HARVARD THEOLOGICAL STUDIES

EDITED FOR THE

FACULTY OF DIVINITY

IN

HARVARD UNIVERSITY

BY

GEORGE F. MOORE, JAMES H. ROPES,
KIRSOPP LAKE

CAMBRIDGE
HARVARD UNIVERSITY PRESS
LONDON: HUMPHREY MILFORD
OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS
1919

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VII

IS MARK A ROMAN GOSPEL?

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CAMBRIDGE
HARVARD UNIVERSITY PRESS
LONDON: HUMPHREY MILFORD
OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS
1919

TO

HARVARD UNIVERSITY

IN GRATEFUL ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF THE
DEGREE OF S.T.D. CONFERRED
JUNE 18, 1914

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IS MARK A ROMAN GOSPEL?

NEXT to the authorship and the date of a Gospel the question of its provenance is of vital moment to the historico-critical interpreter.

An example of this is the fourth Gospel, a writing attributed since 181 A.D. to the Apostle John. It dates from about 110 A.D. and almost certainly emanates from Ephesus, but differs from the Synoptic Gospels to a degree impossible to explain as a mere matter of development in time. Within the limits of a decade or two a Christian community does not so revolutionize its fundamental religious conceptions as to substitute a Christology of incarnation, such as we find in the Johannine writings, for a Christology of apotheosis, such as monopolizes the entire field in all the Synoptic literature, and manifestly represents the accepted doctrine throughout the churches which employed this literature for catechetic purposes. And the contrast between Johannine and Synoptic literature is not confined to Christology. The differences are quite as great in other doctrinal fields such as soteriology and eschatology, to say nothing of questions of form and of historical fact.

The true explanation of these differences between the first three and the fourth Gospel must be more geographical than temporal. The two types derive not so much from different periods as from different environments. We may properly speak of the four Synoptic writings (counting Acts as a separate work) as Syrian; for in spite of the admixture in Matthew and Luke of an important Second Source,[1] the three Gospels all represent, through common dependence on an outline of "Petrine"[2] story, a basic report which, however adapted in Mark to the emancipating, anti-legalistic, principles of the

[1] The material commonly designated by the symbol Q.

[2] The term "Petrine" is here employed, not in the doctrinal sense attached to it by the Tübingen critics, but merely to characterize material which has Peter as its central figure next to the Lord; or at least reports events as they would appear from the testimony of this Apostle.

Gentile churches (and in this doctrinal sense Pauline), goes back for its historical data to Peter and the Galilean Apostles.

In the later, elaborated form of Matthew and Luke this Synoptic type of evangelic tradition cannot be much earlier than 100 A.D., whether Matthew or (more probably) Luke be prior. The Markan form is more primitive; but while it may antedate Matthew and Luke by ten or possibly fifteen years, ancient tradition itself does not at first claim for Mark an origin within the life-time of the Apostles, but frankly admits the loss of the true sequence of events in Jesus' career, ascribing it to the inability of Mark to consult the eye-witnesses.[1] This unfortunate disappearance of the "order" is attested not merely by the ancient tradition which we have presently to scrutinize, but at an earlier time by our third evangelist (Luke 1, 1–4, καθεξῆς), and subsequently by an early defender of the "order" of the fourth Gospel.[2]

Whatever the precise dates, and whatever the exact provenance of this triad of Gospels, Mark, its earliest member, together with the two satellites of Mark, embodies what we may designate the "Petrine," or "Galilean," tradition of the sayings and doings of Jesus. The Ephesian Gospel, which stands over against this group, in closer relation to the Second Source than to Mark, may justly be termed "Deutero-Pauline"; for it not only embodies the distinctive Christology and soteriology of Paul, in many respects completing and reconstructing Synoptic tradition from the viewpoint characteristic of the Pauline Epistles, especially Ephesians, but (as we have seen) it can be definitely traced to Ephesus, the headquarters of Paul's missionary activity. This Ephesian Gospel, if it deigns to borrow some few elements of Galilean tradition, presents them only in a form completely recast, adapting them to the paramount purpose of exhibiting the whole earthly career of Jesus from the Pauline standpoint. It is set forth as a sort of *avatar* of the eternal Logos.

[1] On the later modifications of the tradition which avoid this unwelcome result, see below, p. 20.

[2] The Muratorian Fragment (to be dated with Lightfoot ca. 185, against Zahn, Harnack and modern scholars generally). Its author quotes 1 John 1, 1–3 in support of his claim that John narrated events "in their order."

A concrete example will help to demonstrate the importance (as yet by no means appreciated) of this differentiation of Petrine, or Synoptic, gospel tradition from the Deutero-Pauline, or Johannine; for it has a direct bearing on questions of historical criticism. The Petrine tradition in both its branches has much to say of Jesus' work in exorcizing evil spirits. In the Second Source one of the principal dialogues centers round the accusation of the scribes, " He casteth out by Beelzebub." In both elements of the Book of Acts exorcism is prominent as a demonstration of the Spirit and of power. In the Petrine speeches of I Acts [1] Jesus' ministry is specifically described as " going about doing good, healing all those that were oppressed of the devil." In Mark, above all, exorcism is the typical evidence of Jesus' supernatural power. It is the " beginning of miracles " at Capernaum (1, 21–28), the commission of the Twelve (3, 15), and the proof of supreme power at the mount of Transfiguration (9, 14–29). Power over demons is the assurance the reader receives from the evangelist that Jesus is in reality " the Holy One of God " (1, 24, 34; 3, 11–12; 5, 7), and constitutes the ground on which the Twelve are brought to this conviction (4, 39–41).[2] Its supreme manifestation is the beginning of the end (13, 25). Most characteristic is the story of the exorcizing of the legion of devils (5, 1–20). Here Red.-Marc.,[3] if he does not actually build upon the well attested incident of II Acts (cf. Mark 5, 7 with Acts 16, 17), at all events makes manifest the ground of his own theory of demonic recognition (1, 24, 34; 3, 10–12). On this Petrine basis accordingly exorcism appears as the typical and characteristic mighty work of Jesus and his disciples. It is the nucleus and core of Markan Christology.

Turn now to Pauline and Deutero-Pauline tradition. Only in the form of a wrestling against the powers of darkness " in

[1] Acts 1, 1–15, 35 has been proved by Prof. C. C. Torrey (Composition and Date of Acts. Harvard Theological Studies I, 1916) to be the translation of an Aramaic work which has Peter as its central figure. Following Torrey's nomenclature we designate this portion as I Acts.

[2] It is important to observe that the language addressed to the storm (*πεφίμωσο*, cf. 1, 25) implies that to the evangelist it is a manifestation of *demonic* power.

[3] I. e., Redactor Marci. The designation is used for the evangelist individually in distinction from his sources, or material.

the heavenlies" (ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανίοις) is there any trace of exorcism in Paul; and this is the only trace of it in the fourth Gospel (John 12, 31). It is easy to attribute the silence of Paul as to exorcisms of Jesus to accident, somewhat less easy thus to account for his silence on the subject in referring to gifts of "miracles" and "healings" in the Church, and practically impossible thus to account for the silence of the fourth Gospel. We may say that Pauline and Deutero-Pauline tradition is on this point less historical. There is abundant reason to hold that on this point the more cultured circles represented by Paul and the fourth evangelist felt rather differently from the οἱ πολλοί, and their reserve may be thus accounted for. On the other hand the type of Christology represented in Mark 5, 1–20 and the connected passages need not be unaffected by the form of belief cherished in Petrine circles.

The purpose for which this illustration is adduced is not to determine on which side the truer representation lies, but to note the difference, and the consequent importance of distinguishing the two types of evangelic tradition, and to observe that they are not developments the one from the other, but must have existed for a considerable period side by side.

At the latest the Johannine Gospel cannot be more than a decade or two later in origin than the Synoptic group, whose development covers approximately the period 75–100 A.D. Provenance, therefore, in the case of this fundamental distinction between the Petrine and the Deutero-Pauline type, is a matter of much more significance to the critical exegete than mere date. The contrast of Johannine and Synoptic represents the difference between the Deutero-Pauline point of view and that of the Galilean Apostles in its later development. It is a difference which with due appreciation of the provenance becomes not merely intelligible but illuminating. In their attempt to explain the historical origin of the Gospels the Tübingen critics made altogether too much of the idea of rectilinear development. Recognizing the extreme degree of the difference here noted, they postulated almost a century of time to account for the development of the Johannine Logos doctrine beyond the apotheosis Christology of the Synoptists; forgetting that in

all but name the Logos doctrine is already present in the Pauline Epistles, the earliest literature of all, since, group for group, the Pauline Epistles antedate the Synoptic writings by a full generation. Thus the school of Baur, in spite of their epoch-making insight into the interworking of Jewish and Gentile tendencies in the apostolic church (the so-called Petrine and Pauline gospel), conspicuously failed in their theory of Gospel origins. The failure was largely due to neglect of the geographical factor. It remains to be seen whether twentieth-century criticism will have broader vision than Tübingen, and better appreciation of the fact so curiously symbolized by Irenaeus in his famous defense[1] of the "sacred quaternion," that the great catholic Gospels are representative of *world-regions*, standing for phases of the common teaching characteristic of the great historic divisions of the Church.

Mark, the earliest extant Gospel, shows the beginnings of Synoptic development, or of Gospel *story* as distinct from *precept*. It determines the Syrian type, and in this case, for this reason, date is a matter of greater importance than provenance. Fortunately the post-apostolic[2] date for Mark, so emphatically attested in the most ancient testimony (and in our judgment strongly corroborated by the internal evidence), is only disputed by a group of ultra-modern scholars following the watchword of Harnack, "Back to tradition." In this case the reaction is not merely back to tradition but far beyond it.

In the case of the type-determining, original member of the Synoptic group the question of provenance may perhaps be admitted to be on the whole less important than that of date; but it is far from being merely academic.

A Gospel is seldom the product of a single author's mind, and for this reason is not in the earlier times superscribed with his name. Each of the four canonical Gospels, at least, embodies

[1] Haer. iii, 11, 8.

[2] In an important passage of his Stromateis (vii, 17, 106 f.). Clement of Alexandria dates the periods covered respectively by the teaching (1) of the Lord, (2) of the Apostles, (3) of the heresiarchs. The Apostolic age ends according to Clement with the close of "Paul's ministry under Nero." It is in this sense that we employ the term "post-apostolic."

the catechetic material of a church, the entire available record of its many pastors and teachers relating to the mission and teaching of Jesus. Compositions of a more limited character, reflecting the special views of individuals, undoubtedly were produced. References to them occur in the Fathers. But such writings could not survive. Only what stood for the generality, and was in the main a just reflection of current belief obtained general currency, and ultimately canonicity. Hence the importance of provenance. Were it merely a question where the evangelist Mark happened to be when he sat down to write, it would be trifling enough. If, however, this Gospel really represents that phase of Syrian evangelic tradition which had become current in the great Gentile church of Rome a decade or so after the death of Paul, the fact is of vital significance. It will throw much-needed light on the history of this obscure period, and will help us to interpret its scanty records. In confronting the problem we necessarily fall back upon the approved critical method: first, scrutiny of early testimony; secondly, survey of the phenomena of dissemination; thirdly, comparison of the internal evidence.