

The fourth difficulty mentioned in the first part of this article is, how to account for the reception of this "song of loves" into the canon. If one looks up the *Critici Sacri*, vol. iii. (ed. Amstelaedami and Ultrajecti, 1698) col. 251, the first words of the first commentary are these: "According to both Hebrews and Christians, this Psalm treats of the 'Messiah,' though to some it seems to ask an interpretation with reference to Solomon, who was a type of Christ."

This "Solomonic" interpretation may have been very old and have been the cause of its admission. But a Messianic view of its contents is also a probable and sufficient explanation of the fact. The frequent mentioning of a glorious king, combined with the exegesis of יְהוָה in l. 7 not as a verb but as representing the Name—therefore later on replaced by אֱלֹהִים—must suggest to all who are living in a certain conception of the Psalter that the Messiah was its subject.¹

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FURTHER NOTES ON THE SYNOPTIC PROBLEM.

THE synoptic problem which has of late engaged the speculation of some of our keenest and most laborious students is still unsolved. It has opened out many different lines of research, but even the one point claimed to be settled—the priority of St. Mark's Gospel—must still be regarded as uncertain and not free from difficulty.

¹ See e.g. Justin Martyn (ed. Otto³). *Dial. c. Tryph.*, cc. 38, 56, 63, 76, 86, 96. This Psalm furnished a series of testimonies to the effect that Christ is βασιλεύς, κύριος, προσκυνητός, θεός, χριστός, (= κεχρισμένος). Also Cyprian's *Testimonies*, II. 3, 6, 29: Christ is *sermo, Deus, rex in aeternum regnaturus*. Cyprian quotes our Psalm to this end along with passages from the *Song of Songs* in *Epist.* lxxv. ch. 12. Parallel passages occur in the *Testimonies* of Gregory of Nyssa (ed. Zacagni) and of Dionysius bar Salibhi.

It has, of course, been obvious from the first that some kind of relationship exists between the Synoptic Gospels, so that the problem itself is an old one. Recent investigation, however, has shown more conclusively than before that the whole, or almost the whole, of St. Mark's Gospel has been absorbed in the Gospels of St. Matthew and St. Luke. But this 'absorption' does not by any means involve identity of words or expression. The differences, indeed, in parallel passages are in some cases very difficult to account for on the theory that St. Matthew or St. Luke had before him the Gospel according to St. Mark in the form known to us. At the same time it is undeniable that the presence of special words or phrases can only be explained by the supposition of a common source.

A few instances may be cited to illustrate the differences and the identity of parallel passages—Matthew iv. 18–22; Mark i. 16–20. The call of the first four Apostles.

In this passage we have nearly absolute identity in the words of our Lord: *δεῦτε ὀπίσω μου, καὶ ποιήσω ὑμᾶς γενέσθαι ἀλιεῖς ἀνθρώπων*. St. Matthew omits *γενέσθαι* in his report, a slight change, but one to be noted. For the rest Matthew changes Mark's *ἀμφιβάλλοντας* to the more specific *βάλλοντας ἀμφίβληστρον*.

Matthew ix. 1–5; Mark ii. 1–7. The cure of a paralytic. Here St. Matthew's account is brief, and omits several points of interest recorded by St. Mark. The quotation of our Lord's words is identical.

Matthew xii. 9–14; Mark iii. 1–6. The man with a withered hand. Here also a part of St. Mark's report of much interest is omitted by St. Matthew. The parallel is again close only in our Lord's words, with the remarkable exception of the rare verbal form *ἀπεκατεστάθη* (was restored) which is common to the triple tradition and is strong evidence of a common source in Greek.

Matthew viii. 18, 23-27; Mark iv. 35-41. The stilling of the storm. Here there are expressions and even words of our Lord peculiar to Mark. It is difficult to believe that 'a compiler' with this record before him would have failed to transcribe the words of Jesus, and the vivid descriptive touches in Mark.

The same remarks apply to the narrative of the Gadarene demoniac which follows. St. Matthew's account is much shorter, but there is no trace of the copyist here. Matt. viii. 28-34; Mark v. 1-20.

Matthew xxii. 37-39 and Mark xii. 30, 31. These parallel verses contain our Lord's answer to the Scribe's question: "What is the first commandment of all?" The triple report coincides, except that Matthew omits the words *ἐξ ὅλης τῆς ἰσχύος σου* (with all thy strength), and, with St. Luke, uses the preposition *ἐν* instead of *ἐξ*. It is a small divergence of this kind which tends to disprove that the author of the first Gospel was a copyist of Mark. For in that case why should the serious omission have been made, or the change from one proposition to another? This is a typical example of which several instances could be cited, all exhibiting unnecessary changes, and certainly such as no writer in the second century with an apostolic exemplar before him would venture to make.

These instances, chosen almost at haphazard, suffice to indicate the conditions of the problem. Exact identity in part even to the inclusion of an extremely rare verbal form, and, on the other hand, diverse language in describing the self-same event, and particulars given in the proto-evangelium not transferred by the copyist or compiler to his own work.

In considering the solution of the problem another fact must be taken into account, namely, the parallelism of the order in which the events belonging to the 'Marcan tradi-

tion' are recorded in the three Synoptic Gospels. This fact will be apparent by a glance at any harmony of the Gospels, and needs no elucidation. It is shown in an interesting way by comparing Matthew viii. 1-4 with Mark i. 40-45, where the parallelism interrupted after Matthew iv. 25 by the insertion of the Sermon on the Mount is resumed immediately after the sermon, which St. Mark does not record. This parallelism of order proves as distinctly as verbal parallelism a relation of origin between the Synoptics.

The two points, therefore, may be considered together. In regard to the order and sequence of events, although, as has been said, the order of the Marcan tradition is on the whole followed in the other Synoptics, it is more than probable that St. Mark himself was following a recognised order of delivering the Gospel. A great deal is implied by the expression *ἡ διδαχὴ τῶν ἀποστόλων* (Acts. ii. 42). The evidence of the Synoptic Gospels and of the Epistles goes to prove that there was not only a definite Apostolic scheme both in the order and subject matter of instruction in the life and teaching of Christ, but also a consensus in regard to doctrinal teaching.

Some such scheme would be needed for successfully carrying out the system of catechetical instruction which we know to have existed in the earliest days of the Christian Church. Traces of the synoptic order in outline appear as early as in St. Peter's speech on the Day of Pentecost. That discourse is evidently compressed and abbreviated, and in verses 22-24 of chapter ii. of the Acts we have a short but clear indication of the synoptic order: 1. The Gospel of the childhood is suggested by "Jesus of Nazareth"; (2) "Approved by mighty works" expanded would be a narrative of the Ministry; (3) The words "ye did crucify and slay" comprise the Passion and Crucifixion. (4) And the Resurrec-

tion and Ascension are briefly noted by "Him God raised up."

The same order is virtually set forth in our Lord's converse with the two disciples on the way to Emmaus. The importance of that oral gospel according to Christ Himself seems to have been somewhat overlooked in discussing the origin of the synoptic order. All the elements of a synoptic gospel are comprised in that wonderful fragment of our Lord's own gospel, the first part drawn from the lips of the disciples by the questioning of Jesus, the rest given by His own interpretation of the Old Testament Scriptures and by His own evidence of the Resurrection. Other oral gospels preserved in the Acts, and such summaries as are found in the Epistles¹ point to the same general form of delivery. The fact, therefore, that the order and sequence of Mark are followed in the other Synoptics does not of itself prove that the writers of the first and third Gospels had St. Mark's Gospel before them.

But if the form of the Gospel was determined by Apostolic teaching, it is reasonable to suppose, indeed it may be regarded as an established fact, that its contents emanated from the same source.

In order to arrive at a probable solution of the synoptic problem it is necessary to recall as clearly as possible the circumstances in which this unique literature arose.

After the Day of Pentecost, Jerusalem was filled with enthusiastic disciples of Christ. Some had known Him in the flesh. Far more had only heard of Him by report, but were eagerly desirous to learn of His life and doctrine from His chosen Apostles. That this desire was met we learn from the passage in the Acts already referred to (ii. 42) and from Hebrews ii. 3. The 'teaching of the Apostles' would

¹ See Rom. i. 3, 4; 1 Cor. xv. 3, 4; 2 Cor. xi. 4; Gal. i. 6, 7; 1 Tim. vi. 20.

take the form of lectures following, it would seem, a prescribed order, and there is no doubt that the pre-eminent position of St. Peter would attract the most numerous hearers. Among the most capable and intelligent of those hearers it is safe to include Barnabas and his cousin, John Mark. These, together with thousands of other students and disciples, would set forth to divers lands with gospels stored in their memories or copied in papyrus rolls. Among them were the many evangelists who "took in hand to draw up a narrative concerning the matters fulfilled in the ministry of Christ, even as they delivered them which from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word" (Luke i. 1, 2).

These narratives of the gospel, thus carried far and wide, would bear the same relation to each other as the notes taken by different students at a Professor's lecture. At certain points the Apostles' words would be exactly reproduced, at others the sense only would be given, and here and there discrepancies would be found difficult to reconcile. A diligent and careful historian would examine various accounts, as St. Luke certainly did, and select that which appeared to be best attested.

As time went on one or more of those gospel narratives would approve themselves as more vivid in description and more authoritative than the others, and would be widely accepted. This is the kind of pre-eminence which the Gospel according to St. Mark attained. And if we try to imagine further the circumstances which led to its incorporation in the first gospel, it is quite possible that St. Matthew in the course of his missionary travels should find St. Mark's Gospel, or one nearly corresponding to it, used as the catechetical form of instruction in the Churches of a district in which he was evangelising. He may well have been unwilling to disturb the use of such a gospel, either in regard to the sequence or selection of events. But as an Apostle and eye-

witness he had much more to add. Hence an edition of St. Mark revised in the light of fresh research would be enriched and supplemented by the Apostle's personal recollections of the words and works of Christ. It is in such circumstances that we venture to conceive the origin of that part of the Gospel according to St. Matthew which is common to St. Mark. It is a hypothesis which explains at once the occurrence of identity and of variation in the parallel passages of the two Gospels.

II. Passing now to the other sections of the first Gospel, (a) that which is commonly designated as "Q," and which is common to the first and third Gospels; and (b) the section which is peculiar to this Gospel, we cannot discover that recent criticism has suggested any insuperable bar to the traditional belief in St. Matthew's authorship, or to fixing its date before the destruction of Jerusalem.

These sections contain some of the most profound and interesting of our Lord's sayings, and incidents of deep significance and value, which it is difficult to believe would have been put forth and accepted unless they had been stamped with Apostolic authority. They contain, for instance, the whole of the Sermon on the Mount, and in that the claim to revise and deepen the enactments of the Levitical law, the regulation and discipline of the whole of life, involving rules for prayer and fasting (Matt. v. 21 *fol.*), and they contain some of the most treasured parables and some of the most significant miracles. The section known as "Q" presents throughout striking and remarkable parallelisms between the first and third Gospels, but verbal differences abound, sufficient to show independent research or independent translation from an Aramaic original on the part of St. Luke. A single short example will illustrate this: compare (1) Matthew xviii. 12 with (2) Luke xv. 4. (1) *τί ὑμῖν δοκεῖ; ἐὰν γένηται τινι ἀνθρώπῳ ἑκατὸν πρόβατα, καὶ πλανηθῆ ἓν ἐξ*

αὐτῶν, οὐχὶ ἀφήσει τὰ ἐνενήκοντα ἐννέα ἐπὶ τὰ ὄρη, καὶ πορευθεὶς ζητεῖ τὸ πλανώμενον; (2) τίς ἄνθρωπος ἐξ ὑμῶν ἔχων ἑκατὸν πρόβατα καὶ ἀπολέσας ἐξ αὐτῶν ἓν οὐ κατάλειπει τὰ ἐνενήκοντα ἐννέα ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ καὶ πορεύεται ἐπὶ τὸ ἀπολωλὸς ἕως εὗρη αὐτο ;

It will be noticed that there is here a singular identity of meaning, combined with such difference of expression as can hardly have been made by either evangelist having before him the precise words of the other.

The single tradition of St. Matthew or that part of the Gospel which is independent of the other Synoptics is about one-eighth of the whole of the Gospel attributed to him. Besides the passages in the Sermon on the Mount peculiar to the first Gospel and the parables and miracles already referred to, this section contains St. Matthew's account of the Virgin Birth, the flight into Egypt, the charge to St. Peter (chap. xvi.), the arraignment of the Pharisees (chap. xxiii.), and several incidents of the Passion and Resurrection and of the days after the Resurrection.

Whatever theory may be formed in regard to that portion of the first Gospel in which St. Mark is substantially incorporated can it be said that any convincing arguments have been advanced against the authenticity of the remaining portion of the Gospel comprising "Q" and the single tradition of St. Matthew? Against the Matthaean authorship of the Gospel it has been argued: (1) that these sections do not read like a translation, (2) that it is not possible to discern in them the vivid narrative of an eye-witness.

(1) This objection rests on the assumption that "Q," at any rate if by St. Matthew, must be a Greek rendering of the Aramaic *logia* mentioned by Papias as composed by St. Matthew (Eus. *H.E.* iii. 39). But this is an unproved assumption. It is quite possible, it is indeed probable, that St. Matthew, like many of his compatriots, was equally at

home in Greek and Aramaic. St James, the Lord's brother, probably spoke in Aramaic, but the Greek of his Epistle has few if any indications of a foreign element.

(2) The question of descriptive vividness is one of style which cannot be decided by argument; but most readers of the Gospel will admit that there is no lack of narrative power, not only in the report of many parables peculiar to this Gospel, but in introductory passages to sayings of our Lord unreported in the Marcan tradition.

The reproduction of the Sermon on the Mount as reported in St. Matthew's Gospel, with its wonderful beauty and regularity of form, alone proves consummate skill, and points to the inner discipleship of the writer, who has handed down this precious legacy to the Church.

At the same time it may be asked whether it is common experience that the eyewitness of an event describes it as a rule more graphically than those who have received the report from others.

It is the Macaulay or the Freeman who writes the brilliant and picturesque description and not the Norman Chronicler or the contemporary Bishop Burnet, of whom it is said: "To literary style or to eloquence he had no pretension." What one expects from the eyewitness is not so much picturesque description as careful observation of small incidents which might not be thought worthy of notice by the later historian. Of this there are many instances, especially in the closing scenes of St. Matthew's Gospel.

It would, however, be unreasonable to allow *a priori* arguments of this kind to prevail against the traditional evidence of the Matthaean authorship of the first Gospel, while evidence of precisely the same kind is admitted to establish the authenticity of the second and third Gospels.

A further point may be thought worthy of consideration. If the writer of the first Gospel be reduced to the level of a

'compiler' or 'redactor' his Gospel will be an exception to all the other books of the New Testament, each of which by a more or less conscious act of selection carries with it the authority of an Apostle or of one writing directly under the influence of an Apostle.

It is far more probable that the abundant collection of our Lord's sayings and parables which enrich the Gospel of St. Matthew should have been put on record by one of the inner circle of the disciples who were continuously with Jesus, than by one of those who were only occasional hearers.

In regard to the question of date, no really convincing argument has been advanced to disprove the contention either that the Marcan section of the first Gospel or "Q" were put on record before the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus. As to St. Mark it will be sufficient for our purpose to cite the words of Archdeacon Allen, one of the foremost of those critics who repudiate the Matthaean authorship of the first Gospel. Dr. Allen writes of St. Mark's Gospel: "For myself I believe in an ultimate Aramaic original and I see no reason why such an original should not have appeared before the year 50 A.D. The Gospel might well have appeared in Greek about that period, and then have been used by the author of the first Gospel" (*Expository Times*, July, 1910).

The other sections of St. Matthew's Gospel, and in particular that part now designated as "Q," bear every sign of contemporary authority, and, as Dr. Allen conclusively shows in the article referred to, the objections made to an early date of the first Gospel on the ground that it "reflects an advanced stage of ecclesiastical development" rest on a pure hypothesis and have little weight."¹

¹ Dr. Plummer places the date of this Gospel shortly after the fall of Jerusalem. If this were so, it is manifest that the prediction of that event in the

If the early date of the Gospel be admitted—a most important point in the settlement of the Synoptic problem—it is difficult to see why the traditional ascription of the Gospel to the Apostle St. Matthew should not also be maintained. It is a tradition which falls in with the probability of the case. It is to say the least more than probable that one at least of the Apostles who gave lectures at Jerusalem should have himself put forth a gospel. And of the Apostles who is more likely to have written accounts of the ministry of Christ than St. Matthew the publican, who from his calling was almost necessarily bi-lingual? But we are not left in doubt. Whatever bearing the Matthaean *logia* of which Papias speaks may have on the Greek Gospel the fact of their existence and their vogue proves at least a capacity of authorship in St. Matthew. And when this *a priori* probability is strengthened by the direct evidence of Irenæus (*Hær.* III. i. 1) and a catena of succeeding writers, the traditional claim of the first Gospel to apostolic origin is at least as strong as that of the second and third Evangelists to the Gospels which bear their name.¹

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twenty-fourth chapter was at any rate not committed to writing until after its fulfilment. It is an easy and obvious step to suggest that the words are not predictive at all and were never uttered by our Lord. But is it conceivable that words of such profound importance should be falsely attributed to our Lord in the lifetime of St. John and of other disciples who had known Christ, and yet pass unchallenged? But if the words were uttered by our Lord why is it necessary to doubt their publication before the siege and fall of Jerusalem?

¹ It is tempting to note in connexion with this question that the last result of Homeric criticism is to claim the reality of Homer's personality and the authenticity of the Iliad. Professor Mackail writes: "The Canonical Iliad issued as an authorised version at Athens in the sixth century B.C., which is to all intents and purposes our Iliad, is also to all intents and purposes the original and only Iliad, the work of Homer."—*Lectures on Greek Poetry*.