

ST. MARK IN EARLY TRADITION.

1. ONE of the oldest and most trustworthy of Christian traditions attributes to Mark, St. Peter's "son," a collection of memoirs of St. Peter's teaching, which was identified with the canonical Gospel *Karà Mârkov*. In its earliest form the story comes from the Churches of Asia Minor, but it is confirmed by the witness of the Church of Rome and the Church of Alexandria.

The Asiatic tradition describes Mark as St. Peter's "interpreter."¹ The word is ambiguous; the *ἐρμηνεύς* or *ἐρμηνευτής* (*interpreter*) may be either the expositor who brings to light the veiled meaning of his master's words,² or the translator who renders them into another tongue. But the literal sense prevails in later and Biblical Greek,³ and it suits the manner of Papias and agrees with his context. As Link has recently shewn,⁴ the phrase *ἐρμηνευτής Πέτρου γενόμενος* points to an office which Mark had fulfilled at a time previous to the writing of the Memoirs. He had once been Peter's interpreter or dragoman, and Papias mentions the circumstance in order to shew that he was qualified to report accurately the teaching which he had not only heard, but had at the time translated from Aramaic into Greek.⁵ That St. Peter had employed

¹ Papias *ap. Eus., H.E., iii. 39.*

² *E.g., Eur. fragm., σωπή δ' ἄπορος ἐρμηνεύς λόγων. Plat. Ion, 534 E, οἱ δὲ ποιηταὶ οὐδὲν ἄλλ' ἢ ἐρμηνεύς θεῶν.*

³ *Cf. e.g., Gen. xlii. 23, 1 Cor. xiv. 28.* The word is used in this sense by Herodotus (ii. 125), and reappears in Xenophon (*Anab. i. 2, 7*).

⁴ *Th. Studien u. Kritiken, 1896, 3.*

⁵ Bishop Lightfoot indeed (*Clement, ii., p. 494*) thought that "when Mark is called *ἐρμηνευτής*, 'the interpreter' of St. Peter, the reference must be to the Latin, not to the Greek language," his reason being that "Greek was spoken commonly in the towns bordering on the Sea of Galilee, and that Peter must therefore have been well acquainted with it." But the colloquial use of a secondary language does not ensure ability to employ it in public speaking. Moreover, it is doubtful whether Latin would have been easily understood by a Roman audience of the class addressed by St. Peter. That the Gospel which Mark intended for use at Rome was written in Greek admits of no doubt,

an interpreter in his intercourse with Western Churches seems to have been a recognised fact. Basilides claimed that he had received instruction in the faith from one Glaucias, who shared with Mark the distinction of being employed in this service.¹

John the Elder, whose witness Papias gives, had formed a clear estimate of the character and value of Mark's work. It was not, he said, an orderly treatise, for St. Peter's teaching made no pretensions to method, being intended merely to satisfy the requirements of his catechumens (*πρὸς τὰς χρείας ἐποιοῖτο τὰς διδασκαλίας*); nor did it profess to be an exhaustive account of all that the Apostle said (*ἔνια γράψας, ὡς ἀπεμνημόνευσεν*); its one aim was to record faithfully all that the interpreter had heard or could recall, and this purpose was conscientiously fulfilled. In other words Mark limited himself to the task of simply putting together his recollections of St. Peter's reminiscences, resisting the temptation to work them up into a literary form. The result was a careful report, but not an historical treatise² (*οὐ μέντοι τάξει . . . οὐχ ὥσπερ σύνταξιν τῶν κυριακῶν ποιούμενος λόγων*).³ Whether in compiling his materials the editor followed any chronological order or permitted himself to interpose an occasional explanatory note, the Elder does not say; but his words do not seem to exclude either of these suppositions.

though the subscriptions of the Peshitto and Harclean Syriac versions seem to infer from its place of origin that it was a Latin work.

¹ Clem. Alex., *Strom.*, vii, 17, Γλαυκίαν . . . τὸν Πέτρον ἐρμηνεῖα.

² *Τάξει* must be explained, I think, by *σύνταξιν*, and *σύνταξις* implies artificial arrangement and literary skill, rather than chronological order; e.g., the writer of 2 Macc. comforts himself with the reflexion (xv. 39) : τὸ τῆς κατασκευῆς τοῦ λόγου τέρπει τὰς ἀκοὰς τῶν ἐντυγχάνοντων τῇ συντάξει. St. Mark's work, if it is nearly identical with the Second Gospel, was certainly not a *σύνταξις* in this sense; its perfectly unartificial manner distinguishes it from the treatises of those writers of the first generation who, according to St. Luke, *ἐπεχείρησαν ἀνατάξασθαι διήγησιν*, and in less degree from St. Luke's own work, which was written, as he says, *καθεξῆς*, i.e., in systematic order.

³ The clause *οὐχ . . . λόγων* seems to refer to Peter; but the Interpreter's plan would follow that of the Apostle's discourses.

Irenæus was too intimately connected with the Asiatic tradition, and too deeply indebted to Papias in particular, to rank as a wholly independent witness. When he calls Mark "the disciple (or follower) and interpreter of Peter,"¹ who committed to writing the substance of Peter's preaching, it is reasonable to suppose that he is simply reproducing the Elder's testimony. But when he adds that the Memoirs were written after the decease of Peter and Paul (*μετὰ δὲ τὴν τούτων ἔξοδον*),² he is probably on the track of another tradition learnt at Rome. Unhappily the only piece of evidence which comes from Rome direct has suffered mutilation. The first line of the Muratorian fragment is the last of the writer's account of St. Mark. But enough remains to shew what must have been the purport of his remarks. The Evangelist, not having been a personal follower of the Lord, depended upon St. Peter's recollections; some of these had not been given in his presence, but others he had heard and recorded. How far this Roman writer is indebted to Papias is uncertain; the words "[ali]quibus tamen interfuit, et ita posuit," suggest a reference to Papias's *οὕτως ἔνια γράψας ὡς ἀπεμνημόνευσεν*.³ That the Roman traditions were in harmony with the Asiatic may be gathered also from Tertullian's words:⁴ "licet et Marcus quod edidit Petri affirmetur cuius interpret Marcus." The cautious tone of this remark seems to exclude any direct knowledge on the part of the Carthaginian

¹ Iren. *Haer.* iii. 1, 1; 10, 6.

² For this use of *ἔξοδος*, cf. Luke ix. 31; 2 Pet. i. 15; Jos. *Ant.* iv. 8, 2 (*ἐπ' ἔξοδον τοῦ ξῆν*). Victor, however, understands Irenæus to mean that Mark wrote *μετὰ τὴν τοῦ κατὰ Μαθαῖον εὐαγγελίου ἔκδοσιν*, i. e., he seems to have read *μετὰ δὲ τὴν τοῦτου ἔκδοσιν*.

³ Comp. Th. Zahn, *Gesch. des NTlichen Kanons*, ii. p. 18. Lightfoot, *Supernatural Rel.*, p. 206, observes: "Probably, if the notice of St. Mark had not been mutilated, the coincidence would have been found to be still greater." On the other hand, it is quite possible that the lost lines contained fresh matter derived from local knowledge.

⁴ *Adv. Marc.* iv. 5.

writer of Papias's appeal to the Elder; if Carthage believed St. Mark's Gospel to be substantially the work of St. Peter, it was because she had inherited this conviction from the mother Church of Rome.

Alexandria appears to have had an independent tradition upon the subject. In the lost *Hypotyposes*¹ Clement gave an account of the origin of the Second Gospel, which, if not inconsistent with the Elder's statement, places the action of Mark in a new light. Mark, he said, was desired by the Roman hearers of St. Peter's discourses to commit the substance to writing. They pleaded that he had enjoyed peculiar opportunities of knowing what St. Peter taught, since he had long been a personal follower of the Apostle (*ὡς ἀκολουθήσαντα αὐτῷ πόρρωθεν*). Mark assented, and wrote his Gospel; and St. Peter, when the matter came to his knowledge, was at no pains either to prohibit or to forward the work (*προτρεπτικῶς μήτε κωλύσαι μήτε προτρέψασθαι*).² Clement (or perhaps Eusebius who has preserved his words) attributed this story to "the elders of olden time" (*παράδοσιν τῶν ἀνέκαθεν πρεσβυτέρων*), *i.e.*, probably to his predecessors at Alexandria, Pantænus, and others. But in the form which it assumes in Clement, it can hardly be as early as the statement of the Elder John; *ποιεῖν εὐαγγέλιον* is a phrase which savours of the second century rather than the first. Moreover, the tale of St. Peter's hearers besieging his interpreter with petitions for a written record of the Apostle's teaching is suspiciously like the account of the origin of St. John's Gospel which follows it; whilst the attitude ascribed to St. Peter in reference to Mark's undertaking is hard to reconcile with the statement of Irenæus, that St. Peter was already dead when the Gospel was

¹ *Ap. Eus. H.E. vi. 14.*

² Eusebius (*H.E. ii. 15*) has quite another version of this part of the story: *γρόντα δὲ τὸ πραχθὲν φασὶ τὸν ἀπόστολον . . . ἡσθῆναι τῇ τῶν ἀνδρῶν προθυμίᾳ κυρῶσαι τε τὴν γραφὴν.* Cf. Jerome *De Viris Ill. 8.*

published. On the whole it is perhaps unsafe to attach much importance to the details of the Alexandrian story. But its evident independence strengthens the belief that the work of Mark was substantially a report of St. Peter's teaching. On this point Alexandria was at one with Rome and Asia Minor, and these traditions form a threefold cord which is not easily to be broken.

The identification of Mark's Memoirs with the Second Gospel is common to all the early witnesses except the first. John the Elder knew the work simply as a *corpus* of Petrine reminiscences, and the description which he gives, clear and discriminating as it is, does not compel us to regard it as one with the book which a later generation inscribed *κατὰ Μάρκον*. But when Justin¹ quotes words which occur only (so far as we know) in the Gospel according to St. Mark, and adds that they are "written in Peter's Memoirs," it is difficult to resist the impression that he recognises the Second Gospel as the work of Peter's interpreter. In Irenæus the identification is complete;² and if due weight be given to the unique opportunities which Irenæus enjoyed of making himself acquainted with the facts of the case, it is incredible that he should have been deceived in this matter. The book had in his day taken its place in the *τετράμορφον εὐαγγέλιον*, just because it was known to be the work in which the preaching of Peter had been faithfully recorded by his disciple and interpreter.

Later forms of the tradition exaggerate St. Peter's part in the production of the Gospel. Even Origen³ seems to represent the Apostle as having personally controlled the

¹ *Dial.* 106.

² See, e.g., *Iren. Haer.* iii. 10, 6. Irenæus cites Mark i. 1 ff., 24; v. 31, 41, 43; viii. 31, 38; ix. 23, 44; x. 38; xiii. 32; xvi. 19. Thus the whole Gospel, including its present beginning and ending, was known to him as the work of the interpreter of Peter.

³ *Ap. Eus. H.E.* vi. 25 (cf. Jerome, *Ad Hedib.* 2). For a more intelligent estimate of St. Peter's influence over the Second Gospel see the interesting remarks of Eusebius in *Dem. Ev.* iii. 5.

work (ὡς Πέτρος ὑφηγήσατο αὐτῷ), and a more liberal use of the imagination enables the authors of the subscriptions which are appended to the Gospel in certain cursive MSS. to attribute it to Peter as its true author.¹ But these extravagances serve only to set off by contrast the reasonableness of the original story as we find it in the testimony of John the Elder.

It is noteworthy that, with the fewest exceptions, early writers connect St. Mark the Evangelist with St. Peter rather than with St. Paul. The single reference in 1 Peter v. 13 seems to have thrown into the shade the entire history of John Mark's connexion with St. Paul which is to be found in the Acts and Pauline Epistles. From Irenæus downwards, Mark is the disciple of St. Peter. It is rare indeed to find his name coupled with St. Paul's in a similar way. Hippolytus once mentions them together in a passage which will come before us presently;² in the Apostolical Constitutions³ St. Matthew is represented as saying: "Let the deacon or presbyter read the Gospels which I, Matthew, and John delivered to you, and those which were received and left to you by Luke and Mark, the fellow labourers of Paul." The writer has been influenced by the Western order of the Gospels, in which Apostolic authors took precedence of the disciples of Apostles; but in connecting St. Mark's Gospel as well as St. Luke's with St. Paul, he stands, so far as I know, alone.

2. A tradition which, if less early, was scarcely less widely spread, credits St. Mark with the foundation of the Alexandrian Church. Eusebius, it is true, speaks with some reserve: ⁴ "They say (φασίν) that Mark was the first

¹ Codd. 293, q^{scr.}, r^{scr.}.

² Hipp. *Haer.* ii. 57. The collocation seems, however, to be due to a strange blunder on the part of Hippolytus, who thinks of Marcion's Gospel as a mutilated Mark, and thus transfers to Mark St. Luke's connexion with St. Paul; see Duncker's note, *ad loc.*

³ ii. 57.

⁴ *H.E.* ii. 16.

who preached the gospel in Egypt, and established churches at Alexandria." Certainly he had cause to hesitate if he associated this tradition with the anachronism which represented St. Mark as first Bishop of Alexandria, who was succeeded by Annianus in the eighth year of Nero.¹ Jerome improves upon Eusebius by assuming that the eighth year of Nero was the date of St. Mark's death.² A less improbable statement in the second book of the Apostolical Constitutions³ makes Annianus the first Bishop of Alexandria, appointed to that see by Mark the Evangelist. Epiphanius contents himself with a reference to St. Mark's mission to Egypt, which he attributes to St. Peter, and places after the writing of the Gospel.⁴ The *Περίοδοι Βαρνάβα*, a work of the third, or, in its present form, of the fourth century, speaks of Mark as setting sail for Egypt immediately after the martyrdom of Barnabas in Cyprus.⁵ On the other hand, the Clementine Homilies represent Barnabas himself as a resident in Egypt, where he upheld the teaching of St. Peter.⁶

It can hardly be doubted that there is a residuum of truth in this mass of impossible and conflicting traditions. They point, on the whole, to a missionary enterprise in Egypt on the part of Mark, the companion of Barnabas and disciple of Peter, which led to the establishment of a Christian society at Alexandria. Even the date assigned for the appointment of Mark's successor is not improbable, if it be taken to indicate the time of the Evangelist's withdrawal from his Egyptian mission. Mark, according to the reckoning of the chroniclers,⁷ arrived at Alexandria c. A.D. 42, and remained in Egypt till A.D. 62. The former of these dates

¹ *H.E.* ii. 24.

² *De Viris Illustr.* 8.

³ vii. 45.

⁴ *Haer.* 51. 6.

⁵ Tisch., *Act. ap. apocr.*, p. 73.

⁶ Cf. *e.g.* 1. 9, 15.

⁷ See Harnack, *Chronologie*, I., pp. 70 f., 124.

is excluded by the chronology of the Acts; the latter is quite possible, if we place the work of St. Mark in Egypt immediately before his visit to Rome. What more likely than that he proceeded from Cyprus to Alexandria, and left Egypt on receiving tidings of St. Paul's imprisonment at Rome? A few years at Alexandria would have sufficed to lay the foundations of a Church, which would thenceforth connect the name of Mark with its origin, and place him at the head of its episcopal succession. The hypothesis helps, moreover, to account for part of the long interval between Mark's departure with Barnabas and his re-appearance in St. Paul's company at Rome.

3. There remains a group of personal traditions, but only one among them deserves serious consideration. When Epiphanius tells¹ us that Mark was one of the seventy-two who were offended at the discourse in the Synagogue of Capernaum, he overlooks the improbability that the son of Mary of Jerusalem would be found among the Galilean followers of Christ, not to insist upon the Elder's distinct testimony that Mark had never been a personal disciple of the Lord. The statement found in the commentaries of Pseudo-Jerome and Bede, and in the preface which precedes the Gospel in most MSS. of the Vulgate,² to the effect that the Evangelist belonged to the tribe of Levi, or was a member of the Jewish priesthood, rests, without doubt, upon the fact of his relationship to the Levite Barnabas. The Paschal Chronicle adjudges to our Evangelist the crown of martyrdom,³ and the details, as they were elaborated in later times, may be seen in the Sarum lections for St. Mark's Day.⁴ But the fact seems to have

¹ *Haer.* 51. 6.

² See Wordsworth and White, p. 171, "Marcus evangelista . . . sacerdotium in Israhel agens, secundum carnem Levita."

³ *Chron. Pasch.*, p. 252. Cf. Niceph. Call., *H.E.*, ii. 43.

⁴ Procter and Wordsworth, *Sanctorale*, col. 262 f.

been unknown to Jerome, who speaks simply of his death and burial at Alexandria.¹

One interesting little reminiscence is preserved of a bodily defect under which St. Mark laboured. According to Hippolytus,² he was "stump-fingered" (κολοβοδάκτυλος). The epithet does not perhaps determine³ the question whether the defect was congenital or due to some accidental cause or self-inflicted; or, again, whether it affected both hands, or all the fingers of one hand, or one finger only. The preface to St. Mark in Cod. Toletanus⁴ seems to espouse the view that it was a natural blemish, which extended to all the fingers: "colobodactylus est nominatus ideo quod a cetera corporis proceritate (cod.—tem) digitos minores habuisset"; according to that which is found in most MSS. of the Vulgate, the Evangelist had, after his conversion, amputated one of his fingers, in order to disqualify himself for the duties of the Jewish priesthood: "amputasse sibi post fidem pollicem dicitur ut sacerdotio reprobis haberetur." An attempt was made by Dr. Tregelles, in the *Journal of Classical and Sacred Philology*,⁵ to shew that the word was used by Hippolytus as an equivalent for "deserter," in reference to Mark's departure from Perga; but, though this explanation has been widely accepted, it can hardly be regarded as satisfactory. It is far-fetched at the best, and it seems improbable that so offensive a nickname would have stuck to the Evangelist

¹ *De Viris Illustr.*, 8. It is scarcely worth while to add to this list the blunder of Nicephorus Callisti, Μάρκος ἀδελφιδούς ἦν Πέτρος.

² Hipp. *Haer.*, vii. 30.

³ Κολοβός may be either (1) of stunted growth, or (2) mutilated. In favour of the former meaning may be adduced the compounds κολοβανθής, κολοβοκέρατος, κολοβοτράχηλος; on the other hand, the LXX. words κολοβόκερκος (Lev. xxii. 23, where it is coupled with ὠτόμητος), κολοβόρην (Lev. xxi. 18), point perhaps the other way; cf. 2 Regn. iv. 12, κολοβοῦσιν τὰς χεῖρας αὐτῶν καὶ τοὺς πόδας αὐτῶν.

⁴ Wordsworth and White, *loc. cit.*

⁵ Vol. for 1855, p. 224 f.

after his reconciliation to St. Paul, especially in Roman circles, where he was known only as St. Paul's faithful minister. There seems to be no reason for setting aside the literal meaning of the word, or for doubting that we have in it a reference to a personal peculiarity which had impressed itself on the memory of the Roman Church. Such a defect, to whatever cause it was due, may have moulded the course of John Mark's life. By closing against him a more ambitious career, it may have turned his thoughts to the various forms of ministry for which he was perhaps naturally fitted. As the colleague of St. Paul and the interpreter of St. Peter, "Mark the stump-fingered" has rendered enduring services to the Church, which, in the absence of such an infirmity, it might never have been his lot to undertake.

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THE FINAL STAGE OF CULTURE.

(REVELATION xxii. 2.)

A TREE in the midst of a street is a beautiful thing. Sometimes it is sad as well as beautiful. I remember, in the days of boyhood, in one of the busiest streets of the most commercial of cities, how there stood in the heart of the thoroughfare the stump of an old tree. One could not look at it without a twinge of pain; it was the last rose of summer. It marked the final trace of a kind of life that was passing away. It told that the country was being expelled by the town. It suggested a state of things that was dead, an age of rustic simplicity which a past generation enjoyed, and which had left behind only the skirt of its garment.

But it is a very different matter when the tree has overtaken the city instead of the city overtaking the tree.