

## Professor Stanton on the Synoptic Problem.

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DR. STANTON'S book, entitled *The Gospels as Historical Documents*, Part II., has been eagerly expected. Dr. Stanton has lectured on the Synoptic Problem for many years. He knows its history and the numerous solutions which have been offered. And, whereas some men fail because, although they have read Loisy, Harnack, Wellhausen, Weizsäcker, or Holtzmann, they have but a superficial acquaintance with the minutiae of the Gospels, Dr. Stanton knows all the similarities and divergences. And it is as true in historical criticism, as it is in textual criticism, that knowledge of documents is essential to sound work.

I am glad to find myself in complete agreement with Dr. Stanton on many fundamental questions. It is because the differences between us are slight, and may by a little explanation be reduced, that this paper is written. In particular, I am pleased with his masterly vindication of the doctrine of a proto-Mark. (For the sake of the uninitiated I may explain that a proto-Mark is a shorter recension of St. Mark, drawn up at an earlier date, and used by St. Luke. There are excellent reasons for thinking that St. Luke was not acquainted with our second Gospel in its present form.) Dr. Sanday assails Dr. Stanton on this very question. He attributes St. Luke's omissions to lack of space. The roll of paper which he used was not large enough to hold more; as though it were impossible to have some extra sheets added to it, or (as Juvenal says) to write on both sides of the paper. It is on examining details that I find it so difficult to accept Dr. Sanday's explanation. Why, for example, should St. Luke, being himself a Gentile and writing for Gentiles, omit our Lord's journey through the Gentile cities of Decapolis? Why should he omit the words 'to all the Gentiles' from the quotation, 'My house shall be called the house of prayer'? Why omit 'This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached to all the Gentiles'? Dr. Stanton would reply that St. Luke omitted these and other perplexing passages because he was not acquainted with them. On any other hypothesis the omissions seem to me to be inexplicable.

It was to vindicate the doctrine of a proto-Mark

that I have so long insisted on the truth of the oral hypothesis. Dr. Stanton, however, thinks that the proto-Mark may have been a document. He insists that the oral hypothesis is inadequate, and he devotes several pages to a refutation of my teaching about it. I am always glad to discuss that question. Most modern critics of the Gospels decline to discuss it at all. But I shall perhaps astonish the reader when I say that Dr. Stanton's rejection of the oral hypothesis and my acceptance of it amount, practically, to the same thing. I am in substantial agreement with him, as I now proceed to show.

Dr. Stanton objects to the oral hypothesis chiefly on two grounds: (1) He thinks that there is such an amount of minute editing in St. Luke's Gospel and in St. Matthew's, that a written Mark must have lain before those Evangelists, or they could not have made the multitudinous changes which they have made. (2) He denies that Europeans would take the trouble so carefully to master the oral records, as to be able to pass on the tradition unimpaired for many years. Oral teaching, if it consisted (as I assert) in learning by heart, may reasonably be predicated of the Eastern Church, but not of the Western. Granted that St. Luke, being probably a Syrian, had no objection to learn long passages himself, it is quite another thing to believe that he imposed so laborious a process upon St. Paul's converts. They would certainly have objected to bear the yoke of slavery.

It rests with me, therefore, (1) to explain how the minute editing may have been done, and (2) to prove that learning by heart was not foreign to European habits.

In the first page of my first book on the Gospels, I showed how oral teaching may have originated. St. Peter (I suggested) wrote down a lesson upon a tablet, and read it to his pupils, who copied it upon their tablets and repeated it aloud until they had mastered it. Next day they would rehearse the old lesson from memory, with the occasional help of prompting, and then learn another. Day by day they would repeat the process, until a considerable cycle of teaching was formed. St. Peter might have half a dozen tablets for refreshing his

memory, until the words were indelibly impressed on his mind, but a schoolboy is content with one slate, or (in those days) with one tablet. The more diligent and capable boys, on becoming men, could be used as Catechists to teach others. Such teachers were necessary when Churches were multiplied, and we often meet with allusions to them and their work in the Acts and in the Epistles.

So then documents—temporary documents—were in use from the first. I do not abate my claim to adhere to the oral hypothesis by conceding that. Not only so, but at every improvement of the record writing materials were used; sometimes a tablet and stylus, sometimes paper and ink.

The first of these improvements (according to Papias) was the translation of St. Peter's Aramaic into Greek. St. Mark, having been appointed St. Peter's translator, would first write down upon a tablet a section of the Aramaic, and then upon another tablet he would compose a Greek version of it. He would take time and make erasures until he was satisfied with the rendering. Then he would teach it to a class of 'Grecians,' just as St. Peter had taught it to a class of 'Hebrews.'

A Gospel was like a river. It began with a few small rills and rushed rapidly downhill, accumulating strength as it went. The further it advanced, the less was the rush. Something was lost by evaporation and percolation, much was gained by affluents. Sources multiplied. For some time they were kept separate. Then some one undertook the serious task of welding them into one Gospel. Four or five threads had to be twisted into one rope. There is reason to think that the first-beginnings of this work were made in the Metropolitan Church of Jerusalem, but that St. Luke first completed the task, forming the complex Gospel which was thenceforth used in the West.

St. Luke would take the proto-Mark, the proto-Matthew, the Pauline collection, and some scraps of the deutero-Mark, together with such anonymous fragments as had reached him at Philippi. Many of these he had probably collected in a commonplace book, kept in his private custody. His first task would be to procure a written copy of such of the sections as were not already in writing. He used Mark as the framework of his Gospel, and incorporated with it the other sources by means of the art of conflation, in the following manner:—

After carefully analyzing the non-Marcian matter,

he found in it about twenty-four different subjects. He would put down the twenty-four headings upon a tablet and number them. Then he would work through his MSS, placing in the margin the letter *alpha* wherever the subject-matter showed that the passage belonged to his first heading, *beta* where it belonged to his second, and so on through all the non-Marcian sources, until everything had been classified and numbered, exactly as the Ammonian sections and the Eusebian canons are written in the margin of MSS of the Greek Testament.

His next process would be to copy all the *alpha* passages upon one sheet of paper, all the *beta* passages upon another, and so with every letter. Finally, he would arrange the several utterances in what seemed to him the best order. They seldom contained in themselves any note of time or place, and an editor, therefore, must make ventures in dealing with them; but, when he had satisfied himself, he would supply such prefaces, connecting links, and conclusions as would weld the conflation together, and make it fit into its destined place in the Gospel.

It was nothing short of a revolution to substitute the new complex history for the old simple chronicle. A new set of catechists would have to be supplied, or the old ones learn a new lesson. The intricacy of the work shows that it was done, not gradually, but at one stroke. The authority of St. Paul may well have been exerted to introduce it in the Churches.

Meanwhile St. Luke kept his documents and polished them before publishing them. Horace advises an author to take nine years for this task. But the Churches could not wait so long. It would also prepare the way for the coming Gospel, if the complex record were put into oral use. Sir John Hawkins has shown that every Evangelist took immense pains in finishing off the work. Each Gospel has its own peculiar style, vocabulary, and embellishments. Even the trito-Mark within his narrower range was as sedulous in editing as were the others. His 'picturesque' additions I regard as editorial ornaments, and Dr. Stanton agrees that many of them are so.

As long as a man maintains (as Dr. Stanton does) that a document is simply the oral teaching committed to writing, I reckon him as a believer in the oral hypothesis. Publication is quite another matter. 'Litera scripta manet.' If the proto-Mark had been published, I do not see how

it could have perished and left no trace behind, for it was not like those inchoate attempts to which St. Luke alludes in his preface, most of which perished because they did not deserve to live.

It is obvious that if St. Matthew entered upon the work of conflation a few years later than St. Luke had done, he would find both sources expanded. He used, that is to say, a deutero-Mark and a deutero-Matthew. Very slight changes had been made in the old sections, but a considerable number of new sections had been added. St. Matthew collected the non-Markan sections into five long conflations instead of twenty-four short ones. He inserted them into the Marcan framework quite differently from St. Luke. And he dovetailed a good many non-Markan utterances into Marcan sections. We explain this independent action by inferring that he was not acquainted with St. Luke's work.

And now let us consider the objection that Western Christians would not be at the trouble to memorize the records. I have never taught that grown-up persons, either in the East or in the West, were successful in learning many chapters by heart. A man, who has passed his fortieth year, finds the task of memorizing peculiarly irksome. He is slow at mastering a lesson, quick at forgetting it. The catechumens, both in the Jewish Synagogue and in the Christian Church, were for the most part boys. Theophilus was a boy when he was catechized, but in mature life his boyish lessons were partially obscured, till he was glad to have in writing what he once knew by heart. St. Mark is called a 'Chazzan' in Ac 13<sup>5</sup>, and it was the chief duty of a Chazzan to teach the boys during the week, and to assist at the Sunday services for grown-up people. If the Chazzan recited the Gospel on Sunday to the congregation, such of them as had learned it in their boyhood would have their memory refreshed.

The case may be illustrated by what happened in Churches until quite recently. Every child was required to learn the Church Catechism (or the Shorter Catechism), the collect for the day, and sometimes the Epistle and Gospel. When the children became men or women, the public reading of Scripture in Church sufficed for their religious needs, only the teacher knew the Catechism thoroughly, and could correct the minutest mistake.

Now, if we Westerns, down to the middle of the

nineteenth century, were so sedulous in learning by heart, is it not a mistake to think that in the first century the effort would be declined? We have abundance of evidence that learning by heart was practised even by adults. It was in the West that Rhapsodists recited whole books of Homer, as I heard the *Arabian Nights* recited in Tangiers. In the West, Virgil's *Aeneid* was learned by rote. At Rome every educated boy could repeat the list of consuls, two for each year, for seven hundred and seventy-six years and upwards, even as I, when a boy, recited the Kings of England, with the dates of their accession and the length of their reigns. Orators learned their speeches by heart, and declaimed them by help of a *memoria technica*. Rhetoricians composed 'commonplaces,' which consisted of elegant extracts to be learned by heart, and used as occasion offered. Juvenal tells how *crambe repetita* was the death of the unfortunate schoolmaster. What was this but the task of hearing repetitions? When I was at school, the master listened while thirty-three boys repeated (or failed to repeat) forty lines of prose or poetry, in Greek, Latin, or English, four times a week. For learning by heart was then regarded an essential part of education. The present Bishop of Durham, when I read with him at Cambridge, advised me to continue it, but I thought myself too old.

The boys forgot: the teacher remembered. The Catechists knew, what Theophilus half knew. It was by Catechists that the tradition was preserved. If Professor Stanton doubts this, Professor Gwatkin asserts it. In his recently published *Early Church History* (vol. i. p. 279) he writes: 'The Gospel . . . was diligently taught in the Eastern way by the first generation of Evangelists. The master gives out a story—in our time a sura of the Koran—and repeats it till the scholars have thoroughly learned it before going on to another. Hence the tradition of the Apostolic age was not the loose report it is so commonly taken for, but a pretty definite list of selected stories taught as near as might be in fixed words, so that there is no reason to suppose that they underwent any serious change in the course of the Apostolic age.'

This accords with what I have been teaching for thirty years. But oral teaching was of two kinds: (1) the fixed tradition committed to memory; (2) stories repeated so often that they assume a stereotyped form. Dr. Stanton recognizes the latter only. He follows the late Bishop Westcott in hold-

ing that the oral teaching was given with considerable variations at first, but assumed a fixed form through frequent repetition, exactly as a teller of stories now begins badly but polishes and improves until he reaches perfection and then adheres to one form. This view, however, ignores the simple fact that though one man can trust his memory so far, he has no power of transmitting to others his facility except within very narrow limits. When I was a curate in London I could repeat the Marriage Service from beginning to end without book. Though I had made no effort to learn it, frequent repetition had made me perfect. But I could not transmit this power. Every man must begin at the beginning and learn for himself. The simplest, shortest, and only satisfactory way is for each man to commit the words to memory. During the oral period thirty or forty Churches needed a knowledge of the word. Children must be taught; teachers must be found. It was impossible for St. Peter to go the round of all the Hebrew Churches, or St. Mark the round of all the Greek Churches. It is certain that they did not do this. And why should they, when the Metropolitan Church had scores of duly equipped Catechists who were burning with zeal to 'make one proselyte'?

This question of learning by heart is fundamental, and therefore I make no apology for insisting on it. But there are a few other questions which Dr. Stanton raises, about which I have something to say.

He holds that St. Mark's Gospel had no Aramaic basis, but was composed in Greek from the first for the use of the Greek-speaking Jews of Cæsarea and elsewhere, because the Jews of Jerusalem, having known our Lord in the flesh, had no need of instruction in His history. The *Logia* were drawn up for their use, St. Mark's history for outsiders. In teaching thus, Dr. Stanton sets aside the earliest evidence which we possess on this question, namely, the fragment of Papias, preserved for us in Eusebius (*Hist.* iii. xxxix. 15). Papias, I submit, means that while St. Peter appointed St. Mark to translate the Aramaic lessons into Greek, St. Matthew made no such appointment, but left the work of translating to volunteers, several of whom essayed it with varying success. Sometimes two or more versions were made of the same passage. In this way arose the puzzles with which the critic is confronted. I am as reluctant as Dr. Sanday is to throw Papias over-

board. But I have another reason for objecting to the idea that St. Mark's Gospel had no Aramaic basis. Granted that the men of Jerusalem—many of them—knew our Lord and recollected enough of His acts to appreciate the *Logia* and hear sermons: they had children, who did not. And if oral teaching was chiefly a matter for boys, it was quite as necessary in Jerusalem as elsewhere. Indeed, it was more necessary in proportion as the Metropolitan Church was large, and its members strong and able to make known their needs and to demand satisfaction. The Church insisted on the necessity of religious education as strongly as it does now.

Dr. Stanton thinks that the second source (the *Logia*) originated in Jerusalem, but the first did not, because otherwise the two could not have been kept separate. I have shown reason to think that the art of conflation began in Jerusalem at a very early date, though it did not make much progress there for some time, but I see no reason why St. Peter and St. Matthew should not have taught in the same city. St. Peter's energy and example may have stirred up St. Matthew's zeal. In the University of Cambridge there are six divinity professors who teach in friendly concert. Students go first to one, then to another. What should have hindered them from doing so in Jerusalem of old?

Dr. Stanton holds that during the oral stage the second source was not translated into Greek in its entirety, but only in such parts as suited the needs of Gentiles. In particular, he holds that our Lord's teaching about the relation of the Old Testament to the New (Mt 5<sup>17-47</sup>) would not interest Gentiles. To me it seems that the Gentiles were particularly in need of this teaching. The Old Testament was their Bible—their only Bible: what were they to do with it? To take it literally and at full length was obviously impossible: to ignore it was still more impossible. If St. Paul had been acquainted with the verses in question, he would have been saved many anxious arguments. Belief in a proto-Mark suggests belief in a proto-Matthew. A critic who works on the documentary hypothesis has a natural objection to multiply documents: on the oral hypothesis a proto-Matthew is just as easy to assume as a proto-Mark. The later sections of the *Logia* were unknown to St. Luke (except a few fragments) because he tapped the source at an earlier date.

Dr. Stanton holds that the Hellenists at Jerusalem were so few in number, or stayed in the city so short a time, that they may be neglected. To me it seems certain from Ac 6 that in the early days they were particularly strong. How came they to murmur against the Hebrews? Why did St. Peter change his practice at their demand? Why did all the seven bursars bear Greek names? If the Hellenists were not actually in a majority, it looks as though they carried the election—perhaps because many of the Hebrews were too lethargic to vote. It is a common mistake, which I am far from attributing to Dr. Stanton, to suppose that speaking Greek was the test of an Hellenist. If that were true, St. Paul was an Hellenist, though he styles himself a Hebrew of Hebrews. An Hellenist was a progressive Jew, and these progressives would naturally be the first to welcome Christianity. The Church at Jerusalem was captured by the Pharisees at a slightly later date, but the more liberal element prevailed (as we should expect) at first. But if the 'Grecians' did not always speak Greek, they had a smattering of it and a liking for it. They supported those who did speak it. If such men were defrauded of portions of the *Logia*, they would have murmured, not merely that their widows were neglected in the daily ministrations of bread, but that their souls were neglected in the ministry of the word.

Dr. Stanton accuses me of an anachronism in holding that the Synoptic Gospels were read aloud in churches according to a table of lessons. That they were read, I suppose he would allow: why not according to a table? Such tables were used in the synagogues, and the church was modelled on the synagogue. Because the Gospels, he says, were in process of growth, whereas I am assuming that they were complete. I certainly assume that they were practically complete as soon as the three or four sources were blended into one Gospel. After that a good deal of polishing was done, but not many new sections added. We are agreed that all three Synoptic Gospels were published, probably, in the decade 70-80 A.D., but at what date were they put into oral form? I submit that their eschatological sections determine this. St. Mark collects all his eschatology into chap. 13, which deals almost exclusively with the destruction of the temple, but in vv. 24-27 with the larger question of the end of the world. St. Luke copies that chapter with but a few editorial changes,

evidently made (as Dr. Stanton allows) after the event. He gives, in a new conflation, our Lord's teaching about the end of the world. Now contrast St. Matthew: he collects all that he records about the destruction of the temple and the end of the world into one huge conflation, and by altering the introductory question of the disciples, makes the two events synchronous. Would any Evangelist have done this when time had shown that the two events were not at all synchronous? I trow not. But if the conflation was made and put into circulation throughout the Eastern Churches before 66 A.D., then when the crash came the Evangelist might naturally decide that it was too late to alter the chapters. More injury to the faith would be done by breaking up the records and readjusting them, than by letting them stand and dealing with them by exegesis, as the modern commentator does.

But if that conflation was made before 66 A.D., the other four conflations in St. Matthew were probably still earlier. Hence the oral stage of the comparatively perfect Gospel lasted twelve years or more—quite long enough for the formation of a table of lessons. When the second revolution came and every Church used four Gospels instead of one only, a clean sweep was made of old customs. But even Justin Martyr's assertion that the Gospels were read in Churches as far as was convenient, need not imply that each reader was left free to go on as long as he thought fit. Lawlessness was not usual in ancient days.

Dr. Stanton questions whether I was in a position to speak for Dr. Westcott's later opinions about the oral Gospel. He strangely forgets that oral communications are possible even now. It was in a private conversation in 1889 that Dr. Westcott spoke to me with impressive earnestness about his unshaken confidence in the truth of that hypothesis.

Professor Gwatkin observes that of course other forces were at work in moulding the Gospels. That is certainly true, as the Dean of Westminster, Dr. Sanday, and others have insisted. Twenty years ago, being too much under Dr. Westcott's influence, I attributed to defects of memory many changes which, I have now learned, were made deliberately. I venture to point out the following forces:—(1) Theological timidity, which altered St. Mark in places where his assertion of the truth of our Lord's humanity might be used by the

enemy to deny His divinity. Under this heading may be also classed instances where changes have been made to save the characters of the Twelve. (2) The desire to point out the fulfilment of Scripture. The trito-Mark does this several times, quietly and without note: St. Matthew does it ostentatiously. (3) Paulinism. A large number of St. Paul's distinctive words and ideas have been introduced by the trito-Mark and by others. (4) Stylistic changes, to make the Gospels better adapted to Church reading. (5) Editorial corrections, additions, and explanations. Some of these are not improvements. For example, the trito-Mark tells us that Abiathar was high priest when David ate the shew-bread: St. Matthew asserts that the Zachariah who perished between the altar and the sanctuary was son of Barachiah: St. Luke declares that the three hours' darkness was due to an eclipse of the sun during the Pass-over full moon. To some of us it is a relief to

regard these statements as the mistakes of an editor.

Like other critics who accept the documentary hypothesis, Dr. Stanton accounts for a large number of variations by assuming that the same utterance was found in two sources. I admit that this was probably a *vera causa*, but I am very reluctant to allow it a wide range. It may be true of one or two cases, but the oral hypothesis does not require more. In fact, the oral hypothesis gives liberty to the critic. But in all hypothetical work we must remember that we are not dealing with certainties. Nor is the most simple and natural explanation necessarily true. The improbable (as Aristotle reminds us) frequently happens. Long experience has taught me to write 'may' where others are too apt to write 'must.'

A complex problem cannot admit of a simple solution. Those who offer such a solution neglect some factors in the problem.

## Recent Foreign Theology.

### The Theology of Bellarmine.<sup>1</sup>

M. DE LA SERVIÈRE'S copious and learned work belongs to the Library of Historical Theology now being issued under the direction of the Faculty of the Catholic Institute of Paris. The series has already been enriched by works on the theology of Tertullian and Hippolytus, besides other more general studies. The present monograph is based chiefly on Cardinal Bellarmine's famous and most characteristic work, the *Disputationes de controversiis christianæ fidei adversus hujus temporis hereticos*, published in three volumes from 1586 to 1593. That book was the outcome of eleven years' lecturing in the newly founded *Collegium Romanum* in Rome. Bellarmine was above all an untiring controversialist; polemic drew forth all his powers, and in that age gave him a brilliant opportunity for the display of amazing talents. His clarity of thought, orderliness of mind, and phenomenal argumentative dexterity were cordially acknowledged even by his foes. His *Disputationes* became a veritable arsenal for

the militant Romanist. The need for such a manual had been long felt. What the champions of Rome lacked, remarks M. de la Servièrè, was 'a great work in which, alongside of the enemy's objections faithfully reproduced, they might find a clear and complete exposition of Catholic dogma and its proofs,' with all weapons of attack or defence ranged in order. The supply of this want they gratefully owed to Bellarmine.

His teaching on the infallibility of the Pope would be called moderate to-day. It is to be found in the five books devoted by him to the subject of 'the Roman Pontiff,' of which M. de la Servièrè offers us an excellent survey. Christ, we are told, meant His Church to be a monarchy. For unity and order the monarch must be visible, and in the last chapter of St. John's Gospel, with its 'Feed my sheep,' we see our Lord setting Peter upon the throne, and investing him with supreme power over the Church. It is harder to prove that the Roman bishops are Peter's true successors, and certainly nothing that could be called proof is furnished here. It is conceded, however, that a heretical Pope may be deposed—for an extremely ingenious reason, namely, that in virtue of his open

<sup>1</sup> *La Théologie de Bellarmine*. Par J. de la Servièrè, S. J. Paris: G. Beauchesne & Cie. Prix 8 francs.