

even in the holy place ; such impenitent hardihood, that it strove to befool and silence the voice of God among them—these were the sins of the time. And this stern shepherd from the south was the man chosen of God to denounce them and foreshow His certain judgments upon them. No fitter instrument could have been found ; the disease needed a desperate remedy, if any remedy now availed ; these corrupt members must be hewed by the prophets, if any part of the body was to be saved. And to the soft livers in the northern capital the wild, tragic shepherd from the wilderness must have been as wonderful and disquieting as they were odious to him. In the language of Amaziah, the land was not able to bear all his words.

A. B. DAVIDSON.

### A PROBLEM IN CRITICISM.

PAPIAS records that he took no pleasure in “those who related the commandments of others, but in those who reported the commandments given by the Lord to the faithful and derived from the truth itself” (*οὐ τοῖς τὰς ἀλλοτρίας ἐντολὰς μνημονεύουσιν ἀλλὰ τοῖς τὰς παρὰ τοῦ κυρίου τῇ πίστει δεδομένας καὶ ἀπ’ αὐτῆς παραγενομένας τῆς ἀληθείας*). In this Papias, despite the traditional smallness of his intelligence, exhibited a soundness of judgment, which the theology of the future will do well to imitate, for, although the loftiest science and the most advanced thought must always acknowledge the real existence of the unseen and spiritual by the side of the seen and material, of that which is the object of faith by the side of that which is the object of reason, still it is certain that, where statements concerning the spiritual world are made on evidence which can be investigated by reason, that

evidence will be keenly scrutinised, and its exact value must therefore be carefully considered by those who ground their statements upon it. Now assuredly the only indisputably certain authority for the Christian religion must be looked for in the records of the words and works of Christ Himself. From this point of view therefore an inquiry into the history and origin of the Gospels becomes of primary interest, and, without entering on disputable questions, it may at any rate be fairly assumed that an examination into the origin of the Synoptic Gospels is the first problem with which criticism has to deal.

The problem, it is well known, is immensely complex ; but its immense importance is equally clear. In England, however, it has apparently never excited more than a languid interest, and, where it has not been dismissed with an easy sneer at the discordant views which have been arrived at by foreign students, it has been considered sufficient to explain the startling similarities and the startling divergences of the three Gospels by referring to an "oral tradition," which at the time of their composition was partly already crystallized into a definite shape and partly still fluid and amorphous, and by pointing out that the similarities are chiefly found in the reported *sayings* of Christ, which would naturally be preserved with special care, whereas the divergences chiefly occur in the *narrative* portions, where variation in the tradition would more naturally exist.

Thus stated generally this explanation is extremely plausible : when tested however by reference to particular passages, it appears less satisfactory. One such passage I propose to examine, which, if my views are correct, cannot be explained on the hypothesis of a purely oral tradition. The problem thus limited admits of much easier examination, without however losing any of its interest : if, in a single instance, it can be shown that a common *written*

document underlies the text of the three Evangelists, then amid the quicksands of controversy we obtain at any rate one solid point of rock as a foundation for future work of enduring stability. That the view which I take of the passage, which I propose to consider, is certainly right, I do not assert; but I unhesitatingly hold that the point raised is of crucial importance and therefore deserving of the attention of scholars.

The passage itself is this, the text used being that of Westcott and Hort :

“Όταν δὲ ἴδῃτε τὸ βδέλυγμα τῆς ἐρημώσεως ἐστηκότα ὅπου οὐ δεῖ, ὁ ἀναγινώσκων νοείτω, τότε οἱ ἐν τῇ Ἰουδαίᾳ φευγέτωσαν εἰς τὰ ὄρη.—Mark xiii. 14.

“Όταν οὖν ἴδῃτε τὸ βδέλυγμα τῆς ἐρημώσεως τὸ ῥηθὲν διὰ Δανιὴλ τοῦ προφήτου ἐστὸς ἐν τόπῳ ἁγίῳ, ὁ ἀναγινώσκων νοείτω, τότε οἱ ἐν τῇ Ἰουδαίᾳ φευγέτωσαν εἰς τὰ ὄρη.—Matt. xxiv. 15, 16.

“Όταν δὲ ἴδῃτε κυκλομένην ὑπὸ στρατοπέδων Ἱερουσαλήμ, τότε γινώτε ὅτι ἤγγικεν ἡ ἐρήμωσις αὐτῆς. τότε οἱ ἐν τῇ Ἰουδαίᾳ φευγέτωσαν εἰς τὰ ὄρη.—Luke xxi. 20, 21.

It is plain here that, whatever were the *ipsissima verba* of Christ, it is the same utterance which is being reproduced by the three Evangelists, for, apart from the unity of the context in which the passage occurs, the opening words, ὅταν ἴδῃτε, and the concluding words, τότε . . . ὄρη, are identical in all three. Further, it is plain with regard to this utterance, of which we have thus a triple record, that the central portion exhibits very great similarity in Mark and Matthew and very great divergence in Luke.

Now, in examining this triple record, the principle so commonly used in criticism, that whatever is hard to explain is more likely to be original than what is easy, may undoubtedly be applied; and the words of Mark and Matthew may be accepted as more original than those of Luke, for it is impossible to understand how the very clear and simple language of Luke could, if original, have been altered into

the extremely obscure language of Mark and Matthew. The central portion therefore of Luke may be considered as an explanatory paraphrase, given by him of certain words in the original authority employed by him, which he knew would be unintelligible to his readers. That he did however possess the original tradition in the same form with Mark and Matthew is fairly deducible from his use of the word *ἐρημώσεως*, and perhaps from his curious use of *γνώτε* compared with *ὁ ἀναγινώσκων νοεῖτω*.<sup>1</sup>

The problem is thus narrowed to a consideration of the central portion as presented by Mark and Matthew. The words which have to be examined are these :

Τὸ βδέλυγμα τῆς ἐρημώσεως ἐστηκεν ὅπου οὐ δεῖ, ὁ ἀναγινώσκων νοεῖτω (MARK).

Τὸ βδέλυγμα τῆς ἐρημώσεως τὸ ῥηθὲν διὰ Δανιὴλ τοῦ προφήτου, ἐστὸς ἐν τόπῳ ἁγίῳ, ὁ ἀναγινώσκων νοεῖτω (MATTHEW).

Now in these words, the first point which strikes the mind is the great strangeness and difficulty of the phrase τὸ βδ. . . . δεῖ in Mark. Bearing in mind the great accuracy (*ἀκριβῶς ἔγραψεν, Papias*) which Mark exhibits throughout his Gospel, and the law of preferring the more difficult, there is certainly a *prima facie* case for supposing that Mark here more closely represents the original authority, and this view is remarkably strengthened by the peculiar character of the additional words, τὸ ῥηθὲν διὰ Δανιὴλ τοῦ προφήτου, found in Matthew; for the definite reference to prophecy is especially characteristic of Matthew, and the particular form of expression, διὰ Δ. τοῦ προφήτου is only found in his of the three Gospels. It seems reasonable therefore to infer that the words τὸ ῥηθὲν

<sup>1</sup> It may be noted in passing, that we have here a very valuable indication of Luke's method of dealing with his materials; and that, although his explanation is clearly *ex post facto*, and must have been written after the siege of Jerusalem, yet this very fact also clearly suggests the inference that the text of Mark and Matthew is antecedent to that event—an inference of the highest value.

διὰ Δ. τοῦ προφ. are an addition made by Matthew to the original, and that in conformity with them he has preferred, instead of the obscure *ἔπου οὐ δεῖ*, to write *ἐν τόπῳ ἁγίῳ*; for the passage or passages in Daniel (ix. 27, xii. 11), to which he distinctly refers his readers, though extremely ambiguous in other respects, do at any rate connect "the abomination of desolation" with sacrifice and offerings, and so with a "holy place," probably the Temple.

Let us proceed then on the supposition that Mark here most closely represents the original tradition. And, although we call this a supposition, let it be remembered that it approximates very closely to a certainty; for the language of the three writers, partly divergent and partly identical, does present a problem of which some solution must exist; and in seeking for that solution it is absolutely necessary to regard the words of one of the three as more closely representing the words actually spoken than those of the other two. The choice must be made, and, whereas the argument which gives the preference to Mark only involves assumptions which are reasonable and in accordance with the ordinary laws of criticism, on the other hand, any argument used to support the greater closeness to the original of either Matthew or Luke is at once confronted with the insoluble problem of accounting for the development of Mark's striking and difficult words from an original so comparatively simple as the words of Matthew, or so absolutely simple as those of Luke.

Now in the passage as given in Mark, after the obscurity of the words *τὸ βδ. . . δεῖ*, the second point which strikes the attention is the very remarkable and unique parenthesis, *ὁ ἀναγινώσκων νοεῖτω*, and it is this parenthesis which we are now at last fairly in a position to consider. In the first place, it is certain that *ἀναγινώσκω* means "to read," "to peruse a written document" (cf. Eph. iii. 4, *καθὼς προέγραψα ἐν ὀλίγῳ, πρὸς ὃ δύνασθε ἀναγινω-*

σκοντες νοῆσαι τὴν σύνεσίν μου; Acts viii. 30, Ἄρα γε γινώσκεις ἃ ἀναγινώσκεις), and that the parenthesis is an instruction or warning to the person reading the words which precede to endeavour to form a definite mental conception of their meaning. It is clear, in the second place, that in Mark, if these words are assumed to form part of our Lord's utterance, there is no mention whatever of any written document to which they can naturally refer. In Matthew it might perhaps be urged that the reference to Daniel makes the use of ἀναγινώσκων by Christ Himself just possible, though even there such an appeal to the *reader* of what was *spoken* by Daniel would be very strange, and the introduction of such a remarkable parenthesis into our Lord's words is extremely harsh and unnatural (see Weiss in Meyer's *Kommentar*, *ad loc.*). In Mark however it seems quite impossible to believe that our Lord, after using the words "abomination of desolation," should, without in any way referring to them as forming part of a written document or "scripture," insert a parenthesis urging any one who *read* them to endeavour to understand them. Such an appeal to "readers" is moreover quite opposed to the continual and invariable appeal to "hearers" in our Lord's discourses; and further, the appeal, if made by Christ, is made in a form the direct reverse of what would naturally be expected: appeals, injunctions, warnings, are usually directly personal in form, yet in this case we must assume that Christ turns aside from the four disciples, whom He is addressing privately (*κατ' ἰδίαν*), and whom He addresses throughout as "you," and suddenly inserts words of general warning addressed to "any one that readeth."<sup>1</sup> Such a supposition is inconceivable.

We are now left face to face with these words as forming a parenthesis inserted by some one into our Lord's words,

<sup>1</sup> The use of the article is well known, cf. ὁ βουλόμενος, ὁ ἐπιών, etc.

and found so inserted in exactly the same place in both Mark and Matthew. Of this phenomenon there are only five possible explanations: (1) that each writer inserted the parenthesis independently, *proprio motu*; (2) that the words are a gloss; (3) that Mark borrowed from Matthew; (4) that Matthew borrowed from Mark; (5) that Mark and Matthew both employed a common document. The first is the view of Bengel; but, if correct, the coincidence is so astounding as probably to be unique in literature. The second is suggested by Alford, but rests on no shadow of evidence. The third may be dismissed unhesitatingly, and the fourth with almost equal confidence, for reasons which are well known and may be found in Alford's Introduction to his *Commentary on the Gospels*. The fifth solution is one which presents no reasonable difficulty, and would, in dealing with any other than biblical writings, be, I believe, at once accepted.

It is well known that the early Christians attached, and rightly attached, a pre-eminent importance to the utterances of our Lord (*λογία κυριακά*); and it is, to say the least, highly probable that these utterances were at a very early period committed to writing. It is at any rate certain that, when Luke's Gospel was written, there already existed many "narratives" (*διηγήσεις*) "drawn up in order," which recorded the words and works of our Lord, which Luke regards as similar in character to his own Gospel (*ἔδοξε καὶ ἐμοί*), and which can hardly have been other than written. There being therefore no antecedent improbability, but rather considerable probability, in the very early existence of written documents embodying, to various extents and doubtless in somewhat diverging forms, the oral tradition of our Lord's discourses, what right or reason have we to look with suspicion on the evidence which the text of the three Evangelists here affords of the existence of a document containing the present passage, and which was

employed by them all in writing their Gospels? Surely, on the contrary, to be brought face to face with a document which existed before any of the Gospels is something of surpassing interest and importance. Every step which brings us closer to the central figure of Christianity is an immense gain. It cannot be ours to hear the living voice of Him who "spake as never man spake"; but, amid much that is perplexing and obscure, there is, if we will but see it with our eyes, much that—like the present passage—we may rightly and reasonably accept as presenting us with a record of the actual words of Christ, as they were accepted and recorded by His followers at a time when those followers were still taught by His own immediate disciples, and when therefore the accepted tradition may fairly be considered accurate and authentic.

THOMAS ETHELBERG PAGE.

## THE EPISTLE TO PHILEMON.

### V.

"For perhaps he was therefore parted from thee for a season, that thou shouldest have him for ever; no longer as a servant, but more than a servant, a brother beloved, specially to me, but how much rather to thee, both in the flesh and in the Lord. If then thou countest me a partner, receive him as myself. But if he hath wronged thee at all, or oweth thee aught, put that to mine account; I Paul write it with mine own hand, I will repay it: that I say not unto thee how that thou owest to me even thine own self besides."—PHILEM. 15-19 (Rev. Ver.).

THE first words of these verses are connected with the preceding by the "for" at the beginning; that is to say, the thought that possibly the Divine purpose in permitting the flight of Onesimus was his restoration, in eternal and holy relationship, to Philemon was Paul's reason for not carrying out his wish to keep Onesimus as his own attendant and helper. "I did not decide, though I very much