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J. T. MARSHALL

THE ARAMAIC GOSPEL.

INTRODUCTORY.

IN THE EXPOSITOR of last July there appeared an article from the present writer entitled, "Did St. Paul Use a Semitic Gospel?" That article was confessed to be a mere side-issue to a much wider theme of investigation; and though complete in itself, and of great importance, as seeming to prove that the words of the Lord Jesus existed in written form during the fifties of the first century, yet the stability of its positions must ultimately repose upon the establishment, on other grounds, of the wider question, Was the Gospel wholly or partially first written in Aramaic? If the reader was conscious of a slight ὑστερον πρότερον in the process of argument, it may perhaps be condoned by the fact that the order of discovery is not always the order of logic. The task then to which we wish to address ourselves in a series of articles about to appear in this magazine is *to prove the existence of an Aramaic Gospel embedded in our present Gospels, and to unveil its contents.* The method of research pursued in our investigations is certainly self-originated and independent, and though we shall occasionally come upon the track of other explorers, we shall for the most part strike out a path for ourselves.

But before we proceed to the exposition of our method, it will be desirable to lay before the reader certain facts relating to the Aramaic language and to the Aramaic Gospel mentioned by Papias, and also certain theories respecting these facts, so as to lead to a clearer understanding of

PART I

the entire subject. This preliminary matter we will throw into the form of answers to some brief and well-defined questions.

I. By whom was the Aramaic language spoken ?

The Aramaic language was spoken by the inhabitants of Mesopotamia and Syria; by the Mandeans, or Sabians, who lived in Assyria; by the Nabatheans, who at one time inhabited Petra and the Sinaitic Peninsula; by the Temanites of Northern Arabia; and, for at least two centuries before Christ, it was commonly spoken in Palestine. Besides this, for several centuries prior to the conquests of Alexander the Great, Aramaic held the proud position of being the medium of intercourse between monarchs, statesmen, and merchants over the whole of Western Asia. It was known to Rabshakeh the Assyrian (2 Kings xviii. 26), and also to the nobles of Jerusalem, but not, at *that* time, to the Jewish populace. Rabshakeh insisted, we find, on delivering his insolent message in the Jews' language, יְהוֹדִית, so that all could understand him; whereas the Jewish nobles begged him to speak Aramaic, אַרְמֵיִת, that *they only* might understand. So also when the adversaries of Judah wrote to Artaxerxes to warn him of the danger of allowing Jerusalem to be rebuilt, Aramaic was the language in which the letter was written, and in which it is still extant (Ezra iv. 11-16), and the decree sent by Artaxerxes to revoke the former one was in the same language (Ezra vii. 12-26). Similarly, in the court of Nebuchadnezzar at Babylon, the one language in which the courtiers, drawn from so many conquered nations, made themselves understood to one another was Aramaic; as we find (Dan. ii. 4) when the Chaldeans came in to interpret the king's forgotten dream, they spoke אַרְמֵיִת. A misinterpretation of this verse has been the cause of much confusion all down the ages. Because the Chaldean magicians spoke Aramaic, it has been inferred that that was the language of the *people*

of Chaldæa; and hence Aramaic and Chaldee have been used as convertible terms. Luther, for instance, translates אַרְמִית in Daniel ii. 4 "auf Chaldäisch," but in Ezra iv. 7 "auf Syrisch." As distinct from this supposed *Eastern* dialect, that of Syria and Palestine was called Western Aramaic, or Syro-Chaldaic. The cuneiform inscriptions have however revealed the fact that the language of Chaldæa, though cognate, was vastly different from Aramaic; and thus it is totally misleading for our Bible lexicons to be called "*Hebrew and Chaldee*" and for the Targums to be designated "*Chaldee Targums*." The wide difference between Aramaic and the language of Chaldæa is demonstrated, we say, from the inscriptions; but it might have been *inferred* from Isaiah xxxiii. 19 and Jeremiah v. 15, where we are told that the language of the Babylonians was one which none of the Jews could understand, whereas the Jewish nobles understood Aramaic.

A convenient *division* of the Aramaic dialects is (1) Syriac, (2) Mandaitic, and (3) Palestinian-Aramaic. It is convenient geographically, and it is also based on an important grammatical distinction; namely, that the regular pre-formative to the third singular future is, in the three dialects, ܢ, ܠ, and ܐ respectively.¹

II. What specimens of Palestinian-Aramaic have come down to us?

The specimens, as the name implies, are chiefly Jewish. The Aramaic portions of the Bible are Daniel ii. 4 to vii. 28; Ezra iv. 8-16, vii. 12-26; and Jeremiah x. 11. The Book of Tobit also exists in Aramaic, in a unique MS. in the British Museum, which has been edited by Dr. Neubauer; but our chief documents are the Targums. When the Jews ceased to understand Hebrew, and the

¹ For further information, the student is referred to Kautzsch's *Grammatik des Biblisch-Aramäischen*, and Dr. Wright's *Comparative Grammar of Semitic Languages*.

vernacular was Aramaic, it became a practice in the synagogues, in reading the law, to allow an interpreter, verse by verse, to translate the Hebrew into the vernacular. At first the interpreter was not allowed to *read*, he must utter his translation orally; but in course of time a guild was formed, and the translations became more uniform, until in the first or second century A.D. some one master-mind produced, as a "deposit" of the work of his colleagues and predecessors, the so-called Targum of Onkelos. This Targum is in every sense the most valuable; and, with the exception of some subtle evasions of biblical anthropomorphisms and of phrases adjudged to be derogatory to the Divine dignity, it is a remarkably accurate translation. There is in existence also a paraphrase of the Pentateuch; that is, a very free translation, embellished with legendary lore. This is of much later date than the Targum of Onkelos, and contains many Greek words. It exists in two recensions, known as the Targum of Jonathan and the Jerusalem Targum. Equally paraphrastic are the Targums on most of the rest of the Bible; except Proverbs, which is a fairly literal translation.¹ The Samaritan Targum² on the Pentateuch is also in Aramaic, but with an admixture of foreign words from various sources. The specimens of the so-called Palestinian-Aramaic *outside* the Holy Land are (a) some papyrus fragments and stone inscriptions written by Aramaeans and Jews who sojourned in Egypt, some of which belong to the fifth century B.C.; (b) the inscriptions found in Tadmor (Palmyra); (c) some interesting Temanite inscriptions in North Arabia; and (d) the Nabathean inscriptions on rocks and tombs in Petra, Sinai, and the Haurán. Some specimens of the last two are given

¹ The Jews of Wilna have issued the Pentateuch in five small volumes, with Targum and Rabbinic commentary. This is a fact worth knowing, as the Bibles of Bomberg and Buxtorf are difficult to meet with.

² Dr. Brüll has brought out in cheap form an edition of the Samaritan Targum in Hebrew square letters. (Frankfort.)

by Dr. Neubauer in a valuable paper included in *Studia Biblica*.

III. What are the peculiarities of Aramaic, as compared with Hebrew?

Hebrew and Aramaic belong evidently to two distinct groups of the great Semitic family. This fact has been very imperfectly recognised. Eichhorn, for instance, in advocating his theory of a Syro-Chaldaic *Urevangelium*, constantly used Hebrew by way of illustration;¹ and even Dr. Roberts speaks of Aramaic as "a Hebrew *patois*."² Hebrew and Aramaic are cognate, but too unlike to be placed in the same group. The group to which Hebrew belongs contains also Phœnician, Canaanite, and Moabite. But what is very remarkable is, that there is grave reason for doubting whether any of these peoples spoke this language *originally*. The Phœnicians are said in Genesis x. to be a Hamitic people; and their love of the sea, their skill in trade and manufacture, and their city-life distinctly declare them to be non-Semitic: and yet all their literary remains are in a dialect closely akin to Hebrew; so that they must have been immigrants, adopting the language of the aboriginal inhabitants. The Phœnicians called themselves Kenaani, and thus were the same people as the Canaanites; and consequently *both* were immigrants.³ As for the Abrahamidæ, the evidence is not so strong; but if Abram's cousins in Haran were Aramæans (Gen. xxv. 20, xxviii. 5), and if Laban, as a good Aramæan should, called "a heap of witness" יְהוָה שְׂהִידָא (Gen. xxxi. 47), had not Abram spoken the same language 150 years before? If so, the Abrahamidæ and Moabites were Aramæans, and adopted the Hebrew language from the older inhabitants "who were then in the land."

¹ *Einleitung in das Neue Testament*, vol. i.

² *THE EXPOSITOR*. First Series. Vol. vi., p. 81.

³ This view is ably advocated by Dr. Schrader in Riehm's *Handwörterbuch*, art. "Phœnicien."

But to return. When the Hebrew student takes up the Targums he finds himself in another field. This is not the place to dilate upon the *grammatical* differences; but the absence of the prefixed article, the rareness of the construct state, the disappearance of the "Vav conversive," and the totally new conjugations will at once attract attention. And what strikes him more is, that some of the *verbs* which are most frequent in Hebrew are no longer to be seen. Such verbs as לקח, to receive, דיבר, to speak, and עשה, to do, are conspicuous by their absence. Perhaps the most remarkable thing is the thorough change in the simple verbs of "rest" and "motion." עלה, to "go up"; ירד, to "go down"; בוא, to "go in"; יצא, to "go out"; and עמד, to "stand," are not to be found in Aramaic. So also the verbs of "leading," אשר, נחה, and נהל; of "fleeing," נס and חסה; of "departing," סיר, זיר, and סוג, have no equivalent in Aramaic.

The science of Comparative Philology has made many interesting disclosures as to primitive culture and local origin by examining what words the members of a class of languages possess in common, and in what they differ. The former denote, of course, the words in common use *before the dispersion*; the latter, the words which each people required to invent or borrow *after* the dispersion. I am not aware that this method has hitherto been applied to Hebrew and Aramaic, but the results are worthy of note. Both have the same name for "God"; for "sea"; for the ordinary relatives; for the domestic animals, sheep, camel, horse, and cattle; and even for "ploughing" and "sowing": but when we come to words descriptive of *locality*, we find an important diversity. Both have the same words for "plains" and level ground: בקעה, "a wide plain between two mountain ranges"; כישור, "downs"; שפלה, "lowlands"; and מדבר, "a steppe," are all common to both: but to designate a "mountain," Hebrew uses

two words, *הָר* and *גִּבְעָה*, neither of which is found in any other Semitic tongue; and the Hebrew words for "valley," *עֵמֶק*, "ravine," *גֵּיא*, "cliff," *סֶלַע*, are none of them found in Aramaic; yet they have the same words for "river," *נָהָר* and *יֵבֶל*. From these facts we infer that the common home of the two peoples was not a mountainous country.

Then as to their *social condition*. They have both the same word for "dwelling," *בֵּית*; but the words for "wall," *גֶּדֶר*, *חוֹמָה*, and *חֵיץ*, are not Aramaic words. The Hebrew word *קִיר*, "a wall," is connected with the Aramaic *קִרְיָא*, "a city"; but both come from a root meaning "to dig," which shows that the *cities* before the dispersion had "walls" of earth. As for collections of water, they have the same word for "fountain," *עֵין*; for "pool," *אֲגִם*, and also for "well," *בְּאֵר* (Aram., *בִּירְא*). This, taken along with the fact that they have common words for "ploughing" and "sowing," shows that when the Aramæan and Hebrew parted company, they were living in much the same condition as Abram and Lot. Their residence together does not seem to have been embittered by warfare, for each language has its own word for "fighting"; and of the Hebrew words meaning "to kill" or "slay," the following six words, *הָרַג*, *מָתַח*, *פָּרַח*, *שָׁחַט*, *רָצַח* and *זָבַח* are without equivalent in the more peaceful Aramaic. As to the four points of the compass, the Hebrew tongue fixes its own locality by using *יָם*, "sea," for "west"; and *נֶגֶב*, "the desert," for "south." Aramaic of course does not use these words, but designates the east, south, and west by terms which denote respectively the rising, brilliance, and setting of the sun. Thus the Aramaic language does not fix its own locality—presumably there was nothing remarkable in its boundaries. As we have seen then, the evidence indicates that the common home of the Hebrew and Aramæan was a great plain, and that it was the Hebrew who emigrated. It is probable that this plain was that

of the Euphrates; but it is perhaps premature to decide on this, until scholars have come to an agreement as to whether the primitive seat of all the Semites was in Arabia or Mesopotamia.

IV. What explanation can be given of the fact that the vernacular of the Jewish people changed after the captivity from Hebrew to Aramaic?

Mr. Deutsch, in Smith's *Bible Dictionary* (vol. iii., p. 1638), gives the usual explanation of the gradual decay of the Hebrew vernacular in the fact that during the captivity in Babylon the Jewish exiles "enjoyed full liberty of intercommunication with the natives, and were utterly unrestrained in the exercise of every profession and trade," and hence became quite "familiar with the Aramaic." Yet he does not seem to have been satisfied with this theory, for in the article on "Semitic Languages" in Kitto's *Cyclopædia*, he says that the captivity, even allowing for successive batches of immigrants from Babylonia, "does not quite account for the phenomenon of a seemingly poor and corrupt dialect supplanting so completely the other, hallowed by the most sacred traditions, that this became a dead language even in its own country." He then confesses that "the fact has not been sufficiently explained as yet." That is twenty-five years ago, and many things have been made clear since then. But there is one thing which was accessible to Mr. Deutsch which he failed to notice, and that is, that even when the Jewish exiles had been home for a century, they still spoke in the *Jewish* tongue; for in the days of Nehemiah (chap. xiii. 24) the inhabitants of Jerusalem ordinarily spoke *לשון כנענית*. Clearly then they *had not* learned Aramaic in Babylonia; and the deciphering of the cuneiform inscriptions has shown that they *had no facilities* for doing so; for though Aramaic was spoken at court, yet the language of Babylonia was more like Hebrew than Aramaic, and very unlike both.

Further, we now know that it was on the soil of the Holy Land that the Jews learned Aramaic; for (1) the inscriptions of Petra have disclosed that the so-called Arabians (*i.e.* desert-rangers), of whom Geshem (or Gashmu) was chieftain, and who appear with the Samaritans in the very precincts of Jerusalem, first deriding and then opposing the efforts of Nehemiah to rebuild the city, were really Nabatheans, speaking the Aramaic language. Ewald, in his *History of Israel*, maintains that it was during the exile that the Nabatheans vanquished Edom, and began to establish themselves in the deserted cities of Judah. Thus the returned exiles were exposed to Aramaizing influences on the south. And (2) on the north it was equally so. We find in 2 Kings xvii. that the colonists sent to dwell in the depopulated towns of the northern tribes came from the towns of Babylonia¹ and from Hamath.² Now the Hamathites, though originally a Hamitic people, most probably spoke Aramaic. But besides this, the cuneiform inscriptions also narrate that the Sargon who dismantled Samaria sent the remnants of several conquered tribes of Northern Arabia into Samaria³—tribes which were akin to the Temanites, and who with them had paid tribute to Tiglath-pileser II. But it has, as we have said, recently been discovered that the Temanites spoke Aramaic, and therefore we infer that the kindred tribes which were sent by Sargon "to the land of the house of Omri" also spoke Aramaic. In this way (along with the dominant influence of Syria during the Seleucid period) do we account for the historic fact that Samaria and Galilee came to speak Aramaic as the vernacular. Thus the returned exiles were immigrants wedged between two Aramæan peoples; and consequently, first Judæa, and then Jerusalem, gradually succumbed: so

¹ Compare Schrader's *Cuneiform Inscriptions and the Old Testament*, vol. i., p. 268.

² Schrader, *op. cit.*, p. 273.

³ *Op. cit.*, p. 269 seq.

gradually, that they retained the name ἡ Ἑβραϊσὶς διάλεκτος for the speech of the Jewish people, even after they spoke Aramaic. That this is so is clear from the fact that, though every specimen of Semitic extant in the New Testament is Aramaic, yet Ἀραμαῖστί never occurs, and the words Bethesda, Golgotha, and Gabbatha, all Aramaic forms, are all said to be Ἑβραῖστί. Dr. Neubauer is of opinion that Jerusalem did *not* succumb to the Aramaizing influence, but that in the days of Christ the populace spoke a modernized Hebrew. His reasons are given at length in *Studia Biblica*, vol. i., p. 45 seq., and they certainly prove that new-Hebrew was spoken by the *learned*. But there is one fact which Dr. Neubauer has overlooked when he maintains that the *popular* dialect of Jerusalem was Hebrew; and that is, that the field in which Judas committed suicide was called (Acts i. 19) by the inhabitants of Jerusalem *in their own tongue* (τῇ ἰδίᾳ διαλέκτῳ) Ἀκελδαμά. But this is Aramaic, אַרְבָּעָה לֶחָדָה, "field of blood"—the Hebrew for "field" being חֵדָר. This seems to prove that even in the holy city the *people* spoke Aramaic.

V. In what language did the Saviour deliver His discourses? Is it probable that He was able to converse both in Aramaic and Greek?

This is a question of deep interest to every Christian, and the more one loves the Lord Jesus as a personal friend the more wishful will he be to know decisively. The all but unanimous testimony of scholars is that He spoke Aramaic. This was certainly the vernacular of Galilee, and the few Semitic words spoken by our Lord which are left embedded in the Greek of our present Gospels are all Aramaic. These are words which were felt to be too precious to be translated; and though they are few in number, they are amply sufficient to show that, even if the Saviour could speak Greek, yet Aramaic was the language of His home and of His heart. The names Boanerges

(Mark iii. 17) and Cephas (John i. 42), given to the three favourite disciples, are Aramaic. And when Jesus took the deaf and dumb man aside privately (Mark vii. 34), and "looked to heaven and sighed," the language of the sigh was an Aramaic word, אֲתַפְתֵּחַ, which is, for euphony, transliterated *épphathá*. And when the Saviour stood over the lovely form of that child of twelve summers in the house of Jairus, and the heart of Jesus spoke in its native tongue to that which was innermost in the reviving child, He used the Aramaic words מַלְּתָא קִימִי "Maiden, arise." In Gethsemane He used the precious word אֲבַטָּא (אֲבַטָּא); and when, as the Mediator, He hung upon the cross, the words of despair which He uttered, linked as they are so essentially with the great vicarious purpose of His death, are left, as too precious to translate, in the very words in which they were spoken, אֵלִי אֵלִי לָמָּא שְׁבַקְתָּנִי, *Eli, Eli, lama shabaqtani*? This is pure Aramaic. The word שְׁבַק does not occur in Hebrew at all, but its *import* may be gathered from such passages in the Targums as these: Ruth i. 16, "Entreat me not to *leave* thee"; Psalm xxxvii. 25, "I have not seen the righteous *forsaken*"; ver. 28, "The Lord loveth judgment, He *forsaketh* not His saints." The fact that our Lord quoted Psalm xxii. 1 in Aramaic shows, that, even if we may not infer that the Targum had been committed to writing thus early, it was the Aramaic form of the psalm which had endeared itself to the Saviour's heart.

It is well known that there have been some few scholars who have maintained that Christ habitually spoke Greek. In the first series of this magazine there was an interesting controversy between Dr. Roberts and Dr. Sanday on the subject. Dr. Roberts must certainly be admitted, as the result of much research, to have brought to light many neglected facts to prove the prevalence of Greek in the Holy Land. He shows that the conquests of Alexander introduced a new leaven into oriental life. Greek supplanted

Aramaic as the one language of commerce, and as such was spoken by tradesmen and artisans; and many also among the nobles were fascinated by the new pleasures which Grecian civilization opened up for them, and adopted Greek names and Greek dress. To my mind, Dr. Roberts has *proved* "that Christ spoke Greek"—i.e. was *familiar* with the Greek tongue; indeed, I intend to bring forward a new line of reasoning which seems to prove that *some* of the sayings of our Lord are preserved to us in the very words in which they were spoken. One could wish one had been more successful in this search. It would be a pleasanter task to prove that *all* the sayings of Christ recorded in our Greek Gospels are "the *ipsissima verba* which proceeded out of His mouth," than to prove that those *words* have been lost; yet the stern logic of facts leaves us no other recourse than to admit that the discourses of the Saviour were, for the most part, delivered in the Aramaic vernacular—in the mother-tongue—the language in which love speaks to love and heart to heart. We intend however to prove also that the precious words were at a very early period committed to writing, and that each of the synoptists in his account of our Lord's discourses translated from this Aramaic document; and it is not a hopeless wish that in those passages which the three synoptists have in common, the Greek *may* be re-translated into the very words the Saviour used. What a gain this would be to sound scholarship, as well as to theology, we need not pause to describe.

VI. What evidence have we that the discourses of the Saviour were, in the first instance, written in Aramaic?

The earliest testimony on this subject is to be found in a quotation from Papias given by Eusebius in his *Ecclesiastical History*. Papias was bishop of Hierapolis in Phrygia in the earlier half of the first century, and he says that he learned from John the presbyter that "Matthew compiled

the oracles in the Hebrew (? Aramaic) language, and each one interpreted them as he was able" (Ματθαῖος μὲν οὖν Ἑβραϊδὶ διαλέκτῳ τὰ λόγια συνετάξατο, ἡρμήνευσε δ' αὐτὰ ὡς ἦν δυνατός ἕκαστος). There are not many texts of Scripture which have been more controverted than this brief statement. First of all, we have a "various reading," which however does not affect the sense seriously. Many of the Germans read *συνετάξατο*, while our English scholars give *συνεγράψατο*, the difference being that of "compiling" and "composing." Then it is disputed whether Papias knew of a *Greek* Matthew; but the aorist *ἡρμήνευσε* is usually, and correctly, regarded as indicating that the time when the Aramaean Matthew was used was already long past, and probably if the *δε* clause were forthcoming it would allude to the translation. Most important is the dispute as to the meaning of the word *λόγια*. On the one hand, scholars of very different schools restrict the word to its classic import, and hold that the Aramaic Matthew was "simply a collection of discourses," "the oracular or Divine utterances of the Lord Jesus"; while others regard our Greek Gospel as merely a translation from the Aramaic. Dr. Lightfoot, for instance, in his *Essays on Supernatural Religion*, appeals to Romans iii. 2, where the whole Old Testament is called *λόγια*; he also quotes from Philo and Clement, who use the word as synonymous with "the Scriptures": and hence infers that the Aramaic *λόγια* mentioned by Papias comprised our entire Greek Gospel. But our surest guide as to the meaning in which an author uses a word is to consult the author himself: and when we find that Papias composed a work, *Explanation of the Oracles of the Lord*, *Λογίων κυριακῶν ἐξηγήσεις*, and that this consisted largely of an interpretation of the discourses of Jesus; confirming (?) *διαβεβαιούμενος*, his interpretations by sayings more or less fabulous, which he claims to have traced to the circle of the apostles: and when we find that Papias, in comparing

the Gospels of Matthew and Mark, speaks of the latter as containing τὰ ὑπὸ τοῦ Χριστοῦ ἢ λεχθέντα ἢ πραχθέντα, "the things said *or done* by the Christ," and says also that Mark, in contrast with Matthew, does *not* give a σύνταξις τῶν κυριακῶν λογίων (or λόγων), *i.e.* "a compilation of the oracles of the Lord,"—we must admit that the word λόγια, as used by Papias, means chiefly the Lord's discourses; though it *might* also include a brief narrative of the events which served as a setting for some of our Lord's most important utterances, and apart from which they are unintelligible. It is our intention to advance a method which will serve as a touchstone to decide on the contents of the Aramaic *Logia*, and we shall find that it contained almost all the discourses of Jesus and some of the narratives in a condensed form. And as to the connexion between the Aramaic Matthew and our present first Gospel, we believe that our Greek Gospel is a second and enlarged edition of the Aramaic, written after the lapse of some years, when the Church had begun to realize that it is not the *words* of Christ merely that demand our attention, but that His life and works are also Divine oracles, revealing to us the Father.

Papias is not the only Church Father who records that Matthew wrote a Gospel τῇ Ἑβραϊδὶ διαλέκτῳ. Pantænus, who preached among "the Indians," says that Bartholomew had preceded him, and left there the writing (γραφὴ) of Matthew in Hebrew letters. Further testimonies on the subject are collected by Meyer on *Matthew*, pp. 4-8.

VII. What theories have hitherto been held as to the probability that Mark and Luke used the Aramaic Gospel in the compilation of their "Memoirs"?

To answer this question fully would be a tedious and a thankless task. Theories on this subject have sprung up on the fertile soil of Germany, like the fabled warriors from the teeth of the dragon on the soil of Bœotia, meeting with the same fate—mutual destruction. But it should be borne

in mind, that if ever the knotty problem of the synoptic Gospels is to be solved, it must be by the resuscitation of some theory thought to be effete; for every *possible* theory has been advocated, and every one has also been stoned and dragged out for dead. We will restrict ourselves then to some of the most important of these theories. The first great name which claims attention is that of Eichhorn, who thought he had discovered the contents of the Syro-Chaldaic *Urevangelium* in the forty-four sections which the synoptists have in common. Whatever is found in all the three Gospels belonged in his judgment to our Aramaic Gospel, written about the time of the stoning of Stephen. This primitive document was circulated, and was gradually expanded in three different districts by different authors, and then each was translated into Greek. The use of some two of these secondary documents by the synoptists explains the cases where *two* of them agree; while other documents had to be sought as the source of the passages in which each of our evangelists stands alone. Led on by the criticism of opponents, Eichhorn was continually discovering fresh *Urkunden* in a somewhat arbitrary way, considering himself called upon to specify the document from which each verse in our synoptists had been culled. The theory of Eichhorn caused an immense sensation throughout Germany for some years, but the excessive ingenuity and arbitrariness of its later accretions caused it to fall into disrepute. Its chief fault was its dead mechanism. It made the Gospels a mere mosaic of pre-existent materials. It allowed too little for prevalent peculiarities of style in each Gospel, for the independent idiosyncrasies of apostles and apostolic men, still less for inspiration. It quite ignored the fact that each Gospel has its *raison d'être*; that each evangelist was supernaturally endowed with a sublime conception of Jesus and His work; and that in the choice of materials, the arrangement of details, the

omission and insertion of incidents, each evangelist was dominated by his own divinely given conception of the Christ. The Tübingen school of some twenty years later was a reaction against this stolid mechanism. It sought for a *raison d'être*, and was so far right; but was wrong in finding it in a supposed antipathy between the Pauline and Petrine sections of the Church.

The next great scholar that we would name as having investigated the Papiian Matthew is Schleiermacher. He came to the conclusion that the *Logia* was nothing more than a collection of our Lord's sayings; and also that the proto-Mark was not nearly so large as our Mark, but simply the notes which Peter gave to Mark, and thus our Gospels are not in either case the writing to which Papias refers. He was opposed by Weisse, who shows that Papias' description of Mark answers admirably to our canonical Mark. Then came Knobel, who held that the Aramaic *Logia* and the canonical Mark were the two oldest independent documents, and the sources from which chiefly our Gospels of Matthew and Luke were compiled. Meyer maintains that the Aramaic Matthew was gradually expanded by the interweaving of historical matter. Thus enlarged, it was translated into Greek, and became our first Gospel. In its Aramaic form it was used to some extent by Mark and Luke. Mark was written before Matthew was enlarged, and the author of the canonical Matthew (who was not Matthew himself) made use of Mark. Then comes Weiss who claims to have improved on his predecessors in two ways: (1) in the discovery that the *Logia* contained many narratives in addition to the discourses of our Lord. (2) As Meyer, he held that Mark and Luke had the *Logia* before them in writing—not however in Aramaic, but in a Greek translation.

Thus we see that there is a strong body of opinion that the common matter of the synoptists was taken from a

written source ; and we see that several scholars of the first rank have maintained that the Aramaic *Logia* was translated into Greek by each of the three synoptists. This is the conclusion to which we also have come by thoroughly independent investigation. There is a *counter-theory*, first advocated by Gieseler, which, through Bishop Westcott's influence, has been extensively adopted in this country, and has recently been presented in fully developed form by the Rev. Arthur Wright. This is the theory of *oral tradition*. The advocates of this view remind us of the fact that the memoirs of Christ's life were recited in the Church by the catechists, and committed to memory by the catechumens ; and they seek to explain the variations in the homologous matter of the synoptists by two human imperfections : (1) the necessarily variant account which different equally-credible witnesses would give of the same incident ; and (2) the imperfection of human memory in transmitting orally the same discourse. The great objection usually urged against this theory is, that it does not explain the agreement of our Gospels, which is not simply one of words, but sometimes " extends to finishing touches and details of expression, as also to its introductory and transitional formulæ, and in many cases continues throughout long speeches and even series of narratives such as could never have been transmitted in oral tradition " (Weiss : *Introduction*, vol. ii., p. 209). We wish to add a more forcible objection to the theory of oral tradition. If it can be shown, as we hope to do, that the variations in the common matter of the synoptists are, in numerous cases—and we hope to bring forward more than sixty—due to a variant translation of a common Aramaic original, then the theory which would explain them by the errancy of oral tradition must be admitted to be inadequate, if not untenable.

J. T. MARSHALL.