is it probable that Luke would boldly traverse a testimony of such sort, in so private a matter, without a note or comment? Take the markedly conflicting accounts of the death of Judas in Matt. xxvii. and in Acts i. Probably, as Dr. Ramsay suggests, Luke here has incorporated matter which is not strictly accurate. But, however we decide the point, it seems quite certain that even when the Evangelist came to edit the Acts; he had never read the account of Matthew. Take, again, the variations in Luke's account of the institution of the Eucharist, which I shall notice hereafter. However we account for them, it seems impossible that in such a matter Luke, in A.D. 80, could have thus modified the common language of two authoritative Gospels. Or take the familiar Parable of the Sower. We observe that in Luke our Lord's

¹ See Appendix, Note A.

application has lost the striking detail of varying degrees of fruitfulness: "Thirtyfold and sixtyfold and a hundredfold" (Mark iv. 8; cf. Matt. xiii. 8). Would not any perusal of Matthew or Mark have indicated the defect? Luke alone has recorded the story of the penitent on his cross; but he had not learnt what the offence of him and his colleague was. For him they are merely "malefactors." Acquaintance with Matt.-Mk. would have informed him that they were "robbers." Certain topographical peculiarities of Luke lead us to the same conclusion. In A.D. 80, when Matthew and Mark¹ were current Gospels of some standing, Luke, despite his large nautical experiences, would have deferred to the Christian nomenclature, "Sea of Galilee" or "Sea of Tiberias." Along with Josephus, but alone of the Evangelists, he calls this water "Lake of Gennesareth." The scene of our Lord's agony would probably, too, have been designated at least as a "garden," not loosely as "the Mount of Olives." Long before A.D. 80 he might have identified his "certain village" where Mary and Martha dwelt, with the Bethany which he himself elsewhere mentions. In all these cases Luke appears to have retained the facts which he gathered in Palestine, without very close attention to the names. These are just the defects which a long delay between compiling and publication should have enabled Luke to correct, in view of the constant intercourse between the Christians of Judæa and Rome. They are quite unintelligible in the case of a man who for many years might have had access not only to numerous Palestinian Christians, but also to accounts speaking with some degree of Apostolic authority. In this matter, indeed, Luke's very excellencies point to the same conclusion as his defects. There is much indefiniteness of arrangement in this Gospel. Yet both in his genealogy and in his setting of many discourses, Luke has recovered order and sequence where Matthew's arrangement is on an arbitrary plan. But the greater precision of our Evangelist would hardly assert itself in A.D. 80 against a Gospel familiarly associated for ten years with the name of Matthew without some mention of the writer's own authorities. That Luke never mentions these is a proof that, although many narrations of the *Gesta Christi* were afield, nothing had yet appeared which could be said to be full accounts, with Apostolic sanction.

While the subject of defects is on my pen I will notice one which seems to confirm my view of the date of publication

¹ On Luke's supposed knowledge of the second Gospel see Appendix, Note B.

both in Luke's case and that of the other two Synoptics. Many readers of these Gospels must have noticed a very singular omission in their story in the matter of Peter's assault on the High-Priest's servant, when our Lord was apprehended. All three are defective in one very important item, the name of the assailant. For all of them it is not "Peter" who draws the sword, but only "one of them that were with Jesus," or "a certain one of them." And this though Luke knows, as St. John does, that minute detail that it was the "right" ear of the man that was cut off. Now, can it be doubted that it was pretty well known in Christian circles who the one Apostle was who took up arms in the Master's cause? Can we suppose that the affair was really left in obscurity till John wrote down in his Gospel the names "Simon Peter" and "Malchus"? The obvious explanation is that this silence of the Synoptics is deliberate. As long as Peter lived, the acknowledgment of that action of his in a Christian publication might well be used by any enemies of the Church to bring him into trouble. After his death in A.D. 64, however, men's lips would be unsealed, and anyone writing the story might openly name Peter as the assailing Apostle and Malchus as his victim. This is just what John does, and from xxi. 19 we gather that this Evangelist certainly wrote after Peter's death. But by this reasoning we reach the conclusion that all three Synoptics wrote, not after, but before it, and therefore that Luke wrote, not in A.D. 80, but before A.D. 64.

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APPENDIX.

NOTE A.—It is conjectured by many of the critics who assign a late date to this Gospel that Luke had also in hand a third volume on the careers of Peter and Paul after the date A.D. 63, with which Acts closes. Use is made in this connection of the obscure passage in the second century "Muratorian fragment" in reference to Luke. It runs thus: "Sicuti et semote passionem Petri evidenter declarat et profectionem Pauli in Spaniam profiscentis." It is possible that this passage does really point to an early tradition that Luke intended to add to the Acts the story of Peter's martyrdom and Paul's renewed journeys. But this would not necessitate a "third book." Further, if the reference really is to things that Luke might have told, it is surely significant that the *passio Pauli* is not among them, Paul's travels being for the writer the terminus of Luke's imaginary supplement. In fact, the passage (if worth anything) points to a belief that Luke was not able to tell of Paul's martyrdom, presumably because he did not live to witness it. There is not much improbability in this, despite Luke's presence with St. Paul at the time of his writing his last surviving letters (*cf.* 2 Tim. iv. 11; Col. iv. 14; Philem. 24). It is perhaps a fair conjecture, in view of the abrupt close of Acts and certain indications of incomplete editing, that Luke's intention was to carry on his story, that he had material for the

incidents mentioned above, and that his intention was intercepted by death. In that case Acts becomes (as far as the evidence of the fragment goes) a posthumous publication, dating A.D. 68. But that Luke should have *three* works on hand of such immense importance all through the twelve years A.D. 68-80, having, moreover, as Dr. Ramsay admits, got material for the first two as far back as A.D. 58, appears to me improbable in the extreme, and to make the Evangelist outdo Coleridge himself in dilatoriness. Were the times so smooth for the Church that the publication of priceless records could be thus confidently delayed? In connection with this imaginary "third" book of Luke, I notice that Dr. Ramsay insists on Luke's use of *πρῶτον* ("first") instead of *πρότερον* ("former") in Acts i. 1, as if it implies a latent knowledge on the part of "Theophilus" that a third book was in contemplation. Yet *πρῶτος* for the "first of two," or "former," not only occurs repeatedly in the Revelation, but also in Heb. viii. 7, ix. 1, 15, where the former "covenant," and "tabernacle" are contrasted with their successors. And if there is any book which should serve as a gauge for Luke's Greek, it is Hebrews. So closely does it resemble Luke's writings in diction that F. Delitzsch was led by the similarity to a belief that Luke, rather than Paul or Apollos, was its author. The adjective *πρότερος* only occurs once in New Testament Greek (Eph. iv. 22, in regard to "the former manner of life").

NOTE B.—It would really be sufficient for my argument to show that Luke could not have read the Gospel of Matthew. I notice here, however, that the old hypothesis as to Luke's knowledge of Mark's Gospel is almost as certainly untenable, though endorsed in Dean Armitage Robinson's useful little "Study of the Gospels." The more I study the Synoptic problem, the more convinced I am that it was not Mark, but the "common source," which Luke had in his hands. Let the student, with the help of a synopticon, compare, besides the passages cited in my paper, the parallels *in re* Peter's denials, the Crucifixion story, and the visits to the tomb. The first and last of these seem almost conclusively to prove that Luke had not read about these two subjects either in Mark or in the common source. If Luke has read Mark, we shall find him in the one case changing "a maid" into "a man," in the other "a young man sitting on the right side arrayed in a white robe" into "two men stood by them in dazzling apparel." That Luke's version of both incidents is broadly confirmed by the supplementary fourth Gospel (*cf.* John xviii. 25, xx. 11) of course attests Luke's connection with St. John, as advocated in my paper. But the question from the other point of view is, How could a man in Luke's position so boldly traverse Mark's ("Petrine") account without note or comment in the matter of Peter's own denials? Luke's variations in the Crucifixion story are the more striking when we compare Matthew with Mark, for in their presentation of the scene, however we account for it, "the latter is," as Dr. Salmon says, "constantly one of simple copying." It may be worth noticing that the section Luke xx.-xxiv. is unusually full of Lucan phraseology; I find 110 instances. This fact perhaps indicates oral testimony here as Luke's source, rather than the "non-Markan documents" which Dean Armitage Robinson postulates.

