

THE AUTHORS OF THE GOSPELS

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[According to the Clementine Tradition]

BY

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The Gospels are Historical

Fifth Edition



**The Church in History
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This publication brings together the Synoptic researches of many, especially the following pioneers:

Dr. Henry Owen (1716-1795). Anglican priest, Scripture scholar and Boyle Lecturer. First pioneer in modern times to propose the Matthew-Luke-Mark order of the Gospels.

Johann Griesbach (1745-1812). Lutheran University professor who spread knowledge of the Matthew-Luke-Mark order in Germany and beyond.

Pontifical Biblical Commission (1902 -1971). Firmly opposed the Markan Priority theory.

John Chapman OSB. (1865-1933). Considered the greatest Patristic scholar of his time, pointed out weakness of the Markan priority theory. Upheld the priority of Matthew's gospel.

Abbot Christopher Butler OSB (1902-86). Leading English-speaking contributor at Vatican II. Influential in forming the open attitude to research, to be found in *Dei Verbum*. Lifelong active defender of the priority of Matthew's Gospel. Auxiliary bishop of Westminster, London.

William R. Farmer (died in 2000). Methodist professor. He showed how Markan Priority was established in Germany, by Government imposed, 'political correctness.' Promoted the Matthew-Luke-Mark order throughout America. *Editor of the International Bible Commentary (1998).*

Harold Riley. Anglican priest and Scripture scholar. Close co-operator with Bernard Orchard.

Dom Bernard Orchard OSB (1910-2006).

Editor of:

The Catholic Commentary of Holy Scripture (1953).

The New Catholic Commentary of Holy Scripture (1969).

Catholic Edition of The Revised Standard Version of the Bible. (1966).

Bernard Orchard was also author of: ***The Origin and Evolution of the Gospels (1993)***. This short pamphlet showed how the Synoptic Problem may be solved in a way consistent with the ancient historians, modern methods of literary analysis and *Dei Verbum*. This pamphlet inspired the booklet you are now reading.

It is available, with other articles by him, a celebration of his final years and moves to make known and build on his work, as part of a list of articles on item[G225]. Click [HERE](#)

FOREWORD

The theory that Mark's gospel was the first to be written dominates New Testament Studies today. This theory has led to serious and widespread doubts about the historical reliability of the Gospels, upon which our understanding of Christianity is built.

'The Authors of the Gospels' sets forth an alternative view. Using primary sources written by the earliest Christian historians (The Church Fathers) and the findings of modern literary analysis, the author argues strongly in favour of a return to the chronology widely used prior to the time of Jerome.

This would conform to the traditional teaching of the Church that two of the Gospels were written by eyewitness companions of Jesus. The author points out that this teaching was recently renewed in a Dogmatic Constitution, *Dei Verbum*, of the Second Vatican Council.

K.J.Gajewski

NOTE 1.

- a. Scriptural quotations are from the Revised Standard Version (Catholic Edition).
- b. An editorial comment, within a quotation, is indicated within [] brackets.
- c. The author has adopted the reference system used in other `ChurchinHistory` publications. References are provided in double brackets such as: ((AF 753)). The AF refers to a publications listed in the bibliography at the end, with the number denoting the page.
- d. There is a difference between an hypothesis and a theory. But in academic discourse, as well as in popular literature, they are both often referred to as: `a theory`. In this booklet the two words are treated as interchangeable.

NOTE 2.

Associated leaflets also available on this web site:

- a. An introduction to this booklet:
- b. A short overview:
 Why, How and When the Gospels?
- c. The importance of correct translations:
 Dei Verbum, Chapter II, Section 7 - Translation

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CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

For nearly 2000 years Christians have maintained that the Apostles Matthew and John (eyewitnesses of the public life of Christ) and Mark and Luke (secretaries to Peter and Paul) composed the four Gospels. Today this historical basis of Christianity is widely denied, not only by non-Christians, but also by some within the Christian community.

When at parish level speakers are asked to provide solid reasons for this change, the usual replies are: `The experts say so`, or `everyone agrees`. I therefore felt the need to make a personal investigation.

This involved collecting the external evidence (what the early historians wrote) and the internal evidence (modern literary analysis of the texts). This booklet shows the result of this research.

The Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke (often referred to as the Synoptic Gospels) show clear signs of borrowing. The dispute as to who borrowed from whom, and therefore in what order they were written, is the key to the debate regarding authorship.

There are three main schools of thought:

- ~ The Jerome Tradition (Matthew, Mark, Luke, John) ~
- ~ The Markan priority theory (Mark, Matthew, Luke, John)~
- ~ The Clementine Tradition (Matthew, Luke, Mark, John) ~

THE JEROME TRADITION asserts that:

- + The order of Gospel composition was in the sequence they appear in our Bibles today.
- + St. Jerome and some other early Christians made use of this order.
- + If internal evidence contradicts these historians, the literary analysis must be in error.

THE MARKAN PRIORITY THEORY asserts that:

- + Those, who wrote second and third, would have improved the literary form of the Greek in the borrowed verses. They would not have deliberately corrupted the Greek.
- + Mark`s Gospel is in `poor Greek` when compared to that of Matthew and Luke.
- + So Matthew and Luke must have borrowed from Mark.
- + This shows that Mark wrote prior to the other two (i.e. Markan priority).
- + Matthew the Apostle (an eyewitness of the public life of Christ) would not have borrowed from a non-eyewitness when forming the basis of his account.

+ This indicates that Matthew the Apostle did not write the Gospel named after him. It must have been composed by an unknown person at a later date, using Mark's Gospel as a basis and adding additional material from other sources (these are referred to as `Q`).

+ As Luke also improved on Greek of Mark, he must also have written late. This means he could not have been a companion of Paul.

+ These findings of modern literary analysis show that the ancient historians were in error. They are not therefore a reliable source for the historical claim that the fourth Gospel was by John the Apostle, eyewitness of the ministry of Jesus..

+ As none of the authors of the Gospels were Apostles or their companions, their writings can not be seen as accurate accounts of what Jesus said and did.

+The authors must have been unknown writers, living at late dates, expressing their beliefs in the form of stories.

As the Markan priority theory is based upon modern scientific research, and the Jerome Tradition is based on historical records, `Science` should be trusted in preference to `old traditions`.

`The Jesus of History` is not the same as `The Christ of Faith`
Christianity is therefore not built on a firm historical basis.

THE CLEMENTINE TRADITION

+ Challenged by Markan priority, Protestants and Catholics, at the beginning of the 20th century, encouraged a deeper study of ancient languages and placed large resources at the disposal of archaeological researchers in Palestine. This has born rich fruit.

+ Linguists have confirmed the ancient tradition that Matthew wrote in Hebrew.

+ In the early records the Gospel according to Matthew is always listed first.

+ Clement of Alexandria, stated that Luke wrote before Mark, so producing the chronological sequence of Matthew-Luke-Mark-John. The Church Fathers were familiar with and used the same order.

+ When Jerome made a fresh translation of the New Testament in the fourth century, he chose to adopt the Matthew-Mark-Luke-John sequence. This is why we find this order in our bibles today.

+ A growing number of modern literary analysists recognize that Mark borrowed from Matthew and Luke alternately, so confirming the historical evidence that Mark wrote third.

+ Both the historical and literary evidence shows that Matthew wrote for the Jews and that Luke wrote for the Gentiles.

- + Historical evidence and modern literary evidence, both point to Peter giving a series of talks during which he alternately quoted from both Gospels while adding reminiscences of his own. In this way he was authorising the work of Luke (a non-eyewitness Apostle).+ The words of Peter, as recorded by Mark in shorthand, were distributed to those who made requests. This explains the apparent `poor Greek` of Mark. His Gospel was not composed in literary Greek, but was an unedited verbatim record of the spoken words of Peter, for whom Greek was not his native tongue.
- + By Peter supporting distribution of Mark`s transcript, he was granting it authorisation as an official Gospel.
- + This vindication of the reliability of the historical records makes them a reliable and firm authority for accepting that John the Apostle wrote the fourth Gospel.
- + The Clementine Tradition brings the ancient historical records and the latest literary analysis together in perfect agreement.

THE CHURCH

- + Dei Verbum, a Doctrinal Constitution of the Second Vatican Council, insists that eyewitness Apostles wrote two of the gospels.
- + The Markan priority theory, as normally understood, is in conflict with Dei Verbum.
- + The Clementine Tradition is in agreement with Dei Verbum.
- + Rome urges the use of both historical evidence and scientific literary analysis
- + The Holy See has issued many recent statements in which the historicity of the Gospels is accepted as a fact.

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THE CLEMENTINE TRADITION
is in full accord with:

- The earliest Christian historians
- Modern literary analysis
- The doctrine of the church
- Recent Church statements

The following pages contain the evidence for the claims made in this summary. They also contain chapters on the Epistles; how Markan priority grew; its baneful effect on both Protestant theology and Catholic Catechetics, and a history of the reaction of the Church.

CHAPTER II THE EARLY HISTORICAL EVIDENCE

It would be surprising if scrolls produced by the earliest Christian writers had survived intact for 2000 years. However, we do have important extracts and also possess quotations from their works as reproduced by Eusebius in his `Ecclesiastical History`.

a). PAPIAS (c. 60-139) was the bishop of Hieropolis. Eusebius said Papias wrote five books and mentions his commentaries on the Gospels of Matthew and John. Ancient Armenian literature records Papias writing commentaries on Luke and John ((RO 171)). Papias had carefully studied at least three of the Gospels. Hieropolis was close to the Christian centres at Colossae and Laodicea, and about one hundred and fifty kilometres from Ephesus along a good surfaced road. So contact with John the Apostle would have been easy. No doubt John took a great interest in Papias as he trained to be a bishop, and afterwards gave him good advice. His life span overlapped that of John by 30-40 years and Papias speaks of `The Presbyter`, who traditionally has been identified as John the Apostle. An extract from the fourth book by Papias and preserved by Eusebius reads:

`And this the Presbyter used to say: “Mark, being the recorder of Peter, wrote accurately but not in order whatever he [Peter] remembered of the things either said or done by the Lord; for he [Mark] had neither heard the Lord nor followed him, but later, as I said, Peter, who used to make teachings according to the **cheias**, [a special kind of anecdote] but not making as it were a systematic composition of the Lord’s sayings; so that Mark did not err at all when he wrote certain things just as he had recalled [them]. For he had but one intention, not to leave out anything he had heard, nor to falsify anything in them”. This is what was related by Papias about Mark. But about Matthew’s this was said: “For Matthew composed the **logia** [sayings] in Hebrew style; but each recorded them as he was able”. ((EH 3: 39, 8 and RO 166r)).

Here we have Papias quoting John the Apostle’s words in defence of the style of the Gospel of Mark. So the `poor Greek` of Mark is not something first noticed in the 18th century. The extract, `... the Presbyter used to say`, being in the plural, shows that aspects of Mark’s gospel had to be repeatedly defended by John the Apostle against criticism.

b). JUSTIN THE MARTYR (c. 100-165) was born in Palestine and following his study of philosophic systems, became a Christian about 130 AD. About 138 AD Justin moved to Rome and set up as a teacher of Christian philosophy. He became a public leader in the defence of Christian beliefs against Paganism, the Jews and the heretical teachings of Marcion. So he had to be careful to use soundly based arguments. Amongst his writings we possess twelve direct quotations from the Gospels. Justin then moved to Ephesus where he died. The elderly members of the Ephesus community would remember the Apostles who had lived in or visited the town. In his `Dialogue with Trypho` published between 161-165, Justin quotes from Matthew and Luke referring to them as, “the teachers who have recorded all that concerns our Saviour Jesus Christ”.

He writes of `the memoirs composed by the apostles which are called Gospels`. He specifically attributes the Apocalypse to John the Apostle. He knew the Septuagint well, and used the same version that had been used by Matthew. Justin in his `Dialogue with Trypho`, frequently uses the phrase `the memoirs of his apostles [note: plural] and others who followed him`, as the source of his quotations ((JMD ch. 98-107 and RO 122)). So Justin accepted that apostles had written at least two of the Gospels. Also, in his `Dialogue with Trypho`, he refers to Mark 3:16-17:

`And when it is said that he [Jesus] changed the name of one of the apostles to Peter, and when it is written in his [Peter`s] memoirs that this happened, as well as that he surnamed two other brothers, who were sons of Zebedee, with the name of Boanerges, which means Sons of Thunder, this was a signification of the fact that it was He [JHWH] by whom Jacob was called Israel...`
((JMD 106. 9-10 and RO 125)).

c). IRENAEUS was born about 120 AD near Smyrna. After travelling throughout the Roman world gaining a wide knowledge of Christian life and history, he was made bishop of Lyons and martyred about 180 AD. As a young man he frequented the house of bishop Polycarp in Smyrna. In a letter to Florinus, he wrote regarding his childhood:

`... I can even describe the place where the blessed Polycarp used to sit and discourse - his going out, too, and his coming in - his general mode of life and personal appearance, together with the discourses which he delivered to the people, also how he would speak of his familiar intercourse with John, and with the rest of those who had seen the Lord, and how he would call their words to remembrance. Whatsoever thing he had learned from them respecting the Lord, both with regard to His miracles and his teaching, Polycarp having thus received [information] from the eyewitnesses of the Word of Life, would recount them all in harmony with the Scriptures ... ((See newadvent.org web site: Fathers: Irenaeus: Fragments from lost writings of Irenaeus, item II and IJK 540)).

In the first chapter of his third book in the series known as `Adversus Haereses`, Irenaeus records that the apostles of Christ preached the Gospel verbally. He then continues:

`Matthew also brought out a written Gospel among the Jews in their own tongue, when Peter and Paul were preaching the Gospel at Rome and founding the Church. But after their demise, Mark himself the disciple and recorder of Peter, has also handed on to us in writing what had been proclaimed by Peter. And Luke too, the follower of Paul, put down in a book the Gospel which was being preached by him. Later on too, John, the disciple of the Lord, who had even reclined on his bosom, he too brought out a Gospel while he was dwelling in Ephesus of Asia`. ((RO 128-9: IAH 3. 1,1; and EH 5: 8, 2)).

This quotation above comes from the Latin translation of his work. But we also possess the same passage in the original Greek as quoted by Eusebius. This confirms the Latin translation is accurate.

The Latin version may imply that Irenaeus was thinking that Mark and Luke wrote after the death of Peter. However, the perfect tense used in the Greek version makes it clear that this is not so. Irenaeus was merely saying that the gospels of Mark and Luke have handed on the traditions taught by Peter and Paul when they were still alive ((RO 163)).

‘Tongue’ may also be rendered as ‘language’ or ‘dialect’. ‘Demise’ was also used by the Greeks to denote ‘departure’. ‘Matthew also’ may also be rendered as: ‘So Matthew’.

Irenaeus is saying that the Gospel of Matthew was composed by one of Christ’s apostles who had already proclaimed the Gospel verbally. As Peter fled to Rome about 41 AD and Paul was martyred in 67 AD, Matthew must have written between these dates.

When, in his third and fourth books, Irenaeus builds his case against three heresies, he uses quotations from the Gospels in the order of Matthew-Luke-Mark-John.

In 3:9,1-3 he quotes mainly from Matthew, in 3:10,1-4 from Luke, in 3:10, 5 from Mark and in 3:11,1-6 from John.

In the second controversy he says the Ebionites only use Matthew; Marcion mutilates Luke; the Docetists adapt Mark and Valentinus misuses John (3:11,7).

In the third instance he quotes Scripture to show God was the father of Jesus, then writes: ‘...Matthew hath set down, and Luke also, and Mark...’ (4: 6, 1). ((IJK 220, 234, 320)).

So the order most familiar to Irenaeus was that of Luke being prior to Mark. Hans von Campenhausen first pointed this out in his 1972 book, ‘The Formation of the Christian Gospel’, page 195, note 243.

In our Chapter IV we have an item showing that this use by Irenaeus is consistent with the Sunday readings of the Gospels in the early churches.

d). THE MURATORIAN FRAGMENT, or Canon, was discovered in 1740. Its authorship is unknown but it is thought to have been written by Hippolytus ((MFGR)). It is in barbarous Latin and not always correct. It mentions Pope Pius I who reigned from 141-158, and three heretics as contemporaries, so is normally dated as about 150 ((RO 138)). The surviving extract of the opening indicates that Mark was present at a specific event.

“... at which nevertheless he was present and thus related. In third place [we have] the book of the Gospels according to Luke. This Luke, a physician, after the Ascension of Christ, when Paul had taken him, as one studious of Right, [to be his follower] at his own request [in his own name], wrote from report, since he himself notwithstanding had not seen the Lord in the flesh. Yet as far as he could ascertain so indeed he began to relate, beginning at the birth of John

The fourth of the Gospels is John’s, one of the Disciples. At the insistence of his fellow-disciples and bishops he said: Today and for three days fast with me and what shall be revealed to each of us relate to one another.

The same night it was revealed to Andrew, one of the Apostles, that whatever should come to the minds of them all, John in his own name should write it all down ...

...What therefore [is there] to wonder at if John so constantly utters statements indeed in his Epistles saying from his own experience: What I have seen with our eyes and heard with our ears and our hands have touched, these things we have written to you? For thus he declares that he is not only an eyewitness and a hearer but also the writer of all the wonders of the Lord in order.

However the Acts of the Apostles were written in one book. To the excellent Theophilus, Luke dedicates [the Acts], some of the events of which happened in his presence, just as he clearly declares, though with omission of Peter's Passion and Paul's journey from Rome setting out for Spain" ((MFGR and RO 139-140)).

e). THEOPHILUS, the sixth bishop of Antioch writing about 179, named John as the divinely inspired author of a Gospel ((CCHS 776b)).

f). POLYCRATES, bishop of Ephesus, in 189 defended the authenticity of the four Gospels by appealing to the authority of the Apostles Philip and John. He also called on the witness of seven kinsmen, who had been bishops in Asia before himself, that: `He who was reclining on the breast of our Lord wrote John's Gospel`. ((CCHS 776b)).

g). CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA (c 150-215) was a pupil of Pantoris, the first great Christian teacher at Alexandria in Egypt. Clement records that he himself had travelled widely, meeting and listening to `truly notable men` from all over the Roman Empire ((EH 5, 11)). While Rome was the administrative heart of the Church, her intellectual centre was at Alexandria. The town had long possessed a famous Pagan university. The earlier presence of Philo had also made it the centre of Jewish studies, and it was here the Septuagint translation of the Old Testament had been made. In his `Adumbrationes in Epistolas Canonicas`, Clement commented on 1 Peter 5, 13. As Eusebius did not copy the full quotation, we are using here the Latin translation by Cassiodorus:

`Mark, the follower of Peter, while Peter was publicly preaching the Gospel at Rome in the presence of some of Caesar's knights and uttering many testimonies of Christ, [Mark] being begged by them that they should be able to record what was said, wrote the Gospel which is called the Gospel of Mark, from the things said by Peter; just as Luke is recognized as the pen that wrote the Acts of the Apostles and as the translator of the Letter of Paul to the Hebrews`. ((RDCA and RO 131)).

The words `Caesar's knights` brings to mind the letter of Paul to the Philippians:

`...so that it has become known throughout the whole praetorium and to all the rest that my imprisonment is for Christ`. And, `All the saints greet you, especially those of Caesar's household` (Phil.1: 13 and 4:22).

The next quotations are of particular importance with regard to the subject of this booklet. They are quoted by Eusebius from Clement's books.

“So greatly then did the brightness of true religion light up the minds of Peter's hearers that they were not satisfied to have a **once-for-all** hearing nor with the unwritten teaching of the divine proclamation, but with appeals of every kind begged Mark, the follower of Peter, whose gospel we have, to leave them too a memorial in writing of the teaching given them by word of mouth. Nor did they cease until they had persuaded the man, and in this way became the cause of the written gospel according to Mark. And it is said that the Apostle, when the fact became known to him through the revelation of the Spirit, was pleased with the eagerness of the men and approved [or ratified] the writing for use in the churches.

Clement relates the anecdote in the sixth book of: `The Outlines` [Hypotyposes], and Papias, bishop of Hierapolis, also bears witness to it and to Peter mentioning Mark in his earlier letter. Indeed they say that he composed it at Rome itself, and that he indicates this when referring figuratively to the city as Babylon in these words: `The elect [the church] that is in Babylon greets you and so does my son Mark` ((EH 2. 15, 1-2 and RO 166)).

`And again in the same books, Clement states a tradition of the very earliest presbyters about the order of the gospels; and it had this form. He used to say that the first written of the gospels were those having the genealogies. And that the Gospel of Mark had this formation. While Peter was publicly preaching the Word in Rome and proclaiming the gospel by the spirit, the audience, which was numerous, begged Mark, as one who had followed him for a long time and remembered what had been said, to write down the things he had said.

And he did so, handing over the Gospel to those who had asked for it. And when Peter got to know about it, he exerted no pressure either to forbid it or to promote it ... But John, last of all, being conscious that the exterior facts had been set forth in the [other] Gospels, after he had been urged by his friends and divinely moved by the Spirit, composed a spiritual Gospel`. ((EH 6:14, 5-7 and RO 166r)).

In this last paragraph above, Clement of Alexandria clearly sets down which two gospels were the first to be written - Matthew and Luke. He is the only early historian to specifically write concerning the chronology of the Gospels. He said he was quoting the very earliest presbyters [note in the plural]. Other writers did not dispute his evidence.

h). TERTULLIAN (c. 155-220) lived mainly in Africa and was a contemporary of Clement of Alexandria. For a time he practiced as an Advocate at Rome, so as a lawyer he would have been very experienced when sifting evidence. Between 207 and 212, he wrote `Adversus Marcionem` [Treatise against Marcion]. Being one of disputation, it would have been compiled with great care to ensure it was not open to challenge.

“... I lay it down to begin with that the documents of the gospels have the Apostles for their authors, and that this task of promulgating the gospel was imposed upon them by the Lord himself. If they have also for their authors apostolic men, yet these stand not alone but as companions of the apostles, because the preaching of disciples might be made suspect of the desire of vainglory, unless there stood by it the authority of their teachers, or rather the authority of Christ, which made the Apostles teachers. In short, from among the Apostles, John and Matthew implant in us the Faith, while from among apostolic men Luke and Mark reaffirm it, ...”. ((TE Book 4: 2, 1-2 and RO 133-4)).

Here Tertullian has placed the name of Luke before that of Mark and later writes:

“That same authority of the apostolic churches will stand as a witness also for other gospels, which no less [than Luke`s] we possess by their agency and according to their text –I mean John`s and Matthew`s, though that which Mark produced is stated to be Peter`s, whose interpreter Mark was. Luke`s narrative also they usually attribute to Paul”. ((TE Book 4: 5, 3 and RO 135)).

i). ORIGEN (c. 185-253) was the successor of Clement of Alexandria as the principal teacher in Alexandria. Eusebius quotes Origen as asserting that by tradition:

“The first **written** was that according to the one time tax collector but later apostle of Jesus Christ, Matthew, who **published** it for the believers from Judaism, composed in Hebrew characters. And second, that according to Mark, composed as Peter guided, ...And third, that according to Luke, the gospel praised by Paul, composed for those from the Gentiles. Finally, that according to John”. ((EH 6: 25, and RO 169)). [Emphasis not in the original]

It is very unlikely Origen intended to dispute the clear statement regarding the order of **writing** provided by his teacher, Clement of Alexandria. Origen is explaining how and why the gospels were composed, not the order of their **writing**. He could have been thinking in the order of their **publication**. If this is correct, his listing in the order of Matthew-Mark-Luke-John, is not a problem for those holding the Clementine tradition. [See part 1. of Chapter XVIII].

j). ANTI-MARCIONITE PROLOGUES

These second, third and fourth century Gospel introductions come down to us in both Latin and Greek. Concerning Mark we read:

“...Mark who was also called Stubfinger, because he had shorter fingers with regard to the other dimensions of his body. He had been the disciple and recorder of Peter, whom he followed, just as he had heard him relating. Having been asked by the brethren in Rome he wrote this short Gospel in the regions of Italy; when Peter heard about it, he approved and authorized it to be read to the church with [his own] authority`. ((AMM and RO 148)).

Concerning John we read:

“John the Apostle, whom the Lord Jesus loved exceedingly, last of all wrote this Gospel at the request of the bishops of Asia against Cerinthus and other heretics and especially the teachings of the Ebionites then arising, ...”

“But they also say that there was another reason for this Gospel being written, because after reading the volumes of Matthew, Mark and Luke on the gospel, he of course approved the text of their accounts and confirmed the truth of what they had said, but [perceived] that they had provided the account of one year only in which he suffered after the imprisonment of John. Omitting therefore the year whose happenings were recorded by the three, he related the events that had occurred at an earlier period before John was shut up in prison, as will be able to be clear to those who have carefully read the books of the four Gospels.

The Gospel therefore written after the Apocalypse, was also given to the churches in Asia by John while still living in the flesh, as the bishop of Hieropolis, Papias by name, a dear disciple of John, has related in his `exoteric`, that is, in [his] last, five books, who wrote out this Gospel, John dictating it to him”.
(AMJ and RO 151)).

k). EUSEBIUS OF PAMPHILIUS (260-340) emerged as a great scholar of the Church as She was emerging into cultural and political freedom. As bishop of Caesaria he had a library with 30 000 scrolls and codices ((CTJ 74)). This library included the most complete collection of Christian documents ever assembled. He was the literary heir of Pamphilus, who had inherited the library of Origen, as well as the correspondence of Dionysius of Alexandria who had died in 264. As a theologian and biblical critic he played a part in the 325 Council of Nicea. Between 303 and 325 he wrote his ten-volume history of the church, which summed up the accumulated historical knowledge of the early Christian world. Eusebius had a great advantage over the researchers of today in that he had a great number of books in front of him which have since been lost.

Fortunately he normally quoted what earlier historians, such as Papias, Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Origen and others had written, rather than provide paraphrases.

Some modern authors assert that Eusebius copied from Clement and Clement obtained all his information from Papias. They say that if Papias was in error, Clement and Eusebius would be also. But this is not correct. As mentioned previously, Eusebius knew Clement had `travelled widely and listened to truly notable men [note plural] from all over the Roman Empire`. Eusebius saw Clement as a very reliable witness to the consensus view of the most educated Christian authorities. He treats the witness of Papias as being a separate confirmatory source. For example if we reread the words of Clement in g) above, we see that Eusebius, when quoting information from Clement of Alexandria, regarded him as an independent source. Regarding Peter and Mark, Eusebius says Papias: “**also** bears witness to it”. ((EH 2: 15, 2 and RO 166)).

Eusebius explained that at first the apostles and disciples did not write of their experiences, but relied on the proofs of the Spirit. But Matthew and John eventually wrote `perforce`. Matthew wrote because he was on the point of leaving Palestine, so left something to partially make up for his absence.

John wrote because the existing gospels limited themselves to one year of Christ`s preaching. He was asked to add the events of the other years ((EH 3: 24, 1-15)).

l). ST. JEROME (331 – 420)

Many people presume the gospels are printed in the order in which they were composed and that this order is based on the earliest Christian traditions. But this is not correct. At the end of the 4th century, Pope Damasus became concerned at the faulty translations and copying errors creeping into the Latin texts in use in Western Europe. So he commissioned Jerome to prepare a new Latin translation from the Greek. When completed it was known as `The Vulgate` and issued for standard use in the West.

In his letter, `Epistula ad Damasum`, addressed to the Pope and enclosed with his final text, Jerome had to explain why he had adopted the Matthew-Mark-Luke-John order. This indicates it was not normally used in the West ((WRFN 27)). [See this chapter, section p].

During the same years, Jerome compiled `De Viris Illustribus` [On Illustrious Men]. When describing these men, he does so in the order of Matthew (chapter 3), Luke (7), Mark (8) and John (9) ((WRFN 26 and DVI)). This was the Clementine order.

When Jerome wrote his Prologus Quattuor Evangeliorum [Prologue to the Four Gospels], he did not specify whether they had been written or published in the order he had adopted.

In his letter to Hebidiam, Jerome wrote: "...Peter also had Mark, whose gospel was composed with Peter narrating and him writing."

m). AMBROSIASTER is the name given to an anonymous author of the late fourth century. He appears to have been writing just after the Vulgate had been published. A passage in his writings implies that the gospels in his copy of the New Testament were arranged in the Matthew-Luke-Mark-John order.

`The gospel is arranged according to the order [of their contents] rather than in chronological order. Therefore, Matthew is put in the first place because he begins from the promise, that is, from Abraham to whom was made the promise of the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ. Next comes Luke, because he relates how this incarnation took place. Third comes Mark, who witnesses that the gospel preached by Christ has been promised in the Law. Fourthly John ...`. ((AS and RO 201-2)).

n). ST. AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO (354 – 430).

During Jerome's lifetime, Augustine wrote his: `De Consensu Evangelistarum` in four volumes. In the first volume he wrote that the received order was Matthew-Mark-Luke and John, but the order of dignity was Matthew-John-Mark and Luke ((AH 1 Book 1: 1-3)).

Because he mentioned Matthew-Mark-Luke in his first volume, this order has often been referred to as: `The Augustinian Tradition`. But this is a misnomer because in his fourth volume he explains that Mark's Gospel developed the thoughts of Matthew and Luke. ((AH 4 Book 4:10, 11 and RO 211-214)).

David Peabody has examined Augustine's thinking regarding this in some detail. ((WRFN 37-64)). He shows how Augustine eventually adopted the Clementine tradition.

In this booklet, to avoid confusion, we refer to the Matthew-Mark-Luke-John sequence as: `The Jerome Tradition`.

o). THE MONARCHIAN PROLOGUE TO MARK'S GOSPEL

This was probably written by Priscillian, a heretic who died in 386.

“For setting out on the perfect work of the Gospel, and starting to preach God from the Lord’s baptism, he did not bother with the nativity story which he had seen related in the former [Gospels].

A similar prologue, probably by the same author, refers to Luke’s Gospel as being after Mark’s. ((RO 208-9 and WRFN 22 and 23)).

p). THE OLD LATIN VERSIONS

These early Latin translations from the Greek continued to circulate for centuries after Jerome’s Vulgate was published and many copies or part copies have survived. Most have the Gospels in the order of Matthew-John-Luke-Mark. ((BMM and RO 126)). It is likely that this order was adopted so as to honour the Apostles by placing them first. However, it is interesting that if John is moved to the end, we are left with the Clementine tradition.

q). THE EASTERN TRADITION

The Greek and Russian Orthodox liturgies have not changed as much as those in the Latin West. Apart for a few feast days, Matthew is read on Sundays from Pentecost. Luke follows later in the year and Mark begins during Lent. John is read in the Easter period. The Melkite Church, which traces herself back to Antioch, has a similar order, as do the Byzantine Churches. This points to the early Christians being familiar with Luke being used prior to Mark. [For details see Documentation Section on this website]. See also Chapter IV.

r). THE TWO ENDINGS OF MARK.

Most of the early copies of Mark are as we have them today. But some have been found where the last twelve verses are replaced by:

“But they reported briefly to Peter and those with him all that they had been told. And after this, Jesus himself sent out by means of them, from east to west, the sacred and imperishable proclamation of eternal salvation” ((RSV)).

COMMENT: The early historians are completely united in stating that Matthew the Apostle wrote the first Gospel, and John the Apostle wrote another. They also agreed that Luke and Mark wrote the other two. While there are two traditions as to which of these was written / published first, the oldest tradition places Luke as written prior to Mark.

NOTE: Remarks such as, “the evidence shows that the original gospel of Matthew was written in Greek”, or “Papias is unreliable”, are sometimes made today. But these remarks are not based on historical research. They are made on the presumption that the Markan priority theory has been proved. It is this ‘evidence’ (i.e. a theory) that they claim shows the historical evidence to be in error.

CHAPTER III

LITERARY ANALYSIS

When the Gospel of Mark is compared with those of Matthew and Luke, a pattern is noticeable. According to literary analysis, the grammar, vocabulary, style, idiom and sentence construction, Mark is said to be in poorer Greek than that found in the parallel verses of the other two. Some examples will illustrate this:

In Mark 1:12 we read `drove`, while Matthew has `led up` and Luke `led`. Both of these are more refined styles.

In Mark 2:4 the paralytic is described as lying on a `pallet`. This was a slang word for `bed`. So the other two are using better Greek.

In Mark 4:41 Mark uses the singular of the verb `to obey` when he is speaking of `wind and sea`. The other two use the correct plural form.

In Mark 5:9-10, after stating `for we are many`, Mark writes `he begged`. Luke correctly has `they begged`.

In Mark 10:20 the aorist middle of the Greek verb `ephylaza` is used instead of the aorist active. The aorist active is correctly used by the other two writers.

In Mark 16:6 the singular of the Greek verb for `to see` is used, although `women` is plural. Matthew has the correct word. Also Mark uses the term `the place` in the nominative instead of the accusative, while Matthew is correct.

Literary analysis highlights other differences between the Gospels.

1. There are clear Aramaic expressions to be found in Mark, which are missing in five parallel accounts in Luke. They are also missing in five of the seven parallel accounts in Matthew. These are: Boanerges (3:14-17), Talitha cumi (5:40-41), Corban (7:9-13), Ephphatha (7:32-35), Abba (14:13-36), Golgotha (15:22-23) Eloi Eloi (15:34).
2. Mark's gospel has a primitive freshness and a vivid style compared to those of Matthew and Luke. His unsophisticated style can be seen in the frequent use of `And` or `Immediately` when commencing a paragraph.
3. In many instances Mark uses redundant words. For example we read: `that evening` in Matthew 8: 16-17, and `the sun was setting` in Luke 4: 40-41. Mark has: `That evening as the sun was setting` (Mark 1: 32). So Mark is saying the same thing twice. This is also known as a `duality`.
4. Mark's Gospel has apparently unimportant pieces of information, such as the reference to a cushion (Mark 4: 38).

Scholars broadly agree on these distinctive characteristics but dispute how and why they arose. The alternative explanations will be set out in our next chapters.

CHAPTER IV THE JEROME TRADITION

For centuries it was universally presumed that the sequence of Matthew-Mark-Luke-John, enshrined in the New Testament as translated by St. Jerome, was the sequence in which they had been written. Henry Owen's suggestion, in 1764, that Luke wrote prior to Mark, was seen by academics as revolutionary. But, as his idea did not threaten the historical reliability of the Gospels, Christians were not perturbed. It was when the Markan priority theory asserted that Mark had written before Matthew, and that Matthew and John were not eyewitnesses of the life of Christ, that Christians became concerned.

The supporters of the Jerome sequence appealed to the authority of Augustine of Hippo, who had said 'the received tradition' was Matthew-Mark-Luke-John. They often refer to this order as: 'The Augustinian Tradition'. But, as pointed out in chapter II, Augustine in his fourth book followed Clement of Alexandria's order of Matthew-Luke-Mark-John

In the early church the Gospels were read in church in continuous order. The Epistle and Gospel read on a Sunday would continue from where it had been left the previous week. Signs of this pattern, with interruptions for feasts, may be found in many of the Eastern Churches today. The Byzantine Church in her Sunday gospel readings begin immediately after Pentecost with Matthew. Luke follows from September, Mark begins in or before Lent and John is read following Easter. The Syrian church has the same arrangement (evidently originating in Antioch). ((CC06659a)). [Also see the Documentation section of this website].

This pattern, together with the use of this sequence by Irenaeus, points to at least some of the early church using the gospels in the Matthew-Luke-Mark-John order.

Over the past 200 years the supporters of Jerome's Matthew-Mark-Luke sequence, have achieved much in upholding the priority of Matthew and in exposing the inconsistencies to be found in the Markan priority theory. Many have done so out of loyalty to what they understood to be the oldest and only Christian tradition and usage.

But, by presuming that Mark wrote before Luke, they have been less effective than they could have been. They have exposed themselves to the criticisms, based on literary analysis, made by the Markan Priorists.

They correctly held that Luke had borrowed from Matthew but, in order to conform to Jerome's tradition, they had to presume that he had also borrowed from Mark. This meant that Mark must have been written prior to Luke and therefore prior to Peter's death. But Irenaeus said it had been written after Peter's demise. R.Ginns, in an authoritative article in support of the Jerome tradition, was forced to presume Irenaeus had made an error ((CCH 744g)).

CHAPTER V MARKAN PRIORITY

The arguments put forward in support of Mark having written prior to Matthew and Luke are as follows:

1. It is easy to understand Matthew and Luke improving on 'the poor Greek' of Mark. But difficult to see why Mark would have deliberately spoiled the good grammar and sentence formation of the other two.
2. Matthew and Luke omit the seven clear Semitic expressions found in Mark. This points to them addressing audiences at a later time than the original mainly Jewish congregations.
3. As if to save space, Mark omits important items such as the infancy of Christ, the early preaching of John the Baptist, the Sermon on the Mount, the Beatitudes, the Lord's Prayer and much of the resurrection narrative to be found in the other two. But he then adds redundant clauses and unimportant details. Why should he act in such a manner? It is easier to imagine Matthew and Luke wishing to expand Mark's Gospel by adding extra important information, and making room by cutting out redundant clauses and unimportant details.
4. Mark portrays Christ and the Apostles more favourably than the other two. It is more likely that reports of alleged deficiencies of Christ and the apostles would have been toned down with time. Mark portrays Christ, and the apostles, more favourably than the other two gospels.

Markans also claim what they consider to be supporting arguments for their position:

5. Parables in the gospels of Matthew and Luke indicate that they were aware of the 70 AD destruction of Jerusalem.
6. The anti-Jewish spirit of Matthew reflects the decision taken about 85 AD at Jamnia, to expel the Christians from the Synagogues.
7. The theology to be found in Matthew and Luke is more developed than that in Mark.

Having established to their satisfaction Mark's priority, the following arguments are put forward:

- a. It is agreed that Mark was not an eyewitness Apostle, and he wrote between 65-75 AD.
- b. An eyewitness Apostle would not have based his Gospel on Mark's non-eyewitness account. Therefore, the author of the gospel referred to as: 'According to Matthew', was not the eyewitness Apostle of that name

- c. As all the ancient historians report that Matthew wrote first, and this is contrary to the Markan theory, all those historians must have been in error. We are therefore unable to trust the historians. So we do not have reliable historical evidence that John the Apostle wrote a gospel.
- d. This points to the gospels known as by Matthew, Luke and John, having been written by unknown authors in various Christian communities, many years after the events. The words placed on the lips of Christ would therefore have been based on verbal traditions more than fifty years old, or on the creativity of the authors.
- e. This means that, as we do not have reliable firsthand eyewitness accounts of the words and acts of Christ, there is no basis for knowing with certainty what Christ said or did.

When this booklet uses the terms `Markan priorist` or `Markan` it is referring to those who accept this progression of thought.

This line of thought is consistent and persuasive if we accept its first premise that Mark wrote prior to Matthew. The acceptance of this premise leads to the contradiction of all the ancient historians, the 2000 year old tradition of the Catholic Church, including a dogmatic decree of the Second Vatican Council, the traditions of the Eastern Orthodox Churches, the general consensus of the founders of the various Protestant bodies and a growing number of modern exegetes.

Sometimes, during a talk on Scripture, a member of the audience may challenge the presumption of Markan priority implied by the speaker. The audience can become restive because to them it does not seem important who wrote first. They have come together to be inspired by the Word of God and do not want to waste time on what appears to be an unimportant academic argument.

Their point of view is understandable. But two points need to be noted. It is quite likely the speaker will explain a piece of Scripture from Matthew`s gospel with reference to how Matthew `revised` the meaning expounded by Mark. If Mark wrote second this line of meditation, however uplifting, cannot be said to come from the biblical Word of God.

The second point is to recognise that the speaker is preparing the mind of his audience to accept the Markan priority theory as correct and endorsed by the Church. While this may not cause problems during the evening of the talk, it could lead eventually to problems of faith for those who decide to study further.

At one time the Markans asserted that Matthew and Luke were composed in the second century. They now tend to give them a late first century date of between 85 –95 AD.

CHAPTER VI THE CLEMENTINE TRADITION (GRIESBACH AND 2GH)

Supporters of this tradition, as revived by Henry Owen ((HO)) and Johann Griesbach, hold that Mark`s Gospel was formed by the conflation of the gospels of Matthew and Luke. They liken this to two streams flowing into one another to form one stream (i.e. conflating). This approach is often known as: `The two Gospel Hypothesis`, or `2GH`. [According to Orchard, Peter was the conflator].

When the three Gospels are placed side by side, we can see where borrowing has taken place. This is known as a synoptic arrangement. Synopsis means, `seeing as if with one eye`. Matthew, Luke and Mark are frequently referred to as `the Synoptic Gospels`.

Synoptic arrangements may vary depending on how the gospel verses and pericopes are divided. (A pericope is a small section or sub-section of a verse). The chart below is based on the synoptic arrangement designed by Harold Riley ((RO 4-6)). The shading indicates where Mark`s gospel incorporates material from Matthew or from Luke. When illustrating this zigzag effect the works of several authors were consulted, including Riley ((RO 6-18)), Orchard ((RO 263-272)) and Meijboom ((JJK 151-155)).

When the wording of Matthew and Luke is identical, we are not able to decide which gospel Mark was following at that moment. Sometimes just a small variation within a verse provides a clue. For example, at the Transfiguration Mark follows Matthew`s `six days` rather than Luke`s `about eight days`. This enables the shading to be placed for this verse with Matthew.

THE ORDER OF MARK AND ITS PARALLELS

		Matthew	Mark	Luke
The Baptist and Jesus` Baptism	T1	3:1-17	1:1-11	3:1-22
Temptation		4:1-11	1:12-13	4:1-13
Into Galilee		4:12-17	1:14-15	4:1-13
Call of Four Disciples		4:18-22	1:16-20	
Events at Capernaum			1:21-38	4:31-43
A preaching tour		4:23	1:39	4:44
The Leper			1:40-45	5:12-16
Five Occasions of Controversy			2:1-3:6	5:17-6:11
Healing of Multitudes		4:24-25	3:7-12	(6:17-19)
Calling of the Twelve			3:13-19	(6:12-16)
<i>Sermon on the Mount</i> (Matthew)	OF and B	5:1-7:27		
<i>Sermon on the Plain</i> (Luke)	B			6:20-49
Matthew`s narrative continued		7:28-8:34		
Luke`s narrative continued				7:1-17
<i>The Apostolic Commission</i> (Matthew)		9:35-10:42		
Matthew`s narrative continued		11:1-12:21		

Luke`s narrative continued			7:18-8:3
“He is beside himself”		{3:20-21}	
On Collusion with Satan T2	12:22-30	3:22-27	
Sin against the Holy Spirit	12:31-37	3:28-30	
Jesus` True Kindred	12:46-50	3:31-35	
The Parable Collection			
Parable of the Sower and comments	13:1-23	4:1-20	8:4-15
Lamp under Bushel/Bed		4:21-25	8:16-18
Parable of Seed Growing Secretly		{4:26-29}	
Parable of Mustard Seed	13:31-32	4:30-32	
Use of parables	13:34-35	4:33-34	
<i>The Parable Collection continued</i> (Matthew)	13:36-52		
Across the Sea and back		4:35-5:43	8:22-56
Jesus Rejected at Nazareth	13:53-58	6:1-6a	
Commissioning the Twelve T3		6:6b-13	9:1-6
Opinions concerning Jesus	14:1-2	6:14-16	9:7-9
Death of the Baptist	14:3-12	6:17-29	
Return of the Apostles		6:30-31	9:10a
The Five Thousand	14:13-21	6:32-44	9:10b-17
Walking on the Water, and Healings	14:22-36	6:45-56	
Defilement, Traditional and Real	15:1-20	7:1-23	
Syro-Phoenician (Canaanite) Woman	15:21-28	7:24-30	
The Deaf-Mute (Matthew, Healings)	(15:29-31)	7:31-37	
The Four Thousand	15:32-39	8:1-10	
Pharisees: Sign and Leaven	16:1-12	8:11-21	
The Blind Man		{8:22-26}	
The Confession of Peter	16:13-20	8:27-30	9:18-21
First Prediction of the Passion	16:21-23	8:31-33	9:22
“If any man will come after me”	16:24-28	8:34-9:1	9:23-27
The Transfiguration	17:1-9	9:2-10	9:28-36
The Coming of Elijah	17:10-13	9:11-13	
The Epileptic Boy	17:14-21	9:14-29	9:37-43a
Second Prediction of the Passion	17:22-23	9:30-32	9:43b-45
True Greatness	18:1-5	9:33-37	9:46-48
The Strange Exorcist		9:38-41	9:49-50
Warnings against Temptation	18:6-9	9:42-50	
<i>Discourse on True Greatness</i> (continued)	18:10-35		
Departure to Judea	19:1-2	10:1	9:51
Luke`s Central Section OF			9:52-18:14
On Divorce and Adultery T4	19:3-12	10:2-12	
Jesus blesses the Children	19:13-15	10:13-16	18:15-17
On Riches and Discipleship	19:16-29	10:17-31	18:18-30
Third Prediction of the Passion	20:17-19	10:32-34	18:31-34
The Sons of Zebedee	20:20-28	10:35-45	

The Blind Bartimaeus		20:29-30	10:46-52	18:35-43
The Triumphal Entry		21:1-9	11:1-10	19:28-40
Jesus in Jerusalem		21:10-11	11:11	
Cursing of the Fig Tree		21:18-19a	11:12-14	
Cleansing of the Temple			11:15-17	19:45-46
Conspiracy against Jesus			11:18-19	19:47-48
The Fig Tree Withered		21:19b-22	11:20-26	
The Question about Authority		21:23-27	11:27-33	20:1-8
Parable of the Wicked Husbandmen		21:33-46	12:1-12	20:9-19
Questions on Tribute and Resurrection		22:13-33	12:13-27	20:20-40
The Great Commandment		22:34-40	12:28-34	
Questions about David's Son		22:41-46	12:35-37a	20:41-44
Woes to Scribes and Pharisees		23:1-36	12:37b-40	20:45-47
The Widow's Mite			12:41-44	21:1-4
Prediction about the Temple etc.		24:1-22	13:1-20	21:5-24
False Christs and False Prophets		24:23-28	13:21-23	
The Coming of the Son of Man		24:29-36	13:24-32	21:25-33
Conclusion: "Take Heed, Watch"			{13:33-37}	
Discourse continued (Matthew)		24:37-25:46		21:34-36
Conclusion (Luke)				21:37-38
Jesus' Death Predicted	T5	26:1-5	14:1-2	22:1-2
Anointing at Bethany		26:6-13	14:3-9	
Betrayal by Judas		26:14-16	14:10-11	22:3-6
Preparation for the Passover		26:17-20	14:12-17	22:7-14
Jesus Foretells his Betrayal		26:21-25	14:18-21	
The Last Supper		26:26-35	14:22-31	22:15-34
Gethsemane		26:36-56	14:32-50	22:39-53
The Young Man who Fleed			{14:51-52}	
Jesus before the Sanhedrin		26:57-68	14:53-65	22:54-55
Peter's Denials		26:69-75	14:66-72	22:56-62
Jesus Delivered to Pilate		27:1-2	15:1	23:1
Trial before Pilate		27:11-14	15:2-5	23:2-5
Jesus Condemned to Death		27:15-26	15:6-15	23:17-25
Jesus Mocked by Soldiers		27:27-31a	15:16-20a	
The Road to Golgotha		27:31b-32	15:20b-21	23:26-32
Crucifixion		27:33-43	15:22-32a	23:33-38
The Two Thieves		27:44	15:32b	23:39-43
Death of Jesus		27:45-54	15:33-39	23:44-48
Witnesses to the Crucifixion		27:55-56	15:40-41	23:49
Burial of Jesus		27:57-61	15:42-47	23:50-56
Women at the Tomb		28:1-8	16:1-8	24:1-9
The Last Twelve Verses			{16:9-20}	

From the shaded areas we are able to see how Mark's Gospel borrowed alternating from the existing two Gospels. Verses of his own, are indicated by { }.

OF indicates 'The Our Father' and B the 'Beatitudes'. T will be explained on page 26.

The chart illustrates the alternating borrowing of complete verses, but is not detailed enough to indicate the borrowing of individual words or phrases. For example: Although Mark 6: 7-16 as a whole draws from Luke, the words in 6:14 are from Matthew. Although Mark 8: 27-10: 40 is mainly taken from Matthew, the influence of Luke may be seen in 8: 38, 9: 32-33. ((JJK 153-5)).

According to the Markan priority theory, when Matthew ceases to follow the order of Mark, Luke continues in it until, when Luke ceases, Matthew takes over, and this continues throughout the Gospels. This could only have been accomplished if Matthew and Luke co-ordinated their work very closely. But, according to the Markan priority theory, these Gospels were created in separate communities that were out of touch with one another. This is an insoluble difficulty for the Markan theory.

This difficulty also applies to individual phrases. Matthew and Luke use exactly the same five Greek words to form a phrase concerning Peter's denial. Mark uses three different words conveying the same meaning (Mark 14: 72). If Markan priority is correct, how could Matthew and Luke have arrived at the same phrase without having been in contact with one another? ((DBP 303)).

DUPLICATIONS

As mentioned in Chapter IV. 3, the duplications of Mark are a feature of his style. These are usually referred to as his `redundant clauses` or `a duality`. To take the example used in Chapter IV:

Matthew: "That evening they brought to him" (Mt. 8: 16-17).

Luke: "Now when the sun was setting, ...they ...brought them to him " (Luke 4: 40-41).

The gospel of Mark (1: 32), conflates the material together as:

"That evening, when the sun was setting, [or `sundown`] they brought to him ...".

By using `evening` and `sundown`, Mark is duplicating himself. For those who accept that Mark is conflating, there is no difficulty as it is just part of the style of Mark. But for Markan priorists duality is a serious problem. If there were only a few instances of duality, they could be ignored. It could be said that Matthew just happened to use half of the duality and Luke happened to use the other half. But there are many dualities and where both halves are of equal importance, they never chose the same half. Matthew and Luke would have had to divide up Mark's dualities between them in a consistent manner to avoid them using the same half. The only way this division could have been achieved would be for them to have worked closely together. Again the advocates of Markan priority meet the problem that, according to their theory, Matthew and Luke did not know one another.

Realising the strength of the Clementine case, Markans have attempted to answer this problem. In 1983, C.M.Tuckett claimed there were 213 dualities in Mark's gospel, so chance would explain the 17 cases where Matthew and Luke chose different halves ((CMT 20-21)). At first sight this appears a plausible argument, and many feel overawed by statistics. So a few comments are required.

- e. Let us presume for the moment, that Markan priority is correct. Of the 213 dualities Matthew and Luke did not use either half in 157 of them. It is correct that 39 do not use the same half. But these instances are where dualities are vague or do not have `equal value` (i.e. one word is more suitable than the other, so was highly likely to be chosen by both). The debate must be judged on the 17 cases where there is a clear duality of equal value and meaning (e.g. `evening` and `sunset`). Markans need to explain why, whenever there was such a choice, Matthew and Luke always chose differently.

2. An interesting observation may also be made regarding the 213 dualities examined by Tuckett. Matthew has one or both halves 152 times, of which 124 are when Matthew and Mark are in the same sequence. Luke has one or both 116 times, of which 114 are when one or both are in the same sequence. This provides further support for the view that Mark was conflating the other two.

3. As Riley has pointed out, the normally accepted number of dualisms as listed by Neiryneck, a Markan, is 217. Tuckett omits many of these while adding others of his own. So the statistical basis for his calculations is itself open to questioning ((RO 107-8)). A more detailed response to Tucket's argument was made in 1987 by Allan J. McNicol ((AJMT)).

HEALING AND COMMANDMENTS

Of the ten healing stories in Mark, eight appear in Matthew and Luke. They have chosen exactly the same eight ((WRF 166-7)). Mark lists six Commandments (10: 19). Matthew and Luke list five and these are exactly the same five ((WRF 160)). If Mark was reading from the other two there is no problem in accepting that he copied what was in front of him and added something of his own.

But if Matthew and Luke were using Mark, the pattern of choosing exactly the same items would be highly unlikely if they did not consult with one another. Markan priority insists that they did not know one another.

OTHER ASPECTS

a). As recorded in our Chapter II g, Clement of Alexandra recorded that: "And when Peter got to know about it [Mark's Gospel] he exerted no pressure either to forbid it or promote it". This raises interesting questions. If Mark's Gospel was the first gospel to be written, and therefore the `flagship` of the Christians, why was Peter so indifferent regarding its promotion? On the other hand, if we accept that two well prepared and constructed Gospels already existed, and Peter had merely preached a series of sermons based on them, Peter's attitude is easy to understand.

b). By examining evidence from historical, scientific and Church teaching, this booklet may be said to take a `holistic` approach to New Testament dating. But most Markan priorists live in the narrow world of literary analysis only. Before engaging in debate they set the precondition that literary analysis only may be considered.

To meet this attitude a group of American scholars who accept the sequence of Matthew-Luke-Mark, have published books within this framework. ((DBP, AJM and AJMT)). They leave aside questions of dating, place of composition, identity of author, reason for publication and historical sources. They challenge Markan priority on the bases of literary analysis alone. Although their books tend to be too academic to gain a wide readership, this shows Markan priority is coming under increasing challenge even on the restricted battleground of its own choosing. Their work has added much to the analysis of Mark`s verses where he borrows from one gospel, but is subtly influenced by the other. They have established a `2gh` web site ((col)).

c). Markans admit that Matthew`s Gospel is more Jewish than Mark`s. They explain this, by claiming, without evidence, that Matthew was `re-Judaizing` Mark. Rabbi Philip Sigal, a Talmudist, in his authoritative work: *The Foundations of Judaism`*, volume 1, says that `historical-literary criticism` points to `Mark beginning a great process of de-Judaization which proceeds for centuries ...`. For Sigal `Mark is a later composition arriving on the scene after Matthew, and probably Luke, were well known ...` ((WRFN xxvi)).

d). When we weigh the evidence for the Matthew-Luke-Mark sequence, against that for the Mark-Matthew-Luke, we find that the scales come down heavily on the side of the former. But there remains the apparent `poor Greek` of Mark as a Markan priority counter-weight.

This was, and still is, the foundation of all Markan speculations. To discuss this we will turn to the pioneering work of Dom Bernard Orchard as set out in the next chapter.

e) Juggling?

It has been objected that Peter, even with assistants, would not have been able to `juggle` between two scrolls. But once we accept Orchard`s construction of Peter delivering five talks, the problem disappears.

There are 25 places from where Peter commenced quoting. Ten of these would be where Peter started his talks, so his assistants could have easily have opened the scrolls at these places prior to the talks. In eight places Peter would have to return to a verse following on from (or very close to) where he had ceased quoting from a few minutes previously. So the scroll could have remained open without disturbance. There is no reason to suggest that the 7 longer jumps, spread over four evenings, would have been outside the capabilities of pre-warned assistants.

The longest `jump` occurs in the second talk. Matthew`s gospel would need to have been unrolled for 31 verses whilst Peter is quoting from 13 of Luke`s verses. It is interesting that Mark interjects four verses of his own at this point. Did he do so in order to provide his assistants with a little more time?

CHAPTER VII

THE CLEMENTINE TRADITION (PETER'S TALKS)

As we saw in previous chapters, there is much internal and external evidence indicating that Mark borrowed from the Gospels of Matthew and Luke. But the supporters of this Clementine tradition still have to face the challenge that if Mark was borrowing from the others, why did he change their well structured Greek prose into `poor Greek`? This question is the foundation of the Markan priority theory, and for many the greatest obstacle preventing a confident acceptance of the Clementine Tradition.

Finding a reason for the `poor Greek` of Mark was at the centre of the dating controversy. Markan priorists said it showed that Mark must have written first. Opponents, taking their stand on the historical evidence and church teaching, said Mark was written after Matthew, but their failure to provide a reason for the `poor` Greek of Mark made their arguments seem inconclusive.

Fortunately, increased knowledge of first century life has made it possible to throw light on this problem. B.H.Streeter, the main promoter in England of Markan priority during the early part of the 20th century, wrote regarding the difference between the style of Mark and the other two:

`It is the difference which always exists between the spoken and the written language. Mark reads like a shorthand account of a story by an impromptu speaker – with all the repetitions, redundancies, and digressions, which are characteristic of living speech. And it seems to me most probable that his Gospel, like Paul's Epistles, was taken down from rapid dictation by word of mouth`.
(BHSG 163)).

Streeter presumed Mark had taken down the words in private while acting as a personal secretary. So Streeter was not deflected from advocating Markan priority. Although the opinion of Streeter was remembered, it was not till the 1980s that his observation was seen as very significant. Bernard Orchard had become particularly interested in the opening verses of Mark where scripture is misquoted. This led him in 1987 to speculate that Peter had given a series of public talks to a carefully selected audience, and that Mark's Gospel was a transcript of these talks. In 1991 a book by E.R.Richards established, on the basis of new data, that Greek shorthand had been developed before

52 BC. He explained: `...it had long been the custom for public men to have their speeches recorded by competent shorthand writers` ((BOO 13)).

This transformed the speculation of Orchard into a practical hypothesis, which he published in 1993 naming it: `The Fourfold Gospel Hypothesis` ((BOF 1)). The evidence for the conflation of Matthew and Luke has been explained in the previous chapter. What Orchard realised was the manner in which it had taken place. Mark had not been leisurely sitting at a desk in a private room.

Orchard sees Matthew as having written for the Jews of Palestine, and Luke for the Gentiles of Asia. As Luke had not been an eyewitness of the ministry of Christ, Paul asked Peter to endorse the Gospel composed by Luke. Peter did this by giving a series of talks blending together Matthew and Luke, while adding memories and comments of his own. As Mark took down the talks verbatim they contained the blemishes one finds in unedited speech. Orchard has explained his thesis:

Our thesis that Peter was going to restrict his testimony to what he could vouch for by his own personal memories of the Ministry, is supported by his omission of Luke's birth narratives, Central Section, Resurrection stories, and his omission of all that Luke himself has left out of the six composite Matthean Discourses.

He reinstates Luke's Great Omission (Mt 14:22 - 16:12), and furthermore reintroduces a few Matthean stories omitted by Luke, such as the pericope about divorce (Mt 19:3 - 9), and adds a few stories of his own. This leads us to formulate the following hypothesis regarding Peter's handling of Luke as follows:

On this hypothesis Peter's principal aim was to authenticate the text of Luke; and he decided to use the occasion to add individual comments of his own, prompted by his own personal memories, and his intimate knowledge of the Gospel of Matthew which had been circulating in the Church for at least twenty years as a handbook. He therefore concentrates on following Luke in order, pericope by pericope, as closely as his own personal memories will permit. He holds open the scroll of Luke, but the scroll of Matthew is also within reach, though he can quote word for word by heart whenever he wants to.

And so whilst steadily following the order of Luke he feels entirely free either to vary the wording of Luke in favour of Matthew's text, or to introduce his own variant of Matthew, in virtue of his being the eyewitness of the events he is describing. At the same time he has no problem in agreeing to follow Luke's alternative arrangement of the stories in Mt 3:1 - 13:58, nor does he need as a general rule to refer to the scroll of Matthew while he follows Luke freely and even conflates it with Matthew. ((BOA 388-389)).

Harold Riley, an associate of Orchard, stresses the ongoing nature of this conflation. Mark's gospel keeps going forward when borrowing from the other two. He never retraces his steps by rolling the scrolls backwards. So stories of the Centurion's servant and the messengers of the Baptist are omitted. To find them, Peter would have had to wind back the scroll ((RO 11)). In one place only is there a change in order and it is significant that this is at Luke 6: 12-19. The lines of Matthew and Luke are so close together Peter could see them at the same time. Rolling back was not required.

Orchard suggests Peter gave five talks. The 'T' on the chart indicates where he judges each to commence ((RO 269-272)).

Markans argue that if Mark wrote after Matthew and Luke he would not have left out the infancy narratives, the Lord's prayer, the Beatitudes and the Resurrection. They argue that it would be more likely that Mark wrote first and that Matthew and Luke added them. This would be logical if they were all writing in private, but we have no evidence to presume this. The omission of the items does not cause a problem when we accept that Mark was recording Peter's voice conflating the other two. He conflated only what was parallel and convenient.

To quote Orchard again:

“From the start the speaker determined to confine himself to the pericopes where Matthew and Luke have for the most part common material and are generally in parallel, that is, between 3:1 (=Luke 3:1) and Matthew 28:10 (=Luke 24:12). Thus Mark omitted the birth and resurrection narratives, the whole of Luke's central section, and both great sermons; ...But he did adopt Luke's summary version of Matthew's discourses on mission, community, parables and eschatology”. ((RO 268)).

The `Our Father` and the Beatitudes were included in the two great sermons or in Luke's Central Section, so were not in the segments conflated [For position see OF and B on chart in previous chapter].

The examination of the Gospels in the light of the above produces many interesting insights, for which we have room for only a few examples.

Note how often `And` is used to link sentences and clauses. This is a telltale sign of an untutored impromptu speaker of Greek. We have all heard speakers, especially if they are working from notes in front of them, repeatedly using `and` or `then` or even `erh`. In a written composition Peter or Mark would have adopted a more polished format. The words in Chapter 1, verses 2 and 3 lack a main verb, so do not form complete sentences. While Mark omits important aspects of the life of Christ that were reported by Matthew and Luke, he adds trivial details. These are a puzzle for Markan priorists. But, if we accept the Clementine tradition as developed by Orchard the puzzle is solved. Peter was omitting sections of the other Gospels where it was difficult to conflate while adding short personal memories. This would be very human for a speaker.

Peter would have been very familiar with Matthew's Gospel, but Luke's would have brought back half-forgotten incidents. As Peter read Luke 8: 22-56 he recalled the scene and spontaneously mentioned the position of the cushion (Mark 4: 38). Matthew in 14:19 tells of the multitudes sitting down on the grass, and Luke in 9:14 of them doing so in companies. Mark in 6:39 conflates the two accounts by speaking of both the grass and the companies. But this must have brought the scene to mind and he remembers something, which at the time had caught his attention – the grass was green in that arid area.

The cautionary aside, “with persecutions” (Mark 10: 30), is thrown out as an after thought, during the course of an impassioned delivery.

In Mark 12: 41-44 the speaker realises his audience has not understood what he meant by `two tines`, so explains that they are the equivalent of the smallest Roman coin. In Mark 3: 30 he feels bound to restate the reason for the condemnation in verse 29. In Mark 7: 20, when Peter is teaching about a Jewish eating taboo, he interrupts his flow with an explanation.

The insertion of “the father of Alexander and Rufus” (Mark 15: 21) at such a sorrowful moment, indicates the remark had some personal relevance to Peter’s audience. It calls to mind that a Rufus was present in Rome (Rom. 16:13). In Mark 16: 4 Peter interjects the exuberant comment “For it was mighty big”. This is known to grammarians as an `intensifier` used to create a sense of wonder. A trained writer of Greek would not have used it while he sat at his desk. It is such interjections that give this gospel its fresh and vivid style.

In the previous chapter we discussed `redundant clauses`. An aspect of such clauses is that they are often found in transcripts when a speaker has been guided by two similar documents. In Chapter III we listed some of the grammatical errors of Mark, and in Chapter V show how important they are for Markan priorists. Yet they are to be expected from a fisherman speaking a foreign language.

As Orchard has written:

... the Gospel of Mark is in no way the smooth product of a skilled author sitting at a desk, but has all the vividness, the inconsistencies, and the peculiar turns of speech, that one finds in actual transcripts of live speeches, for example, sudden breaks, asides, anacolutha [incoherence within a sentence] and so forth` ((RO 273))

Two scriptural allusions of Mark are significant. The first is in chapter I, where Peter opens his talk by proclaiming a title. In the second verse, he says he is going to quote from Isaiah the prophet. But he then quotes from Malachi 3: 1. As the words leave his lips he realises his error so runs on with Isaiah. The audience understands and it passes in a moment but the shorthand secretary has recorded the slip of the tongue for posterity.

The second is in chapter 2: 26, where Abiathar is referred to as the high priest who gave David and his companions the Bread of the presence to eat (1 Samuel 21: 1-6). But Ahimelech, father of Abiathar was the high priest at that time. Again the shorthand recorder has caught the slip. A writer in the quiet of his room composing a Gospel, or taking private dictation from Peter, would have made corrections. But if we accept that it was an unedited verbatim record of a talk, there are no problems.

The Gospel of Matthew has 18,293 words and that of Luke 19,376, which are just the right lengths to fill a standard papyrus roll. Mark, with 11,025 words, would leave nearly half the roll unused. This is a pointer to Matthew and Luke carefully planning their compositions, while the publication of the third gospel had not been planned.

Exegetes have been puzzled by the way Mark ends so abruptly at 16: 8, without reporting any resurrection appearances. Orchard suggests the two accounts of Christ's resurrection appearances, like his infancy, were too dissimilar to be easily conflated ((RO 271-2)). Mark's Gospel narrative stops exactly at the point where Matthew and Luke are no longer conflatable ((BOM 112)). Also, Paul was able to provide his own witness of Christ coming to him (1 Cor. 15: 18), so could endorse this part of Luke's gospel himself.

Orchard suggests the last twelve verses may have been notes for a further talk. But readers may find it worth turning to an alternative suggestion of my own given at the beginning of our Chapter XVIII.

When we compare Orchard's hypothesis with the historical records, we find complete agreement. It is instructive at this point to re-read our Chapter II. Papias defends Mark's unedited wording, Justin says Peter produced memoirs, Irenaeus states that Mark recorded Peter, Clement reports the delivery of talks and the requests of the audience, The Anti-Marcionite Prologue of Mark adds extra details, and Eusebius makes a summary of the records.

It is common to find the first chapter of a modern book admitting that Markan priority is a theory, but treating it as a fact in the remaining chapters. Following books by Chapman, Butler, Riley, Farmer, Orchard, Robinson, Peabody and others, many accept that the evidence for Markan priority is not convincing. Inertia is now an ally of the theory. An observation by Dennis Nineham in the 1970s is interesting. He wrote that he held to Markan priority, 'Not because there are any really good arguments for it, but because there do not seem to be any better arguments for any other position'. ((SNTW 362)).

Since then the debate has moved on and if we accept that Mark's Gospel is a transcript of talks given by Peter, the time has come to abandon other theories. The puzzle of Mark's "poor Greek" is solved without requiring the rejection of the historical evidence and the adoption of the destructive theory of Markan priority.

The 'Fourfold Gospel Hypothesis' of Orchard may be summarised as follows: Matthew wrote for the Jews in Palestine about 45 AD. Luke, utilising Matthew, wrote about 60 AD for the Gentiles. Then at the request of Paul, Peter gave a series of talks so as to endorse the Gospel of Luke. John then supplemented and clarified the other three, so that together the four Gospels present the one Gospel of Jesus Christ.

During its modern development this approach has appeared under a variety of names: The hypothesis of Owen; Owen-Griesbach; The Griesbach hypothesis; the hypothesis of Farmer; the two gospel hypothesis (2gh); and the fourfold gospel hypothesis of Orchard. To avoid confusion and in recognition that Clement was the first to specifically write of the Matthew-Luke-Mark sequence, this booklet collectively refers to this approach as 'The Clementine Tradition' or 'The Tradition of Clement'.

[For additional reasons to accept the Clementine tradition, see Chapter XVIII].

CHAPTER VIII DATING MATTHEW

For nearly 2000 years it has been held that Matthew wrote his gospel in Jerusalem prior to the destruction of the city in 70 AD. The reason modern books have transferred its composition to a later period is so as to conform to the Markan theory. When dating is examined on its own, without this supposition, the witness of the ancient historians is clearly correct. This chapter will highlight some of the concerns featured in this gospel that indicate its background was Palestine and Jerusalem as it existed prior to 70 AD.

The new Christian community was formulating its position with regard to the Hebrew Scriptures, The Law, the Pharisees, the Sadducees, the Temple sacrifices, purification rites, the Sabbath, admission to the community, internal discipline, fasts, prayers, marriage, divorce and celibacy, as well its attitude to the Samaritans and Gentiles. As we read through the chapters and verses of Matthew we see this taking place. This is what gives this gospel such a Jewish flavour and points to it being written at this time and place. There are many examples which indicate a Palestinian background:

5: 19	Fulfilment of the law.
5: 23-24	Bringing gifts to the altar.
5: 35	Swearing by Jerusalem.
10: 6 and 15: 24	The lost sheep of the house of Israel.
15: 22	The Samaritan woman.
24: 21	The Sabbath.
19: 28	The twelve tribes.
23: 16-22	Swearing by the Temple and the altar.
23: 27	White-washed tombs.

Luke and Mark/Peter addressing mainly Gentile audiences omit these subjects.

The Jews lived by `The Law` and Matthew was very conscious of it. He uses the words Just, Justice, Lawlessness, worthy, judgement fifty times, while Luke uses them twenty four times and Mark only twice ((NCCHS 710B)). We can see here a sign of a progressive moving away from the Palestinian environment.

Matthew assumes his readers are familiar with the views and customs of the Scribes, Pharisees, Herodians and Sadducees. He never explains who they are, which would be expected if he had a mixed Gentile-Jewish audience towards the end of the first century ((RO 233)). He is busy solving the problems of Christian Jews, while ignoring those of the Gentiles who, by 85 AD, were pouring into the Church. Major theological concepts in Matthew`s Gospel presume an audience possessing a good understanding of the Old Testament. The Gospel uses concepts foreign to Greek thought such as:

9: 14-15 Nuptial Tent. 17: 10-13 Bridegroom. 22: 7 Marriage Feast.

The Greeks, thanks to Aristotle, had a word for `species`, but the Hebrews lacked this concept. They used expressions such as: `Son of Man`, Son of Ox, Son of Crow etc. Tresmontant examined this in detail ((CTH 30-45, 87, 131)).

Matthew writes of the Sabbath (24: 19-20), yet the corresponding passages in Luke 21: 23 and Mark 13:17 omit it. Again we see the Church drawing further away from her Jewish roots.

Matthew in 16: 1-12 attacks the Pharisees and Sadducees four times in a long passage. In the related passage in Mark 8: 11-27, we see the mention of the Pharisees reduced and there is no mention of the Sadducees. If Matthew had written second, why would he double the references to the Pharisees and insert the phrase `and the Sadducees` four times? We need to remember that by AD 85 the Sadducees had ceased to exist.

Why would Matthew (17: 24-7) in 85 AD be preoccupied with the half- shekel Temple tax which had ceased to exist fifteen years earlier?

Comparing the two stories in Matthew 15: 1-2 and 15: 21, with Mark 7: 2-4 and 7: 28, we see Mark finding it necessary to explain the act of `washing` and the nationality of a Canaanite. Matthew writing for Palestinians had no need to do this. If Matthew was writing in 85 AD for a mainly Gentile readership, and basing his Gospel on Mark`s Gospel, why did he leave out the helpful explanations provided by Mark?

Matthew`s Gospel is full of examples claiming Christ fulfilled the Hebrew prophecies (e.g. 1:22, 2:15, 2:17, 4:14, 8:17, 12:17, 13:35, 21:4, 27:9). He reports the rending of the Temple veil (27: 51), yet does not record the fulfilment of Christ`s biggest prophesy – The destruction of the Temple.

According to Matthew 12: 38-42, Christ said the story of Jonas would be a sign to a disbelieving Jewish generation. The point of the story (see Jonas chapters 1 and 2) is that the pagans would flock to be righteous while the chosen people would keep their hard hearts. The three-day whale incident is ancillary to the main story. If Matthew had written towards the end of the century when the Gentiles were flooding into the Church, he would have been able to show the full fulfilment of the prophecy ((CTH 42)).

These are all signs of Matthew writing pre-70 AD.

The disciples realised Christ was aware of the future and out of curiosity asked questions. But Christ was aiming to make his Apostles single-minded and not waste time on idle curiosity (John 21: 22). He gave them answers, but Christians have been puzzled ever since as to what applied to the immediate future and what to the end of the world. Whether this was deliberate on the part of Christ or whether the Apostles became confused, we do not know. But we do know that a major item of the prophecy, the destruction of the Temple and Jerusalem, had been fulfilled within forty years.

If Matthew wrote after 70 AD why did he fail to take the opportunity to unscramble the reporting of the words of Christ?

Orchard has pointed out that the letters of Paul to the Thessalonians, written in the 50s, show the influence of Matthew's Gospel. Orchard comments: "We find the same teaching, the same metaphors and similes and the same key words, some exceedingly rare". Apart from two in 4: 16, the words are used in the same order. The order is not so close in the second Epistle, but even here the words all appear in chapter 24 and the beginning of chapter 25. Other powerful supporting reminiscences of Matthew are to be found in Galatians 1: 12, 16, and 1 Cor. 7: 1ff and 9: 14 ((RO 119-120)). For a fuller description of these relationships see `Biblica 19 (1938): 19-42`. This is further evidence of Matthew writing prior to the 50s AD.

Every ancient historical source says the Apostle Matthew wrote the first Gospel and most of them record that it was in Hebrew or at least in a Semitic language or style.

CHAPTER IX A HEBREW MATTHEW

The previous Chapter pointed out how the subject matter in Matthew's Gospel indicates its early composition for a Jewish audience in Palestine. In this chapter we look at the linguistic evidence of it being first written in Hebrew.

Eusebius quoting Papias wrote, "Matthew collected the oracles [logia or sayings] in the Hebrew language/style". ((EH 3: 39.16)). Quoting Irenaeus Eusebius wrote, "Now Matthew published among the Hebrews a written gospel also in their own tongue/ dialect". ((EH. 5: 8, 2)). Kirsopp Lake in a footnote to his translation explains that the word `also` indicates that Matthew's Gospel also had a spoken form. Markans reject the evidence of Eusebius as unreliable because it challenges their theory. Most Markans assert that it is not possible to back-translate Matthew's Greek Gospel into Hebrew. Yet they have no evidence for this assertion. The Pontifical Biblical Commission in 1912 stated that this assertion did not undermine the words of Eusebius.

In recent years two Frenchmen have thrown more light on this question. Jean Carmignac, a specialist in Greek and Hebrew, spent eleven years from 1943 translating `The Book of Chronicles`. Then from 1954-63 he was engaged in translating manuscripts from the Qumran caves, otherwise known as `The Dead Sea Scrolls`. Although his work was mainly concerned with the Old Testament, he noticed several interesting connections with the New.

So in 1963 he attempted to translate a Greek Gospel back into the form of Hebrew used at Qumran. Carmignac was `absolutely dumbfounded` to find how easy it proved to be. Realising his translation would meet with ferocious criticism from Markan priorists, he searched in the old monastic libraries of Europe to see if the translation had been attempted previously. In this way he also hoped to correct and improve his own work. Although he lacked the time to make a thorough search, he soon found sixty translations of Gospels or portions of them. Some were by Rabbis who had become Christians and others by Rabbis wishing to dispute with Christians.

Carmignac had not completed the writing of his scholarly findings but was aging. So his friends persuaded him to write a small book for the general public, which appeared in 1987. He not only wrote that Matthew's Gospel was the first to be written, but that it was in Hebrew. He could also see a Hebrew substratum in the other two synoptic Gospels.

According to him, the order of composition was a Hebrew Matthew followed by a Greek Luke, and then by a Greek Mark. In order to conform to Markan priority, he presumed there must have been an earlier Hebrew version of Mark, which Mark later translated. If we ignore this presumption, his work dovetails with the Clementine tradition of Matthew-Luke-Mark. He dates Greek Mark as before 70 AD, so Matthew and Luke also before that date.

In 1953 Claude Tresmontant, a French Hebrew scholar, published a book dedicated to Hebrew thought. He then worked for many years to produce a Hebrew-Greek dictionary. While doing this he was overwhelmed by how easy it was to back-translate the Gospels into Hebrew. In his 1980 `Le Christ Hebreu` [English translation 1989], he explained in detail the Hebrew basis for the Gospels. He formed the opinion that Matthew in both Hebrew and Greek could be dated as having been written soon after the Resurrection, Luke between 40-60 AD, with Mark 50-60 AD. ((CTH 324)). While not confirming the Clementine order, it allowed its possibility.

Tresmontant detected a Hebrew substructure to Mark`s Gospel. At first sight this appears to conflict with the normally accepted view that Mark recorded Peter speaking in Greek. But, according to Orchard, over 90% of the talks by Peter consisted of him quoting from Matthew and Luke. So the Hebrew substructure of these quotations would automatically be carried into his talks. The additions made by Peter would also possess a strong Semitic tone because Peter was a native Aramaic speaker. J Kurzinger has shown that the word of Papias regarding Matthew`s Gospel would be best rendered as `style`. ((RO 128-9)). This would be a good description of a Greek document written with a Hebrew substructure.

When discussing Semitisms in the Gospels, Carmignac and Tresmontant accepted that many could be explained as a Greek author borrowing familiar Hebrew words. It would have been easy for the translator to carry over some Hebrew words. But the Hebrew sub-structure pointed out by Carmignac and Tresmontant is of a different kind.

Hebrew likes wordplay and takes great pleasure in using similar sounds to assist memorisation. In Matthew 3: 9 we read of `stones` and `children`. In Greek and English there is no linguistic connection to assist memorisation. But in Hebrew it reads as `abanim`, and `banim` ((CTH 64)). In Matthew 9:16 the tear (qera) becomes worse (ra). In Matthew 13: 6 shemesh (sun) is linked phonetically to the word for root (shoresh). In Matthew 21:12, shulehanot (tables) is similar to shulehanim (changers). ((JC 29)).

Hebrew Matthew in 26: 38 probably used the words `imdu` (stay) and `immadi` (with me). The word `immadi` was translated into Greek, and therefore into English versions. This is acceptable in English but superfluous in the Greek language ((JC 30)). It is interesting that Peter, reading a Greek copy of Matthew and speaking in Greek, omits it (Mark 14: 34). We may ask Markan priorists why Matthew, if writing in Greek at the end of the first century, adds a superfluous Greek word.

Translators and copyists are liable to make small errors, and these show when we compare the Gospels. It is necessary to point out here that the use of small dots or dashes in Hebrew are not aids to pronunciation, as they are in some languages. In Hebrew they signified completely different letters. Many apparent discrepancies between the Gospels may be explained if we accept that Matthew`s Gospel was originally in Hebrew. In Matthew 22: 19 we read `show me a coin`, while Mark 12:15 has `bring me a denarius`. But in Hebrew a coin is HBW and a denarius is HRW.

In Hebrew only a small difference distinguishes B and R from one another, so could easily have been misread when being translated into Greek ((JC 32)).

Matthew 13:17 has, `the just` or `righteous men`, but Luke 10: 24 has `kings`. As `the just` corresponds to WYSRYM and `kings` to WSRYM, and as the symbols for W and Y are very close, we are able to see how easy it would have been to read W in place of Y. Misreading the word `king` for `just` in Greek would be unimaginable ((JC 33)).

In the previous chapter, we noted that some Hebrew theological concepts present in Matthew's Gospel would be alien to Greek thought. Here we may note some of the more common Hebrew words and expressions used by Matthew but not by Greeks: Beelzebub, Woe, Flesh and Blood, deliver into the hands, hardness of heart, to set one's face. Why would a Greek use these if not translating from the Hebrew? These words are not used by Luke or Mark ((CTH 67-71, 90-92 and 112)).

Tresmontant has pointed out that a Hebrew-Greek Lexicon had to be produced when the Old Testament was translated into Greek (the Septuagint). He holds the opinion that the Christians used the same lexicon in New Testament times. On both occasions the translators were worried about losing the full meaning, so tended to transcribe word for word, even though this could produce a Greek which did not flow well.

So the evidence produced by Carmagnac, Tresmontant, and at least sixty Rabbis, is that the Gospel according to Matthew was first written in Hebrew. The examples supplied here are just a few of the many provided by the two French authors. This is in full accord with the historical records of Papias and Irenaeus, which say a Hebrew version for the Jews of Palestine was composed first. A Greek version appeared when converts were gained amongst those who could speak Greek only.

Although these two Frenchmen firmly agreed that the Synoptic Gospels were written pre-70 AD, they did not take a stand on the sequence in which they were composed. But it is interesting that Tresmontant refers to them in the order of Matthew-Luke-Mark four times on one page of his writings ((CTG 14)). As they have shown that Papias and Irenaeus were correct to report that Matthew's Gospel was first written in Hebrew, confidence in the other information these historians provide, is greatly increased.

In 47 AD Western sailors learnt how to utilise the monsoons so as to sail from Egypt to southern India in less than 100 days. According to Indian records, Thomas the Apostle landed at Malankara, Kerala in 52 AD ((SGP 5)). After establishing seven churches he moved to Coromandel on the east coast where he was martyred in 68 AD. Irenaeus records that Pantaenus, director from 180-192 of the Alexandrian School of Sacred Learning, paid a visit to India in 190 and was shown a copy of the gospel of Matthew in Hebrew characters. Pantaenus said the Apostle Bartholomew had taken it to India ((EH 5: 10)). Thomas was called `Mar Toma` [Lord or Bishop Thomas] so Pantaenus, who knew Hebrew but not the local Indian languages, may have misheard this as `Bar Tolmai`, the Hebrew name for Bartholomew ((SGP 19)). Whether this copy of the Gospel according to Matthew had belonged to Thomas or Bartholomew, Pantaenus had seen it and it was in Hebrew.

Yet Markans claim it was written to an isolated Greek speaking community after both Thomas and Bartholomew were dead.

In his *De Viris Illustribus*, Jerome claims that Matthew wrote in Hebrew letters and words for the sake of the Jews and it was translated into Greek. He writes that: “the Hebrew itself is preserved even now in the library at Caesarea ...”. He also says that he: “was given the opportunity of transcribing this volume by the Nazarenes who use it in Beroea, a city of Syria”. He adds that Matthew, when quoting from the Old Testament, had used Hebrew Scriptures not the Greek Septuagint. ((RO 203 and DVI, chapters 3 and 7)).

The doubt regarding the use of Hebrew by Matthew is due to the view put forward by J.A. von Widmanstadt in 1555. Without firm evidence he asserted that Hebrew was a dead language at the time of Jesus ((JC 83)). Many books still repeat this error yet Luke reports that Paul used Hebrew when speaking to a Jewish mob (Acts 21: 40 and 22: 2). The *Dead Sea Scrolls* have now confirmed that Hebrew was not a dead language at the time of Christ ((JC 65)).

CHAPTER X ANTI-JUDAISM IN MATTHEW AND JOHN

Markan priorists claim that Jews and Christians were on good terms and shared the same synagogues till 85 AD, when the Jewish leaders at a conference in Jamnia, composed a prayer containing an anti-Christian curse. As Christians would not say this prayer they were expelled from the synagogues. As the gospels of Matthew and John have an anti-Judaic tone they must have been written after 85 AD.

This may sound plausible until we examine the history of the period which has been studied in detail by both modern Jews and Christians. The Jewish findings were published in, `Jewish and Christian Self-Definition` by E. P. Sanders, 1981. William Horbury, who is the leading Christian authority on this subject, endorsed these findings. Robinson quotes from the book:

[The prayer] `... does not reflect a watershed in the history of the relationship between Jews and Christians in the first centuries of our era. Apparently there was never a single edict which caused the so-called irreparable separation between Judaism and Christianity. The separation was rather the result of a long process dependent upon local situations and ultimately upon the political power of the church`. ((JATRP 76-77)).

And concerning a later period:

`... there is abundant evidence from patristic sources that Christians were frequenting the synagogues quite often. Indeed there is far-flung evidence that it was the church leadership that strove to keep Christians away from the synagogue and not the Jews who were excluding them. Such protest from the church Fathers demonstrates the receptivity of the synagogues to Christians. This situation is highly unlikely if the synagogue liturgy contained a daily curse against Christians`. ((JATRP 75-76)).

And again: `There is no evidence to show that people were excommunicated on the ground of harbouring non-orthodox beliefs ... While to Christians heresy mainly implied doctrinal dissent, in Judaism doctrinal dissent did not make a Jew into a heretic`. Deviationism was assessed on grounds of practice or discipline rather than doctrine ((JATRP 77)).

So the scenario created to support the Markan priority theory evaporates when closely inspected.

When we seek evidence to explain the anti-Hebrew tone of the Gospel, we do not have to look far. While Christ was alive his followers feared being thrown out of the Synagogues (John 12: 42), and when hiding in the upper room after the crucifixion, they lived in fear (John 20: 19). After the descent of the Holy Spirit, the Apostles emerged from hiding to proclaim the Resurrection, perform miracles and attract converts.

The Sadducees and the High Priest brought Christians before the Sanhedrin, ordering them to be beaten and to cease preaching. Stephen, a very eloquent deacon was tried by the Sanhedrin and stoned to death (Acts 7:59).

A short time later the Roman governor had to visit Caesarea, so left the High Priest to govern Jerusalem in his absence. The High Priest took this opportunity to launch a persecution consisting of searches, arrests, imprisonments and executions (Acts 8:1). Then he sent Saul to Antioch and other towns to bring fleeing Christians back for trial and death. (Acts: 28: 11). It was during a journey to Damascus that Saul was converted and took the name Paul (Acts 13: 9). The Apostles hid until the return of the Roman governor.

When Claudius became emperor in AD 40, he appointed the Jewish Herod Agrippa as king of Palestine. Needing to consolidate his influence with the High Priest, Herod beheaded the Apostle James the Great and, "Seeing that it pleased the Jews", he arrested Peter. (Acts 12: 1-11). When king Herod died his son was too young to rule, so a Roman governor was appointed and under him the Church was left in peace.

Matthew would have written his gospel at or about this time.

In 58 AD Paul decided to return to Jerusalem from Asia but, hearing that some Jews were plotting to kill him, he travelled by an indirect route (Acts 20: 3). So as to uphold the traditions of his people he visited the Temple for the purification ceremonies, but when recognised he was dragged from the Temple and an attempt made to kill him (Acts 21: 30-31). Fortunately, Roman troops in a nearby fort intervened. Wishing to learn of the reason for the disturbance, the Romans asked the Sanhedrin to hold a trial. While the Pharisees were willing to acquit Paul, the Romans had to intervene again to protect Paul from the enraged Sadducees (Acts 23:10).

The following day it was decided to send him to Felix the Roman governor of Judea now living in Caesaria. Hearing that forty Jews had taken an oath sanctioned by the High Priest to kill Paul, Felix provided a large escort of troops (Acts 23: 21-25). Although rejecting the accusations of the Jewish leaders, Felix granted Paul a limited freedom only.

After two years, Festus replaced Felix. Wishing to gain popularity, the new governor was willing to grant the demand of the Jewish leaders for Paul to be tried by the Sanhedrin. Paul avoided this by claiming his right as a Roman citizen to be tried in Rome. But, before Paul could be sent to Rome, Festus died and Albinus was appointed to replace him.

A few weeks passed while Albinus prepared to travel to Palestine so as to take up his post. In his absence, the High Priest and Sanhedrin were free of Roman control. The city would be crowded during Passover and the leading Jews feared the Christians would take the opportunity to preach more openly. At this time a holy man was known to spend long periods of daily prayer in the Temple. So the authorities placed him on a wing of the building and told him to warn the crowds against Christian preaching.

They were not aware he was the Apostle James, now bishop of the city. As soon as he stood up on the wing and openly preached Christ, the priests and Pharisees realised their mistake so threw him down. After being stoned he was beaten to death with a club. Following this incident in 62 A.D other Christians were killed. ((EH 2: 23 and BC 118-121)).

Albinus, who was still in Alexandria, sent an angry letter depriving Annas of the high priesthood. Although this brought the Sanhedrin under control and an end to the killings, the Sadducees banned Christians from worshipping in the Temple ((BC 121)). Within four years Palestine was ravaged by war so the Christians moved to the Gentile town of Pella, 130 kilometres to the north.

These events explain why Matthew and John saw the Jewish leadership as enemies. In 64 AD Nero launched a persecution far worse than anything attempted by the Jews. If the authors of the gospels of Matthew and John wrote later, why are the Romans reported so favourably? We may add that most Markans admit that Mark wrote before 85 AD. Why was he anti-Judaic if the two communities were friendly at this time?

Why, if the Council of Jamnia had so outraged the Christians that it greatly coloured their writing, did the gospel writers not refer to it?

As many anti-Christian events took place well before the conference of Jamnia, they easily account for the anti-Judaism in the gospels.

CHAPTER XI

LUKE, ACTS AND THEIR RELATIONSHIP WITH MATTHEW

The traditional belief is that the Gospel of Luke was composed by the companion of Paul in Greek no later than 65 AD. It was based on his personal research and extracts borrowed from the Gospel of Matthew. Those claiming this Gospel was written anonymously about 85 AD, or in the second century, deny the author was a companion of Paul.

So let us look at the evidence.

The author declares his aim is to set out an orderly account of the events in the life of Christ and His followers. He does so in the form of a communication to Theophilus. In a second volume, known as `Acts`, the author continues the story from where he left it at the end of his Gospel. If it can be shown that Acts was composed prior to the destruction of Jerusalem, it follows that Luke`s Gospel was also composed prior to 70 AD.

The author of Acts records the conversion of Paul in chapter nine and then spends eighteen chapters detailing the travels of Paul, including his arrest, voyaging, shipwreck, arrival in Italy and his two years awaiting trial. But when we would expect details of Paul`s trial; sentence or release; there is an abrupt silence. The absence of this information is a clear indication that Acts was completed before 64 AD.

Acts ends at a time of peace for the church in Rome. Yet secular historians tell us there was a great persecution of Christians after 64 AD. As this does not appear in Acts, we have another indication that Acts was sent to Theophilus before this date.

This dating is confirmed by the way Jerusalem and its Temple are treated. Luke-Acts constitutes one third of the New Testament, yet contains two thirds of the references to Jerusalem. In the two volumes of Gospel and Acts, the city is mentioned 31 times. We can see that the Temple and Jerusalem are very prominent in the thinking of the author. Yet he ignores their destruction, the civil and religious symbolism of such destruction and the impact on the life of the Church and her missionary preaching. Again, the obvious reason is that Jerusalem and the Temple were still standing at the time he wrote.

The letters sent by Paul to various destinations became well known and copied for reading in the churches. Luke, as the companion of Paul, would not have foreseen their future importance, so did not mention them. But a writer of a generation or more later, giving an account of the life of Paul, would have alluded to at least one as an example of the writing ability of Paul and his thought. Yet nothing is said.

Markans work hard to find alleged discrepancies in the New Testament, but it is prudent to check their assertions. Some claim that Luke`s Gospel tells us that Christ ascended to heaven soon after His Resurrection (Luke 24: 50), while Acts speak of a forty day delay (Acts 1: 3). But the Gospel does not say how long it was between Christ speaking to the Apostles in the Upper Room and leading the Apostles out to Bethany. As we know from other parts of the Scriptures, `then` does not mean `immediately`.

In four places in Acts (16: 10-17; 20: 5-15; 21: 1-18; 27: 1-28) the author uses the pronoun `we`, when recording the journeys of Paul. The obvious meaning is that the author was with Paul in the 60s. Those arguing against this meaning, claim “we” could have been a stylistic device or that the author was copying from an old manuscript without adjusting the wording. But these claims are pure speculation to avoid acceptance of the clear meaning. Acts contains a whole range of pronouns such as: I, me, he, us and they. Together with `we` they all fit naturally into the manuscript.

Paul, when acting alone, is referred to as `he`. When Paul is separated from the author but with others, `they` is used. When Paul is with the author `we` or `us` is used.

Paul`s companions are referred to as `they` until Paul arrives for the first time in Troas (Acts 16: 8) when `we` and `us` is used till Paul leaves Philippi with Silas (Acts 16: 40). `They` is used again until `they` return to Troas (Acts: 20, 5). Then for the remainder of the travels of Paul, `we` is used.

It is common for a writer to give greater detail to events in which he has been involved compared with those he has learned second hand. It is noticeable that the author deals at great length with the `we` events at Philippi, yet provides a short summary of the `they` passages (Acts: 16: 4-8; 18: 18-23).

For the remaining time the author is in such close touch with Paul that events are often recorded on a day-to-day basis. The suggestion that Luke was using the royal `we`, when meaning `I`, is contrary to the narrative. When he does refer to himself in Acts 1: 1, he uses `I`.

Luke devotes one and a half chapters to Stephen (Acts 6: 8- 8: 1). He must have obtained this information first-hand from Saul/Paul who had been closely involved in the trial of Stephen and in his execution (Acts 7: 58). Christians would not have been close enough to those events to hear the conversation in such detail.

An early Greek prologue says that Luke was an unmarried physician, a Syrian by birth who died aged 84 at Thebes in Boeotia ((RO 144)). Irenaeus in his `Against Heretics` took it for granted that Luke was the author of one of the four Gospels. The heretics with whom he was disputing must have accepted this as being true, otherwise the arguments being used by Irenaeus would have been useless.

There is nothing in the many early writings or in more recent discoveries that remotely hints that the author was not the companion of Paul. The only reason it is alleged to have been someone else, is because the acceptance of Luke`s position destroys the theory of Markan priority.

Luke says Christ came to preach (4: 18) and that he did preach (20: 1) yet, according to Markan priorists, Luke not only failed to report this preaching but substituted the views of a later unnamed creative theologian.

Christ said to his apostles: “You shall be my witnesses” (Luke 24: 48 and Acts I: 8). The Gospel writers frequently refer to themselves as being witnesses (Acts 1: 22; 2: 32; 3: 15; 5: 32 etc.). So the apostles had a real interest in the historical dimension of the teaching of Christ. The only way to reject this view is to assert that the books of the New Testament are a massive confidence trick of falsehoods invented by theologians to fool their readers and later generations.

It has been claimed that as the author of the Gospel and Acts did not give his name, these writings are anonymous. But no one writing to a named person, such as Theophilus, would write: “it seemed good to me ...to write ”, without letting the recipient know who was writing to him. If the correspondent had a reason to omit his name from the scroll, he would write his name and address on the wrapping or in a covering note. The most likely reason Luke omitted his name will be explained in our chapter XV.

The first twelve chapters of Acts concern the early church in Jerusalem with Peter as the key figure. In the twelfth chapter we read of Peter escaping from prison, hiding in the home of John Mark and leaving for `another place` (Acts 12:17). This would have occurred in 41 or 42 AD ((CTJ 44)). In the first chapter of his Gospel Luke stresses that he has made careful researches, and throughout his writings we find he is very precise when giving place names. So why was he vague here?

Theophilus would know of Ezekiel 12: 1-13, where it was written, “Therefore ...prepare for yourself an exile`s baggage, ... in the dark ... and go into exile ...to **another place**”. In 12: 13, `the other place` is identified as Babylon. At this time Rome was coming to be known as a second Babylon. Peter himself refers to it by this name in chapter 5 of his first Epistle. The Apocalypse (Chapters 14, 17 and 18) also refers to Rome in this way. So the author was writing in code to Theophilus, to inform him that Peter had gone to Rome. The early historians report Peter preaching in Rome, none reported that he visited Babylon of the Chaldeans ((BC 44)).

Following his escape from prison, Peter was a fugitive. Herod had executed two guards because of the escape. So we have Luke, who aimed to be factual in his accounts, using code regarding the whereabouts of Peter. If Acts had been written after the death of Peter in 65 AD, the author would have been free to say where Peter had fled.

All these observations point to Acts, and therefore the Gospel according to Luke, as being written some time before this date. Jerome stated that `Acts` was completed in the fourth year of Nero which would be in 64 AD. ((DVI chapter 7)).

The Infancy narratives

In a 1977 book, R.E.Brown, a leading Catholic Markan priority scholar, denied the historicity of the infancy narratives of Matthew and Luke. Edith Black has shown that the exegetical principles used by Brown, according to which he denies this historicity are in sharp conflict with the norms laid down by the Catholic Church ((EB)).

Brown attracted a large following, but he had not examined the narratives with an open mind. He was committed to the theory of Markan priority with its acceptance of late composition by anonymous non-Apostolic authors personally out of touch with each other, writing creative theological treatises rather than history.

From this presupposition and therefore narrow perspective, Brown presumed that the only way the infancy narratives in Matthew and Luke could possibly be historical, was if their authors had both copied an earlier tradition.

As the infancy narratives did not repeat the same stories, he concluded that such an earlier document could not have existed, and therefore the first chapters of these Gospels were not historical ((RBM 34-36)). From this understanding many problems arose and some have gained wide circulation. Yet when Markan Priority is rejected, the 'problems' disappear.

For example, Brown said that secular historians did not corroborate the massacre and census stories. But is there a need for corroboration? It is unscientific prejudice to accept the evidence of all sorts of ancient historians provided they were not a Christian such as Luke. Unbiased modern historians accept the accounts of ancient historians as being correct unless there is strong contrary evidence. In this case contrary evidence does not exist. Also, Luke claimed to be giving an account of historical events, so had to be very careful. He knew that many anti-Christians alive at the time would try to find errors in what he was writing.

Bethlehem was a small community, with the number of males under two years not more than twenty ((RL 372)). According to Josephus, the main Jewish historian of the period, Herod carried out large massacres of his own family, his officers and the general population. They were on such a scale that a non-Christian historian would have passed over the killing of twenty children without comment ((RL 372)).

When discussing scholars who claimed to be demythologising the New Testament, the editor of Faith Magazine asked an interesting question. "Do these scholars ever stop to weigh up the psychological state of mind they imply in the evangelists of the New Testament? Herod may have been a depraved beast, but it would be a monstrous crime to frame even Herod with a murderous outrage he did not commit. Do `scholars` like these know anything about the love of God as an experience?" ((FM March 1991, page 6)).

Quirinius (Cyrinius) did not become governor of Syria until 10 AD so, at first sight, there appears to be a genuine problem here. It is true that other historians are not able to confirm the taking of a census at this time, but they are also unable to say with certainty that it did not occur. Our knowledge of the administrative background of the period is very fragmentary. Roman census did not take place at the same time in each part of the empire, and when one was carried out it could be spread over many years. As Luke mentions `the first enrolment`, he was presuming Theophilus knew of at least one later one. If Luke were so ignorant of the history of the period, would he have left himself so open to criticism, by attempting such precision?

We lack details of the early career of Quirinius. Some modern historians think he was given charge of some affairs in the Middle East before being promoted in 10 A.D. to the position of governor of Syria ((RL 328)).

A census was usually held so as to have a basis for taxation. It was therefore very important for those owning land to inform their children, who would inherit. The census would have been a subject of discussion for many years amongst villagers. Many of Luke`s contemporaries would have been aware of the census through such family histories.

Luke was writing at a time when records of the census would have been available in both Jerusalem and Rome. It is significant that there is no sign of the Roman, Pagan, Jewish and heretical enemies of Christianity challenging the statement of Luke.

Justin Martyr addressed a letter to Emperor Antoninus Pius who reigned from 138 –161. After telling of the registration of the Holy Family in the census, he adds that details can be found in the official Roman archives ((JMA 1: 34)).

About 200 AD Tertullian, in his `Adversum Marcionem`, writes:

There is historical proof that at this very time a census had been taken in Judaea by Sentius Saturninus, which might have satisfied their enquiry respecting the family and descent of Christ` ((TE Book 4: 19,10)).

So at this time there was historical proof available of the census. Sentius Saturninus was the pagan priest appointed by Augustus to head the planning of the worldwide census.

Some critics claim that Mary would not have travelled to Bethlehem, as it was a duty for the head of the household alone. But if the names of Mary and Jesus were not included in the census, Tertullian`s appeal that his enemies looked in the records would have been pointless.

Other critics have asserted that the Romans did not require a return to one`s hometown to be registered. But we read in the K. C. Hanson collection of Ancient Documents:

“Gaius Vibius Maximus, the Prefect of Egypt, declares:

“The census by household having begun, it is essential that all those who are away from their homes be summoned to return to their own hearths so that they may perform the customary business of registration...`” ((KCH)).

This was in 104 AD and only 250 kilometres from Palestine.

nomes = An Egyptian administrative district.

It is true that Matthew writes of a stable at Bethlehem, while Luke reports that the wise men went into a house. But once the crowds had gone home after the census, Bethlehem would not have been so crowded. The family could have moved into a house during the two years prior to the arrival of the wise men.

Let us look at the wider aspects of these narratives. The first two chapters of Matthew and Luke provide essentially the same information: Mary and Joseph are legally engaged; Joseph is Davidic in descent; Mary conceives by the Holy Spirit while remaining a virgin; an angel says the child is to be named `Jesus`, meaning `Saviour`.

Matthew then provides some less-essential details. It was Joseph who was told of the child's name, the place of birth was Bethlehem, the family had fled to Egypt, Herod had carried out a massacre, and Jesus had grown up in Nazareth. Matthew was writing his Lectionary primarily for Jews in Palestine and we can see him contrasting the violent rejection of the Messiah by a Jewish king, with the wise Gentiles seeking the Will of God.

Luke repeats the same essential information, which could be said to be `doctrinal`, but not the less-essential details already made known by Matthew. Matthew had stated that Jesus was born in Bethlehem, but had grown up in Nazareth. A vague intimation of the date of the birth of Jesus was conveyed by the mention of Herod in the Magi story, but he had reigned for many years. A precise date would not have been required in Jerusalem just after the Resurrection. Everyone would have possessed a general knowledge of the period. But Luke, writing twenty or so years later in Asia, would feel it necessary to be more precise and explain how Jesus, a Nazarene, came to be born in Bethlehem. His account provided this information and added that he was born in a manger because the Inn was crowded. He also reports the visit of the shepherds. These details do not conflict with those of Matthew.

According to tradition, Mary lived at Ephesus in Asia, and we know that Luke spent much of his time in the same area. Even if she lived elsewhere, Luke would have been permitted to see visit her. Considering the detailed and intimate nature of the nativity story, it is not difficult to conclude that he obtained his information from Mary, especially as he mentions her memory twice (Luke 2: 19 and 2: 51).

The call of John the Baptist for repentance persisted for a generation or so after his murder. Many of his followers came to accept Jesus, but others claimed John was equal to, or even greater than, Jesus. In telling of the visit of Gabriel to Zechariah and Elizabeth, and the birth of John the Baptist, he was providing powerful facts to support the Christian argument that John was doing no more than preparing the way for Jesus.

Markans sometimes claim the infancy narratives are composed in the midrash form of Hebrew popular legend based on the reuse of Scriptures. Yet there is not a trace of midrash in the early life of the church. What some claim is Midrash would often be better explained as typology. The tradition of the Magisterium, which built upon, developed and solemnly defined the things that are of Christ, always treats the New Testament as inspired, factual and objectively true. ((FM March 91, page 6)).

The Style of Luke

Let us next look at the writing style of Luke. There is a Greek word used thirty-two times in chapters 3-53 of Luke's Gospel and twelve times in Acts. This word has been rendered into English as 'It came to pass' or 'And it came to pass that'. It is a distinctive mark of Luke's style. It is rare in Matthew and John and appears twice only in Mark where he is borrowing from Luke. This 'fingerprint' of Luke appears eight times in the infancy narrative of Luke (1: 8, 23, 41, 59, 2:1, 6, 15, 46). It is a clear indication that the author of the Gospel and Acts also wrote the 'infancy narratives'.

When rendering the Bible into modern English, the RSV version, replaces the phrase 'It came to pass' or 'And it came to pass that', with, 'while', 'now while', 'and while', 'and when', or it is omitted. In this way the fingerprint of Luke's style is lost to view. To see it we need to look at the Douay or King James versions of the New Testament.

When Luke introduces a new person or place, he explains something about them.

1: 5	Herod, <u>king of Judea</u>	1: 5	a priest <u>named Zachariah</u>
4: 31	Capernaum, <u>a city of Galilee</u>	7: 11	a city <u>called Na'in</u> .
19: 2	a man <u>called by name Zacchaeus</u> .	19: 29	the mount <u>that is called Olivet</u> .

Yet in verses 3: 1 and 4: 14-16, we find John, Jesus, Galilee, Nazareth mentioned without any explanation of who or what they are. The reason is that they have already been introduced previously in the infancy narratives ((HR 73-74)). This is further evidence of the infancy narrative of Luke being an integral part of his Gospel.

Matthew and Luke

The Clementine tradition holds that Luke borrowed from Matthew, so let us see whether there are signs of this borrowing.

Matthew's Gospel is constructed in a thematic form. So while the author recounted historical events, he did not place them in chronological order. In recent years Luiz Ruscillo has analysed the material as follows:

A	1-4	Narrative	Birth and Beginning
B	5-7	Sermon	Blessings, Entering the Kingdom
C	8-9	Narrative	Authority and Invitation
D	10	Sermon	Mission Discourse
E	11-12	Narrative	Rejection by this generation
F	13	Sermon	Parables on the Kingdom
E	14-17	Narrative	Recognition by the Disciples
D	18	Sermon	Community Discourse
C	19-22	Narrative	Authority and Invitation
B	23-25	Sermon	Woes, Coming of the Kingdom
A	26	Narrative	Death and Resurrection

((FM Jan. 2002)).

We find a similar thematic order set out in the 1953: 'A Catholic Commentary on Holy Scripture' where it is explained that the Gospel opens and closes with illustrations (Chapters 1-2 and 26-28) of how Jesus fulfilled the prophesies regarding the Infancy, Passion and Resurrection of the Messiah. ((CCHS 678c)). The Commentary summarises the five central discourses (chapters 3 - 25) as follows:

'His first discourse describes the true subjects of the Kingdom and their spirit; his second instructs its missionaries; the third illustrates its hidden but irresistible power; the fourth the mutual obligations of its citizens; the fifth its establishment in power upon the ruins of Judaism'. [with the king ushering his faithful subjects into his Father's kingdom]. ((CCHS 678g)).

Until Markan priority came to be discussed within Catholic circles, this was how Catholics understood the structure of Matthew's Gospel.

Analysing the ways Luke and John treated the Gospel by Matthew, will assist us in determining their order of composition. When in the next chapter we discuss the Gospel of John, we will see how he supplemented Matthew. Here we will show how Luke was influenced by Matthew. This is based on the detailed study of Luke's Gospel made by Harold Riley ((HR 11-145)).

In his opening words, Luke says that many, 'had taken in hand', to produce an account 'in order'. He then says he is going to write an account 'in order'. Luke, in the opening words of Acts, describes this order. He explains that his Gospel told of all that Jesus began to do and to teach. We may note how he gathered together the teaching material into a central section (Luke 9: 52-18: 14) and in doing so changed the order of Matthew's passages. This could have caused confusion amongst his readers regarding chronology, so he acted to avoid this. When changing the order of a passage from Matthew which contained a note of place and time, he omits this note and uses the phrase, 'And it came to pass...`.

To give a few examples: Christ finishes his sermon, descends the mountain and cures a leper (Mt 7: 28-8: 2). Luke, moving this incident to a different location (Luke 5:12-14), suppresses the time and place ((HR 72)). The story of plucking corn is 'at that time` (Mt 12: 1) but Luke makes it non-specific (Luke 6: 1). In Mt 12: 9 we read 'He went down from there`, but Luke changes it to the vague 'on another Sabbath` (Luke 6: 6). In 13:1 Matthew says 'That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat beside the sea`, but Luke avoids the chronology (Luke 8: 4). Luke's policy is highlighted when there would be no confusion by preserving Matthew's chronology, as in Mt 16: 13-17/ Luke 19: 18-45 ((HR 73)). We should add here that 'eight days` designated a week

This presents a question for Markan priorists, who assert that Matthew and Luke borrowed these incidents from `Q` or Mark. Why would Matthew give precise times and places while Luke, who has promised in his first chapter to be accurate, omits them? And why does Luke include them only when he has not altered the timing?

Julius Africanus, also known as Sixtus or Sixtus Julius, was in the army in 195. He later lived in Emmaus and Alexandria, and was involved in rebuilding Nicopolis. Still alive in 240 he was one of the most learned writers of the 3rd century. He wrote a treatise of five volumes on chronology from creation to 221 AD. In it he explained that the genealogies of Christ that had been provided by Matthew and Luke were not at variance with one another. ((EH I: 7)). Why would he have bothered if they were the late symbolic inventions of unknown writers, and not viewed in his time, by Christians and non-Christians, as reliable factual history?

Some Markans argue that Matthew`s Gospel does not have an eyewitness quality like that according to John. But Matthew does not need to claim to be an eyewitness of events, nor explain his personal relationship with Jesus. His readers would already have been very much aware of this. His Gospel reads like a Lectionary to be read at the weekly meetings. If, as is likely, it was a Lectionary, it would have been out of place for him to break into the pattern of worship, prayer and learning with matters of a personal nature.

Matthew and Acts

Orchard has pointed out that if we accept Matthew`s Gospel as being composed about 44 AD, we see that it slots in very well with the situation depicted in Acts 1-12. Matthew is responding to the problems we find there.

To avoid recognising this, the Markans are forced to say that Acts 1-12 does not give a true picture of the Church at that time, or they create an anachronistic Christian Jewish community near Damascus about 75-90 AD, or that Matthew was written in reaction to the obscure workings of the Jewish Synod of Jamnia. There is no evidence for any of these proposals, so they are merely attempts to justify the Markan theory ((RO 241)). That Markans have proposed many mutually exclusive theories is itself a sign of the weakness of their position.

CHAPTER XII THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JOHN

For nearly two thousand years Christians have held that John the Apostle, eyewitness of the public life of Christ, completed this Gospel about 95 AD. Today, some people dispute this. Others accept the date but assert the author was `Prester John`, a non-eyewitness. The story of the alleged existence of such an individual will be discussed in Chapter XV. Here it is proposed to look at the historical and internal evidence pointing to John the Apostle being its author, and at its date.

The Gnostic Challenge

The Gnostic belief, that men were good immortal spirits imprisoned in evil bodies, was widespread in various forms throughout the Greek-speaking world. This imprisonment led to a battle between light and dark, spirit and flesh. While its influence may be seen in much of pagan and non-canonical early Christian literature, we do not possess coherent statements of the beliefs of its various sects.

In the second century the Gnostics became more organised, but their ideas had been causing problems for the Christians much earlier. Irenaeus described the beliefs of Cerinthus before he described those of the Ebionites. He accused the Ebionites of `worshipping Jerusalem`. This points to the Ebionites, and therefore the Cerinthians, being active prior to the destruction of the city.

The word `Gnostic` meant `knowledge`, but heretics had appropriated it to mean `secret knowledge`. In his Epistle to the Colossians Paul writes: "See that no one makes a prey of you by philosophy and empty deceits, ...according to the elemental spirits of the universe, ..." (Col. 2: 8). It is widely accepted even by Markans that this letter was sent while Paul was in prison prior to 70 AD. In 1st Timothy 6: 20 we read: "Avoid the godless chatter and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge, ...". Traditionally minded exegetes, including Pope John Paul II ((JPFR 4: 37)), consider Paul was referring to Gnostic teachings. In the Apocalypse we also read of a warning regarding the Nicolaites, a Gnostic sect (Acts 2: 6, 15).

Irenaeus records that John had in mind: `the errors sown by Cerinthus and earlier still by those called Nicolaites` ((IAH 3: 11, 1 and CCHS 778h)). The Gnostics claimed to be `the knowing men of light and knowledge`. According to the `Anti-Marcionite Prologue of John`, [see Chapter II] the bishops of Asia [present day Turkey] asked the Apostle John to answer Cerinthus and other heretics, and this was the reason why John wrote his gospel ((AMJ and RO 151)).

Irenaeus and others made many references to the Gnostics, and Henry Owen in 1764 used this information to construct an outline of their teachings. The following is based on the work of Owen, but it needs to be remembered that the Nicolaites, Cerinthians, Ebionites and many more sects, varied from one another in their precise beliefs.

The Unknown most high God lived in heaven with the chief spirits or Aeons. He generated an only-begotten son, called MONOGENES, who begat the inferior LOGOS [The Greek for WORD]. There were two high Aeons called LIFE and LIGHT. From the Aeons proceeded inferior orders of spirits, including CHRIST and DEMIURGUS. It was DEMIURGUS who created this visible world out of eternal matter. This DEMIURGUS was ignorant of the supreme God and much lower than the invisible Aeons. He was protector of the Israelites and sent Moses to them with laws of perpetual obligation. [Many heretics observed Jewish laws].

Jesus was a mere man, the real son of Joseph and Mary. But CHRIST descended on him in the form of a dove when he was baptised. CHRIST revealed to him the unknown Father and empowered him to work miracles. Similarly the Aeon, LIGHT, entered into John the Baptist. As LIGHT was superior to CHRIST, John the Baptist was in some respects to be preferred to Jesus.

After Jesus had propagated the knowledge of God, he came to suffer, so CHRIST left him and fled to the uppermost heaven. So it was Jesus only who suffered. CHRIST would return to reign for a thousand years, with humanity the slave of lust and pleasure ((EH 3: 28)). Some groups denied that Christ had risen and that there would be a resurrection of the dead ((HO 92)).

We are now able to compare the opening words of the Gospel of John with this teaching.

John says that CHRIST is the LOGOS [The WORD] of God (John 1: 1). The WORD and MONOGENES [the only begotten son of God] are one and the same person (1: 14). CHRIST, or The WORD, is not an inferior Aeon, but God (1: 1). Christ was not ignorant of God, but knew him always and perfectly in heaven (1: 18). Christ is not to be distinguished from the DEMIURGUS for he is the creator of the whole world (1: 10). LIFE and LIGHT are not particular and separate spirits, but the same as the LOGOS and CHRIST (John 1: 4, 7-9).

So John is saying that CHRIST, the LOGOS [The WORD], LIFE, LIGHT and MONOGENES (the only-begotten) are not distinct Aeons [Spirits], but one and the same Divine person. John says that an Aeon, LIGHT, did not enter into John the Baptist and communicate to him supreme knowledge of the Divine Will. He was a mere man and though inspired, much inferior to Jesus being only the forerunner of him (John 1: 6, 8, 15).

John explains that the Supreme God was not entirely unknown before the time of Christ. Men were enlightened in their own consciences, but they did not want to know him (1: 9-10). The Jews were not the particular people of an inferior god, DEMIURGUS, but of CHRIST, himself the only-begotten son of God (1: 11). Eventually he became man (1: 14) and fulfilled the Law of Moses, which was only a shadow of good things to come, and instituted its fullness. CHRIST came for all men not the Jews only (1: 12,13)). John refutes the idea that John the Baptist, preaching of the Law of Moses, was superior to CHRIST (John 1: 15-34).

In his following chapters, John selected incidents and miracles (see 1: 6, 8, 15-34) to support what he had affirmed. John showed Christ was superior to John the Baptist. A comparison of the passages above shows that Irenaeus was correct in giving the reason why this Gospel was written, so why not accept him as being correct when naming John the Apostle as its author?

Some Markans claim Cerinthus did not live until after John had died. But according to Eusebius, Cerinthus founded his religion `at the time under discussion` ((EH 3: 28, 1)). As he had just been writing about the Ebionites this must have been very early. We also have a graphic story recorded by Irenaeus: `The apostle John once went into a bath-house to wash, but when he knew Cerinthus was within, leapt out of the place and fled from the door, for he did not endure to be even under the same roof with him, and enjoined on those who were with him to do the same, saying "Let us flee, lest this bath-house fall in, for Cerinthus, the enemy of the truth, is within"`. Irenaeus added that he had obtained this story from bishop Polycarp, who had personally known John ((EH 3: 28, 6)).

We read in the opening words of chapter 29: "At his time, too, there existed for a short time the heresy of the Nicolaitans of which the Apocalypse of John [Apoc. 2: 6 and 15] also makes mention". ((EH 3: 29, 1)). So we again see that Irenaeus was writing about a very early period. The Muratorian Fragment tells us how Andrew the Apostle assisted John to write the fourth Gospel [See our Chapter II d]. As there is no record of Andrew living to a great age, this would also point to John writing at an early date during the life of Cerinthus.

Supplementing and clarifying the Synoptic Gospels

It is worth recalling the two reasons for John writing his Gospel as explained in the Anti-Marcionite Prologues [See chapter II j]. John did not confine himself to refuting the Gnostic sects. He took the opportunity to clarify aspects of the life of Christ not to be found in the existing Gospels. John does not repeat details already given in the other Gospels. This is not evidence of him being unaware of them, nor that he wished to disparage them, as some critics have claimed. It is evidence of him being aware of the information Christians already possessed. It is interesting to note how John presumes many of his readers had a vivid knowledge of the environment of Christ's preaching, which was radically altered in 70 AD.

Apart from the main outline of the life of Christ, there was no reason for him to repeat information. If he wrote without knowledge of the existing Gospels, it would be incredible that he could so successfully have avoided repeating so much of what is related in them, such as: The Transfiguration, Christ's confession of divinity before Caiaphas ((CCHS 778h)). Eusebius reports that the three existing Gospels were distributed to all, including John, and John testified to their truth. John then supplemented them ((EH 3: 24, 7 and 11)) and, by correcting any false impressions they may have given, closed openings for heretical attacks.

By looking at various passages we are able to see how he accomplished this.

1. It would have been strange for the Messiah not to have preached in Judea and Jerusalem or attend the great feasts. Yet the Synoptics mention Galilee only. John provides the additional information (John 6: 1, 5: 1, 3: 22, 4: 54). He ignores the Galilean ministry, except for one incident, where there is a specific reason to mention it.
2. This specific reason concerned the Eucharist. The Synoptics had given accounts of its institution, (Mt 26: 26-27: Luke 22: 19-20 and Mark 14: 22-24), but not the earlier promise of Christ to do so. In chapter six John provides an elaborate Eucharistic discourse, including Christ's promise (John 6: 54-58) and a long account of the last supper, but does not repeat the institution of the Eucharist itself.
3. The Synoptics report the tremendous enthusiasm of the triumphal entry into Jerusalem, but not what had caused it. John explains that Christ had just raised Lazarus to life (John 11: 17).
4. Matthew recounts how Christ called Peter, Andrew, James and John to be his disciples (Mt. 4: 18-22), and Luke provides a similar but shorter account (Luke 5: 10-11). Critics could have said that the manner of this call provided neither sufficient time for serious intelligent consideration, nor the opportunity to provide for dependents

Mark had indicated that the father of James and John was not left without assistance (Mk 1: 20). But it is John, who was there, who provides a fuller explanation of what had occurred. He reports that two of the disciples of the Baptist had talked for a long time with Christ in private (John 1: 35-51). What was discussed during that day and night is not given, but we are entitled to presume they heard what was required of them. In the following days, Christ spoke to others he was intending to call.

Matthew and Luke tell us that Christ then went into the desert for over a month, and followed this with a period of preaching (Mt 4: 1-2, Mk 1: 12-13 and Luke 4: 1-2). There was no need for John to repeat this information. By the time Christ finally calls his disciples (Mt. 4: 18-22), each had had time to consider his call and provide for his dependents.

5. Matthew reports the intention of Christ to appoint Peter (Kepha in Aramaic) as the leader of his church (Mt. 16: 18), but not how Peter got this name. So John supplies this information (John 1: 42), but does not repeat the account of the formal promise of the appointment itself. Matthew had already done so. The change of name was important because in Aramaic `Kepha` was the word for both `Peter` and `Rock`.

6. Matthew tells us that Christ was born in Bethlehem, and gives the prophecy that Christ would come from this town (Mt 2: 1-6), but not of Bethlehem being the town of David. John adds this important detail (John 7: 42).
7. Matthew`s Gospel reads as if Simon carried the cross for Christ (Mt 27: 32). The words of Luke (23: 26) and Mark (15: 21) convey the same information. But John makes it clear that Christ was “bearing his own cross” (John 19: 17) and does not mention the assistance of Simon. Note how by introducing the word `own`, John emphasises the meaning of his sentence. We know that heretics were claiming that Christ had not suffered because he had left the body of Jesus before the crucifixion. They were probably quoting Matthew`s account, so as to `prove` it was Simon of Cyrene who carried the cross because Jesus, now a mere man, had been too weak.
8. Matthew reports in 27: 35 that the soldiers divided the garments of Jesus by lots. This was similar to the prophecy in Psalm 22 (23) but Matthew did not mention what had happened to the tunic of Christ. Critics could say that the reports in the Synoptics did not fulfil the prophecy exactly. Matthew had fled the scene so was reporting second hand. Luke (23: 34) and Mark (15: 24) merely provide abridged versions, so did not clarify the question. It was John, having been present, who was able to provide a detailed account of the discussion of the soldiers and the reason they treated the tunic of Jesus differently. It is the account in John 19: 23-24 which shows the events fit the prophecy in the Psalm exactly.
9. At the time of Christ there were two high priests. Matthew tells us that when Christ was arrested he was taken to Caiaphas the high priest, the scribes and the elders. They sent him to Pilate because they wanted him to be executed (Mt. 26: 57). Luke and Mark add little to Matthew`s account. Although according to Jewish law the position of high priest was held for life, Annas had been deposed by the Romans and replaced by Caiaphas. So the Jews could argue that the true high priest had not been guilty. John answers this by stating; “First they led him to Annas, for he was the father-in-law of Caiaphas who was the high priest for that year” (John 18: 13).

John then reports the trial before Annas (John 18: 19-24), which took place prior to Annas sending Christ to Caiaphas. John is showing how both high priests were involved and therefore responsible for the death of Christ. It also appears that the arresting party consisted of men employed by Annas. Note how John introduces the word `First` (Verse 13), which emphasises the meaning of the sentence.

10. Groups of pious Jews were following their tradition of repentance as preached by John the Baptist. They did not accept the superiority of Jesus and his greater claims, and could argue that Jesus had submitted to John for baptism. Also, the Baptist`s words could have been referring to someone yet to come.

Matthew had not been an eyewitness so his account (Mat. 3: 11-15), being second hand, was not reliable. John, having been a close disciple of the Baptist and present at the baptism of Jesus, was able to give his personal testimony that Jesus was `the mighty one` (John 1: 26-42).

11. The words: `For John [the Baptist] was not yet cast into prison` (John 3: 24) are interesting because they presume readers knew of the imprisonment of John, as reported by the Synoptic gospels.
12. Because Matthew constructed his Gospel in a liturgical non-chronological form, [See chapter XI of this booklet], it conveys the impression that the public ministry of Christ lasted for one year only. John corrects this impression by making it clear that it took place through three Paschs. ((CCHS 779c)).
13. Matthew in constructing his liturgy passes quickly from the last supper to the crucifixion, and this gives the impression that both occurred within twenty-four hours. Our modern liturgy, by celebrating the supper on Maundy Thursday, continues this model. But the activity between the two events would have required a longer period, so John explains that the Last Supper took place some days earlier (John 12: 1).
14. There are other apparent inconsistencies concerning this week. But archaeology shows that the Essene district of Jerusalem, the Sadducees and the Pharisees each had their own calendars for the festivals ((CTH 292 and CTJ 118)). Also, just as Matthew had condensed three years into one to suit his lectionary, he would have felt free to condense the events of Holy Week.
15. In our chapter XI we discussed the alleged problem of the census of Quirinius. But if Luke had made a serious error, as is sometimes claimed, this would have been challenged at the time. Yet John does not take the opportunity to clarify or amend the date. The dating of Luke was apparently not a problem for those living in the first century.

There are many observations we are able to make regarding the above.

- a). While the Gospel of John contains many theological insights; it also aims to provide accurate historical data concerning the same period as covered by the other Gospels. He speaks of the same Apostles and holy women, and mentions Caiaphas, Pilate, Joseph of Arimathea and many incidents from the lives of John the Baptist and Christ.
- b). Today we often hear the Gospel of John called `a spiritual Gospel`. This is true, but the word `spiritual` should not be allowed to exclude its historical aspect. John repeatedly claimed to be a reliable eyewitness of events in the life of Christ. (John 19: 35; 20: 30-31; 21: 24). Just as in the opening words of his first Epistle.

c). The action of John in supplementing the Synoptics with such precise and small historical details and explanations, should be pondered. It shows he was treating them as historical documents, not `creative theology`. It also indicates that John was very much alive to the real needs of the churches.

d). Matthew reports that the unnamed disciple mentioned by John (John 1: 35), who had been with John the Baptist, was named John (Mt 4: 21). This explains how the author of the fourth Gospel was able to write with authority regarding the ministry of Christ, and in detailed narrative concerning the mission of John the Baptist, and of his words just prior to the meeting with Christ (John 1: 6, 15-37).

e). In John 5: 2, we see John referring to Jerusalem in the present tense. Critics may try to explain this away, but they have no evidence that it should not be understood as it is written. This indicates that the first part of John`s Gospel was written prior to 70 AD.

f). Matthew recounts how an unnamed person cuts off an ear of the High Priest`s servant (Mt 26: 51-52). Luke 22: 50 and Mark 14: 47 also report this, but all three are careful not to disclose the name of the person wielding the sword. This would have laid him open to prosecution. But John in 18: 10 says it was Peter, and the victim was Malchus. We have here an indication that the Synoptics were written before 65 AD, during the lifetime of Peter, when he had to be protected. While John, writing after his execution, was free of this constraint.

As a side issue it is interesting that Matthew, an eyewitness, does not specify which ear was cut off. Peter, reading from this section of Matthew`s Gospel and as reported by Mark, does not add anything. But Luke specifies that it was the right ear. As Luke was not present at the incident this must have been second hand information and therefore may have been seen as unreliable. But now, John who had been present at the incident, confirms Luke`s information.

g). From our findings above, especially those in e) and f), we are able to date the writing of the main section (i.e. without the final chapter) of the Gospel according to John as between 65-70 AD.

h). If we accept that the gospel of John was written pre-70 AD, and that it clarified parts of the Synoptic Gospels, then these Gospels must have been in circulation before 70 AD.

i). Markan priorists claim that Matthew and Luke reported the destruction of Jerusalem by means of parables. This claim is discussed elsewhere in this booklet, but here it is interesting to consider the reaction of John. He was clarifying the gospels of Matthew and Luke so, if the Markans are correct and he was writing after 70 AD, why did he fail to clarify the meaning of the Synoptic parables where references to the destruction of Jerusalem are intermingled with those concerning the end of the world?

j). Palestine at the time of Christ was a peculiar and very complicated society. The Romans shared administration with the Council of Jewish judges, known as the Sanhedrin. The Sanhedrin was often in conflict with the civil officials, taxes were paid in Greek money, Roman money was used in commerce and Temple dues paid in Jewish money. Hebrew, Aramaic, Greek and Latin were spoken. Public and private life was affected in many subtle ways by this diversity of language, culture and division of authority.

Yet in the Gospels we find countless references not only to geographical features, but to the transient social and religious conditions also. This society was completely swept away in 70 AD, followed by changes in population and government. How could a writer portray the life of this society, so accurately and minutely, living a secluded life far from Palestine, fifty or more years later?

k). When a person lives on one side of a river, such as London, they will often refer to the other side as `over the water`. The author of this gospel uses this expression when referring to the Jordan (1: 28). This implies he was a native of Palestine or had at least lived there for a long period. It also indicates that he was aware of another Bethany. This is just one small item to illustrate how the writer portrayed Jerusalem society so accurately and minutely.

l). The author uses the expression: 'The disciple Jesus loved', six times. These are at the Last Supper; at the foot of the Cross; being entrusted with Mary's protection; outrunning Peter; being first to recognise the Lord; and when Christ says he will have a long life. In Chapter 21: 24-25 he at last explains that, 'the disciple Jesus loved' was writing the Gospel. Tradition has always seen the phrase as referring to the author who felt embarrassed by reporting himself in such privileged positions.

Even if we were to accept the claim put forward by some critics that someone else added verse 24, the person is still identifying to whom the phrase refers. We may also note that most of the instances were of a private or semi-private nature, where only the one involved would be able to provide such a detailed record.

m). Matthew, Luke, Mark and John ignore the destruction of Jerusalem and its Temple, the persecution under Nero and the martyrs at that time which included Peter and Paul. Why would he omit them, if he was writing after these events?

n). Although the Muratorian Canon is not as reliable as other early documents, there is no reason to deny what it says regarding the part played by the Apostle Andrew in the composition of this Gospel. [For this see Chapter II d]. It has been traditionally accepted that verse 23 of chapter 21, shows this last chapter having been written when John was very old, probably about 96 AD.

The Dating of the Gospel of John

As stated in the 1953 edition of `The Catholic Commentary of Holy Scripture`, it was presumed that the earlier chapters were written just a few years prior to this date. ((CCHS 781j)). But in more recent times scholars such as Tresmontant ((CTH 324)), Thied ((CTR xii)), Orchard ((BOO 18)) and Robinson ((JATR 311)) approaching this question from very different directions have concluded that this presumption was an error. They hold that at least the first twenty chapters were written prior to 70 AD.

The use of the word `we` by John in Chapter 21, verse 24 has raised the question of whether a group was involved in writing. To solve the problem of `we` and `This is the disciple` appearing in the same sentence, we need to turn to John`s other writings.

In 1 John 1: 2 we read: "...we saw it, and testify to it..." Yet in chapter 2, he makes it clear that one person is testifying.

In John 4: 14, we read "And we have seen and testify..." Yet in several places in the same document he says; "I am writing..."

In his Gospel, chapter 3:11, he represents Christ as doing the same.

Chapman has shown how John used the word `we` to signify solemnity and when he was speaking of his joint witness ((CL 109)).

THIS IS NOTHING NEW: Those reading this explanation of John`s Gospel for the first time, may wonder whether it is a new, untested approach. Yet until the arrival of Markan priority, it was the normal explanation to be seen in Catholic publications.

In `The Early History of The Church of God` by the Bishop of Clifton, published by The Catholic Truth Society in 1901:

`Cerinthus spread his errors throughout Syria and Asia Minor, and the Gospel of St. John was written especially to combat his wicked heresies`. ((BC 155)).

In the major 1955 printing of the Bible by the CTS, we read at the head of John`s Gospel:

"Many things that they [the other evangelists] had omitted were supplemented by him, ... When he was earnestly requested by the brethren to write the Gospel, he answered he would do it, if, by ordering a common fast, they would all put up their prayer together to the Almighty God."

The Catholic Commentary of 1953 explained that John wrote against the Docetists and the Ebionites, to insist on the divinity of Christ, to confirm that John the Baptist was subordinate to Christ, and to supplement the Synoptic Gospels. ((CCHS 778gh)). The Commentary also quotes the report by Irenaeus that John wrote against Cerinthus and the Nicolaites. This Commentary also provides several arguments to prove that John the Apostle composed the: `gospel according John`. ((CCHS 776d – 778f)).

Catholics have been using the Douai translation of the bible for near 400 years and a standard note regarding John 21: 17 reads:

“Our Lord had promised the spiritual supremacy to St. Peter (St. Matt, 16: 19) and here he fulfils that promise by charging him with the superintendency of all his sheep, without exception; and consequently of his whole flock, that is of his whole Church”.

COMMENT

It is worth noting that there is eyewitness authority behind each of the four gospels. For the Gospel of Matthew we have the author himself, most likely aided by those Apostles still in Palestine at the time. For John’s Gospel it is also the author himself, assisted by the memories of Andrew. Luke’s Gospel was approved by Peter, and Peter endorsed his own words recorded by Mark. This provides a firm historical basis for Christianity

Chapters VI, VII, XI and this chapter show each Gospel was written to meet a pressing need. Matthew wrote for the Jews of Palestine just prior to the Apostles leaving them. Luke wrote to meet the needs of the Gentiles. Peter delivered his series of talks conflating Luke with Matthew so as to authorise Luke’s gospel. And Mark responded to the demand for an unedited record of the talks. John then produced his at the request of Andrew and other disciples to meet the need to answer the attacks of the Gnostics. His later addition of a chapter was again to meet questionings.

We find this pattern supported by the words of Eusebius:

“Only Matthew and John have left us their recollections, and tradition says that they took to writing perforce [i.e. of necessity]. “Matthew ... when he was on the point of going to others...” ((EH 3: 24, 5-6)). Luke was faced with the circulation of unauthorised accounts ((Luke 1: 1-4)), John was asked to relate in his own gospel the period passed over in silence by the former evangelists...”
[So again perforce.] ((EH 3: 24, 11)).

This is very different to the Markan scenario. Markans seem to imagine the authors writing in their leisure time, when the mood took them, in isolated communities away from the real world.

NOTE

John A. T. Robinson used the title: ‘The Priority of John’ for one of his books. This was ambiguous and Robinson had to clarify his meaning several times. “I’m not saying that John was the first Gospel, but it was a first Gospel”. He did not mean it was the first to be written, but that it should be treated as presenting just as much a ‘primary’ (i.e. underived) picture of Jesus as the others. ((SNTW 430 and 434)). So Robinson was supporting the view that John was an eyewitness apostle.

CHAPTER XIII

THE EPISTLES & PSEUDONYMITY / FORGERIES

Although this booklet is entitled `Authors of the Gospels`, it would seem incomplete without a mention of the Epistles. That to the Hebrews will be discussed in Chapter IX, and of the remaining 20, the traditional authorship and dating of seven are generally accepted. But critics assert that the remainder of Paul's epistles, as well as those by other authors, are `pseudonymous`. They claim that the authors were not Paul or any disciple, but unknown persons who adopted the names of the Apostles in the opening words.

As we lack room to examine all these 13 allegedly pseudonymous epistles, we will look at the five most rejected by the critics. These are the three Pastorals by Paul, the second epistle of Peter and the one by Jude.

THE PASTORAL EPISTLES

These are 1st and 2nd Timothy and Titus. These provide their recipients with advice for managing their flocks, so are called `Pastorals`

We will give the arguments put forward by the critics and then reply.

[1]. Raymond Brown, a leading advocate of Markan priority, estimated that perhaps 90% of critical scholarship considered these epistles to be pseudonymous ((RB 50)).

Reply: This consensus is not based on each scholar investigating the matter afresh, but of most accepting the work of someone else.

[2]. Acts, which was written in the 80s ((RB 128)), provides an account of the travels by Paul but do not include a visit by him to Greece and Crete. The Pastoral Epistles (PEs) imply such visits, and thereby create an `insurmountable difficulty` for the traditional belief that Paul wrote them.

Reply: This is an example of how `a difficulty`, concerning the reliability of the New Testament, is not caused by historical or literary evidence, but by the Markan priority theory itself. Because Markans claim Luke wrote his Gospel about 85, they have to date his Acts as later still.

Tradition and the 1953 Catholic Commentary placed Acts in the 60s AD ((CCHS 815a)). The historical evidence tells us that Paul was released from prison and continued his missionary journeys. Let us look at the evidence:

Clement of Rome writes in his Epistle to the Corinthians that Paul `was a herald both in the East and in the West`, and that he reached `the limits of the west` and was then rearrested and executed ((COR chapter 5: 6-7)). Whether you hold that Clement wrote prior to the destruction of Jerusalem or in 96 AD, many of his readers would have been aware of what had occurred. So he is unlikely to have invented the journey.

The `Acts of Peter` was not inspired by the Holy Spirit, but written about 180-190. It states that Paul was granted permission to go where he wished so chose to visit Spain, returning after Peter`s death. He was then arrested and executed ((AP 1-3; 4. 2, 6; 40)).

The Muratorian Fragment of the same period also states clearly that Paul went from `the city` [Rome] to Spain ((MFGR lines 38f)).

Eusebius records that Paul, after spending two years preaching in Rome (Acts 28: 30) and `after being brought to trial` set out on a ministry of preaching ((EH 2: 22)).

We may note that the alleged offence of Paul was minor, Agrippa had not found him guilty (Acts 26: 31-32) and Festus would have included this favourable opinion in his report. Also the Apostle himself expected to be released so he could see his friends (Phil.1: 25-26; 2: 24). Paul had previously voiced his ambition to preach in Spain (Rom 15: 24-28)).

When we look at Acts itself, we note that Luke makes no mention of Paul`s trial, a judgement, or his martyrdom. Yet up to this point Luke has detailed the witness and suffering of Paul in great detail. The obvious conclusion is that Acts does not cover the latter part of Paul`s life. Paul could have written the Pastoral Epistles in his last years.

Once we accept that Luke finished `Acts` prior to Paul being released from prison, the `insurmountable difficulty`, created by Markan priority, disappears.

Michael Prior holds that the second letter of Paul to Timothy may be seen as a request for assistance in the proposed Spanish mission. In the past the whole letter has been interpreted to accord with one word in chapter 4: 6. But as this Greek word, which has been translated as `departure`, was rarely used, its precise meaning in this context is unsure. Prior believes this word should be seen in the context of the whole letter. He suggests the translation should read: `For my part I am already spent and the time for my release is at hand`. A man on the point of execution is unlikely to make a request for books, parchments and a cloak before winter. However a man about to make a missionary journey would find them very useful. ((MP 89-90 and SB Jan 2001, 19)).

[3]. The style is not the same as that seen in the recognised Pauline Epistles.

Reply: The `recognised Pauline epistles` were co-authored, as may be seen from their opening and closing words. They were also addressed to the leaders of churches for public reading. On the other hand, the Pastoral Epistles were private letters to friends. It is a fallacy to think we can learn of the personal and private style of Paul from official co-authored letters addressed to communities.

Dr. Johnson, when visiting Scotland, described the isles in letters sent home and later in a book. Macaulay, the English historian, said it was: `hard to credit the letters and the book had been written by the same man`. ((PT 17: 152)). Prior has examined the styles of Paul in detail and pointed out the fallacies of pseudonymity. ((MP and SB Jan 2000, 2-19)).

[4]. 175 of the 848 words used in the Pastoral Epistles do not occur in the New Testament, but 93 of these 175 do occur in the Fathers and Apologists. This shows the vocabulary of the PEs belongs to the second century.

Reply: Some years ago these statistics were used to convince people. But it has since been shown, with less publicity, that 95 of the 175 occur in the writings of Philo who died 20 years before Paul. Also 153 of these 175 words occur in writings from before 50 AD ((SB Jan 2001, 6)). Almost the same proportion of unusual words are to be found in 1 Corinthians, accepted by nearly all as first century, as occur in the much later Apostolic Fathers ((JNDK 24)). So the vocabulary of the Pastoral Epistles was in use during New Testament times.

[5]. The heresies implied in the Pastoral Epistles did not develop till the second century.

Reply: By the second century Christian heretical sects, incorporating Gnostic and cultic ideas, were well organised. But there is no evidence that earlier and incipient forms were absent from apostolic times ((CCHS 656h)).

[6]. The Pastoral Epistles fit the structured church government developing in the second century rather than that of the Charismatic earlier forms.

Reply: This statement is based on presumptions based on Markan priority. It does take time for structures to develop, but they need to exist before they are able to develop. The traditional view is that in the first years there was both a Charismatic aspect and a structural aspect to the church, as there is today. Both were developing together as they met new needs. Immediately after the Resurrection and prior to the descent of the Holy Spirit, Church leaders were exercising a self-confident authority with a primitive but effective structure for decision making (Acts 1: 25-26). Modern debates, between different viewpoints regarding the constitution and authority of the early Church, should be based on the data provided in the New Testament and in the historical records. It is not scientific to decide the date of this data so as to suit a particular theological opinion, which asserts the early church lacked structures.

[7]. The Pastoral Epistles are like many of the epistles, pseudonymous.

Reply: In many epistles, including the Pastoral Epistles the names of the person or persons sending the letter are given in the opening words, or at the end, or in both. So there should be no problem. Both history and the internal evidence are against the critics. But so as to reject the epistles, they have developed a theory that they are forgeries.

Christians are not likely to easily accept that early Christian leaders were producing forged documents so as to gain converts or to win arguments. So the critics use the word `pseudonymous`, to claim the authors believed they were doing good by fooling their congregations. Others say the congregations were not fooled, but did not object to what was happening.

Those who make these claims come from a world where Christian pseudonymity is considered to have been common in the first century. But, as the quotation below shows, there is no evidence that the Church produced or supported such writings.

In the mid-second century some books were ascribed to long dead apostles, but Tertullian recorded the attitude of the Church. He tells us that an author who was orthodox in his teaching, full of love for Paul and acting with the noblest of intentions, was deposed from the presbyterate for the sole reason that he practiced pseudonymity. Some time later, Eusebius quotes bishop Serapion of Antioch as rejecting writings falsely bearing the names of the Apostles ((JATR 187-8)).

When a pseudonymous letter is sent to the Thessalonians, it is condemned as a forgery, not a harmless Christian convention (2. Thess 2: 2). Robinson has written:

‘There is an appetite for pseudonymity that grows by what it feeds on.’...
‘If you believe it is everywhere, you cease to have to argue for it anywhere.’...
‘Nineham, a well known scholar, appeals to the ‘very common ...practice of pseudepigraphy’ and cites the Apocalypse, the second epistle of Clement and that of Barnabas’. Yet these are all anonymous not pseudonymous.’...‘If we ask what is the evidence for orthodox epistles being composed in the name of apostles within a generation or two of their lifetime, and for this being an acceptable literary convention within the church, the answer is nil. ((JATR 186-7)).

[8]. Many of the epistles could not have been early, because there had not been sufficient time for ‘theological development’.

Reply: This argument is often claimed to be ‘conclusive’. Yet the time it took for such developments is purely speculative. The Apostles had lived in daily contact with Christ for three years. Three had experienced the Transfiguration. In history, many individuals have been known to develop deep spiritual insights within a few years.

Christianity is a revealed religion, so Christ imparted its basic teachings and structures to the Apostles. Although these were developed under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Markans do not know what was known or not known in the first years. Those claiming to make these judgements are living two thousand years after the events, in a completely different environment and with their own ideological agendas and personal presuppositions. Their conjectures are as reliable as measuring a fast growing plant with an elastic measuring tape.

[9]. We are told that Paul would have been too humble to have written: 2 Tim. 4: 7 - 8.

But he was expressing his honest feelings in a private letter to a personal friend. This criticism is based on a false understanding of humility.

[10]. The replies to these points show there is no need to accept Markan assertions regarding the PEs. For a modern Church document endorsing Paul’s authorship see Catechesi Tradendae, Section 62 (Our Chapter XIX point 2).

[11]. Another point worth considering regarding the alleged errors in the PEs, is that similar 'errors' are to be found in the Epistle to the Corinthians (Col. 2: 4, 8, 16 and 23), which are accepted by nearly all to be by Paul ((CCHS 918g)).

PETER AND JUDE

Brown estimated that 95% of critical scholarship did not think that Peter composed the second letter of Peter, and 75% doubted that Jude composed Jude ((RB 50)).

Markans claim that 2 Peter was written in the second century because it quotes from Jude written late in the first Century. Also that 2 Peter 3:16 mentions a collection of Paul's letters which would not have existed till the end of the first Century.

Reply: Recent research suggests Jude should be dated about 62 AD and that it depended on 2 Peter ((CTP 245)). This would place the composition of 2 Peter sometime in the 50s AD. While these dates have not been proved, they show that an increasing number of exegetes are researching with an open mind, unrestricted by Markan dogma.

Regarding a collection of Paul's letters; the Markan argument is based on their own false picture of Roman life. Life in Rome will be considered in more detail in Chapter XVI, but a few comments may be made here. The Romans had a very good postal system and there was much travelling. Like other churches and institutions of the time, the church at Rome would have possessed a library. Because of Rome's central position it was likely to have been one of the best in Christian hands.

When Paul wrote a letter to a church, it is most likely copies would be passed to other churches. In Colossians 4: 16 a specific instruction is given to do this. It is difficult to imagine that none of these copies arrived at the Church's headquarters in Rome. So Markans have no evidence that it took fifty years for a library to be formed at Rome containing Paul's letters. There is another aspect to this question. Peter's second epistle does not say all of Paul's letters were in the collection.

Catholics need to remember that the Council of Trent decreed that the 2nd Epistle of Peter the Apostle is a sacred book [See our chapter XIX]. So do we have a sacred book in which the author falsely claims to be Simon Peter (2 Peter 1: 1)? And in which he falsely claims he has sent a previous letter (2 Peter 3: 1)?

END NOTE

There is no need to worry regarding the authorship of the twenty-one letters. Once the presumptions, problems and difficulties caused by the Markan theory are set aside, there is no reason to doubt the opening and closing words of each letter. It would be difficult to run any organisation and convert an empire, if two thirds of the most important and treasured letters between branches are forgeries.

CHAPTER XIV THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

According to tradition, Paul sent this letter before 70 AD to the Christian Jews of Jerusalem who were known as Hebrews. This tradition was set out in `A Catholic Commentary on Holy Scripture` of 1953 ((CCHS 929a,b)), but was denied sixteen years later in a subsequent publication. This latter adopted the Markan view that it was written by an anonymous person from an unknown place to a mainly Gentile community, probably situated in Rome, between 80-90 ((NCCHS 932b)).

The Council of Trent in 1546 issued a decree which referred to this epistle. `By placing Hebrews in the list of 14 Paulines, Trent favoured Paul`s authorship but did not directly define it` ((CCHS 928a)). For the wording of this decree see our Chapter XIX.

In the early church some had doubted Paul`s authorship and these doubts were revived by the Markans in the 19th century. But in June 1914 the Pontifical Biblical Commission stated that; `No such force is to be attributed to those early doubts` ((CCHS 928a)).

- So:
- 1). The Church at Trent defined this epistle as sacred and canonical, so inspired by the Holy Spirit.
 - 2). Critics have failed to find a valid reason to deny the historical evidence of Paul`s authorship, so there is no reason why it should not be taught as a non-infallible norm in Catholic schools.
 - 3). Paul`s authorship is based on historical tradition and internal evidence alone, so is not in the same category as the Gospels of Matthew and John. a Catholic is therefore at liberty to doubt Paul`s authorship if he should wish.

We will now set out some of the reasons for accepting the traditional opinion.

Critics claim this Epistle is not written in Paul`s normal style. But as explained in the previous chapter, we do not know how to recognise the normal style of Paul when he was writing alone in Hebrew to a community. Theories based on such a weak foundation cannot be reliable.

Critics also point out that after Origen had studied the authorship, he remarked `only God knows`. It is worth noting how critics who deny the reliability of the early historians suddenly start to quote them when thought to be useful in undermining Christianity. Even then the critics create a false impression by reporting in a partial manner. Origen stated that everyone agreed that the quality of Greek was better than that in the epistles known to be by Paul.

But everyone also agreed that the standard of thought was as found in Paul`s writings. So Origen concluded that Paul composed the epistle but another wrote it. He praised those churches that accepted it as being by Paul, going on to write: `But who wrote the epistle, in truth God knows. ... some saying that Clement [a bishop at Rome]... wrote the epistle, others that it was Luke, he who had written the Gospel and the Acts...`. ((EH 6: 25)). So Origen`s doubts were regarding which secretary was working for the author at the time.

Some today consider it has an Alexandrian flavour, so have suggested the secretary for the Hebrew original was Apollos, who came from that town. Luke praised Apollos for his writing ability (Acts 18: 24-28).

Clement of Alexandria had recorded earlier that the Epistle to the Hebrews was by Paul and had been written for the Hebrews in the Hebrew tongue. He also tells that Luke had carefully translated it for the Greeks, hence the style is the same as his Gospel and Acts ((EH 6: 14, 2)). Clement goes on to explain that the words “Paul the Apostle” were not prefixed because the Hebrews were prejudiced against him and he very wisely did not repel them at the beginning by putting his name ((EH 6: 14, 3)). So Clement of Alexandria and Origen both believed Paul had composed the epistle, but were not sure who had held the pen. It is worth noting that no one suggested it was the “creative theology” of an unknown community.

As described in our Chapter X, the discovery of James the Apostle in the Temple, was a great shock to the Jewish authorities. In response, Christians were barred from this sacred place. For years the Christians had been insisting on their loyalty to the laws and rituals of Judaism, so this was a painful psychological blow. Their spiritual life and mental framework were bound up with the national form of worship. The Eucharist was held in simple rooms without the grandeur, formality and history associated with the Temple.

They had now to choose between worshipping exclusively outside the familiar cultural setting, or to deny Christ. At this critical moment Symeon, successor of James as bishop of Jerusalem, would not possess the same personal authority as James had done. With the other Apostles being out of the country, many Christians would have felt leaderless.

News of the crisis would soon have reached the whole Christian world and, if we accept the letter to the Hebrews as a response to this crisis, much falls into place. A careful reading shows it was addressed to a community soaked in knowledge of Jewish history with multiple references to Moses, Melchizedek, the Psalms and the ritual of the Temple. It is addressed to a community as if it was completely Jewish, with no mention of Gentiles or their needs. Only in Jerusalem would such a community exist.

Markans claim that Rome also had a large Jewish population. This is true, but what is significant is that the Jewish Christians addressed in the Epistle were under great temptation to deny Christ, yet their fellow Gentile Christians were not apparently faced with the same temptation. The arguments employed in the fifth chapter of Hebrews, would have had no meaning for former pagans. It is also worth remembering that Paul, having been educated in the Temple, was aptly suited to compose this letter.

The opening words of the letter are: “In many and various ways God spoke of old to our fathers by the prophets; ...”. There is no evidence the early Christians believed God spoke through prophets to the Gentiles, so the letter must have been addressed to a community of Jews. By writing “our fathers” the author was claiming to be of the same race as the Jews he was addressing.

There are many passages indicating that it was written while the Temple was still standing. Examples are listed below with verbs in the present tense underlined.

- 7: 5 `And those descendents of Levi who receive the priestly office have a commandment in the law to take tithes from the people ...`.
- 8: 4-5 `...there are priests who offer gifts according to the law. They serve a copy and shadow of the heavenly sanctuary`.
- 8: 13 `And what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away`.
- 9: 6-9 `...go continually ... performing ...goes, and he but once a year ... he offers
- 9: 13 `...sanctifies...`
- 9: 25 `...as the high priest enters the Holy Place yearly ...`.
- 10: 1 `...sacrifices which are continually offered year after year ...`.
- 10: 3 `...there is a reminder of sin year after year`.
- 10: 11 `And every priest stands daily at his service, offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away our sins`.
- 13: 10 `We have an altar from which those who serve the tent [the sanctuary] have no right to eat' [an allusion to the Eucharist eaten from the Christian table]`.
- 13: 11 `...blood is brought into the sanctuary ...are burned`.

Much of the document is devoted to showing the difference between the Levitical priesthood and the Christian. This is achieved by returning to the Jewish history of sacrifice and then leading up to the statement that it “is becoming obsolete and growing old” (Heb. 8:13). If this had been written after 70 AD, why did the author not use the crowning proof of his thesis? By then the Temple, the Levitical priesthood and its sacrifices, were not merely `becoming obsolete and growing old`, but had gone forever.

In order to explain this use of the present tense, Markans claim the author was describing the ritual originally used in the desert, not that used in the Herodian temple. So let us look a little closer. In chapter 7: 1-4 he recounts the institution as given in Exodus 25-26, so uses the past tense. But when in verse 5 he is describing the current practice he changes to the present tense. In verse 6 he explains the reason for the present practice. Markan literature implies the author was ignorant of how Temple ritual had changed from that of the original Tabernacle in the desert. But the ritual acts to which he was alluding in the present tense were still taking place. Whether or not other acts had been modified, is irrelevant to the discussion.

The tone of the document is that of the need to face a very severe challenge, yet not one threatening death (Heb. 12: 3-4). This was the situation for the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem prior to their flight to Pella. The recipients were reminded of the earlier abuse and torment of their community (Heb.10: 32-34, 13: 3) and urged not to stay away from the assemblies (Heb. 10: 24). The Sanhedrin had prohibited Jewish Christians from entering the Temple ((BC 121)). To be seen attending the Eucharist, would have provided evidence for exclusion. The recipients were reminded how Moses rejected the things of this world and, how Christ was executed outside Jerusalem (Heb.13: 12). His followers must be willing to accept the same ignominy as those with leprosy of being driven to live apart (Lev. 13: 46) outside the camp [nation] of Israel (Heb.13: 12-14).

Their correct cause of action would be a stigma (Heb. 11:26). Many of those there in Jerusalem would have personally heard Christ himself (Heb. 2:3). The example of the faith of Abraham is given (Heb. 11:8-10). He went out not knowing whither he went. In 11:27 we are reminded that by faith Moses left Egypt. And in 13:7 and 17, readers are urged to listen to their leaders.

A Markan argument for this epistle not having been addressed to Jerusalem is that it was to a rich community (Heb. 6:10), whereas Acts 11: 29 and 24: 17 say the Christian community in Jerusalem was poor. But this is not a valid argument. Hebrews 6:10 does not say the community was financially rich. There are many Christian communities in the world today working hard to spread the word of God, while struggling to feed their own members. Yet they provide a loving reception to a visiting missionary. The relief sent on one of these occasions was because of a specific worldwide famine (Acts 11: 28) that reached its peak in 48 AD. The Jewish authorities in Jerusalem may have been refusing relief to the Christians and most communities have poor members who are in need of alms especially in times of discrimination.

As James was killed in 62 and the Christians fled from Jerusalem in 68, the date of the epistle would be between these dates. Before the arrival of Markan priority a date of 62-64 was considered the most likely ((CCHS 929b)).

It is not surprising that copies have been found in Italy but not near Palestine. On arrival at Pella there would have been little incentive for the refugees to make copies. However, as the destruction of the Temple would have traumatised every Jew in the Empire, the Greek speaking Christian Jews living in Italy and Asia would have been very interested. Luke's Greek edition would most likely have appeared soon after 70 AD. Modern literary analysis shows its style to be closer to that of Luke than to any other New Testament writing ((PCB 880c)). This confirms the words of Clement of Alexandria.

In the last chapter of Hebrews, we read; "The brethren from Italy send their greetings". Some claim this shows the Epistle was addressed to Rome, others that it was sent from Rome. Both views are nothing more than speculation. The words indicate that some Italians living near Paul were concerned about the difficulties of those to whom he was writing. Thousands of Italian Christians had been expelled from Rome in 49 and had settled in Asia. It is likely to have been some of these who sent their greetings.

CLEMENT OF ROME

Those who claim a late date for Hebrews argue that the use of the present tense is not conclusive. They point out that Clement of Rome used this tense when describing Temple ritual, yet Clement was writing in 96 AD.

Although this date of 96 AD appears in many Commentaries, it depends on the statement by J.B. Lightfoot as printed on page 3 of his: 'The Apostolic Fathers'. Although he is rightfully held in high esteem, others such as Grotius, Grabe, Orsi, Uhlorn, Hefele, Wieseler held to the earlier date ((CE: St Clement)).

Lightfoot did not discuss alternative dates nor provide any indication of any close personal research. The 96 AD date is based on two assumptions: 1). That Clement wrote after he became bishop of Rome in 91 AD, and 2). That the opening words refer to the persecution by Domitian, murdered in 96 AD ((GE 180-205, JATR 328)).

Let us read the opening words of this epistle by Clement to the Corinthians:

`The Church of God which sojourns in Rome to the Church of God which sojourns in Corinth, to those who are called and sanctified by the will of God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Grace and peace from God Almighty be multiplied to you through Jesus Christ. Owing to the sudden and repeated misfortunes and calamities which have befallen us, we consider that our attention has been somewhat delayed in turning to the questions disputed among you, ...`. ((COR)).

Clement does not claim to be writing as the bishop of Rome, but on behalf of the Roman Community. Eusebius recorded that: `Clement of Rome wrote **in the name of** the church of the Romans` ((EH 3: 38, 1)). He did not say Clement wrote as the bishop of Rome. Peter had ordained Linus, Cletus and Clement as bishops ((BC 157)). Linus succeeded Peter in 67 AD. So Clement would have been acting as an assistant bishop for at least three years prior to the destruction of the Temple in 70 AD. He would therefore write in the present tense regarding Jerusalem during this period. He writes of the noble examples of martyrs, such as Peter and Paul who were killed under Nero, yet there is no mention of later ones. If a persecution by Domitian had just ended, why did he ignore its martyrs? Why did he use just a few vague words to refer to a terrible persecution affecting himself and his closest friends? The recipients of the letter would have been eager for news.

During 69 AD the Roman Empire was in political chaos with the Emperors - Galba, Otho and Vitellius - being killed in one year. This chaos was the cause of troops being withdrawn from besieging Jerusalem. Clement's words fit this turbulent year very well. G. Edmundson presents a good case for Clement writing this letter in the early months of 70 AD ((GE 180-205)). Robinson accepted that Edmundson's case should be most seriously considered ((JATR 329)) and Thied has also adopted this date ((CTR 71)).

After appealing to the rebels, Clement points out what happened to those who hardened their hearts after seeing signs and wonders: such as the followers of Korah (Num. 16: 33) and Pharaoh's army (Exodus 14: 23). This would have been a natural place to add the destruction of Jerusalem when its inhabitants refusal to accept the signs of the Messiah and his disciples. The silence of Clement indicates this event had not yet occurred.

The passage in chapter 41: 1-3 written by Clement in the present tense reads:

`Not in every place, my brethren **are** the daily sacrifices offered or the free-will offerings, or the sin-offerings and trespass-offerings, but only in Jerusalem; and there also the offering **is** not made in every place, but before the shrine, at the altar, and the offering **is** first inspected by the High Priest and the ministers already mentioned. Those therefore who **do** contrary to that which **is** agreeable to his will **suffer** the penalty of death` ((COR chapter 41)).

Researchers, uninhibited by a desire to late date this Epistle, would see this excerpt as a powerful indication of it being written while the Temple was still operating. The purpose of the epistle was to urge the Corinthian rebels to conduct services correctly, so why would Clement offer a role model that had ceased to exist twenty-six years previously?

We have further evidence pointing to bishop Clement writing as an assistant to Pope Linus when sending his message to the Corinthians. Bishop Dionysius of Corinth, in a letter to Pope Soter, who reigned from 166 to 175, wrote:

“This day, therefore, we spent as a holy Lord’s day, in which we read your epistle; from the reading of which we shall always be able to obtain admonition, as also from the former epistle written to us through Clement”. ((EH 4: 23.11)).

The use of ‘through’ means Clement was an intermediary. The epistle of Clement had been one of admonition.

There is other evidence pointing to an early date for Clement’s Epistle. ((GE 180-205 and JATR 327- 335)), but here is enough to show that it’s use of the present tense does not undermine the tradition of Paul writing to the Hebrews before Jerusalem’s destruction..

Late daters also assert that Josephus used the present tense when writing about the Temple in 93 AD. This is true, but he was not writing about an actual practice. He was providing a summary description of the Old Testament ordinances contained in Mosaic Laws.

A SIDE ISSUE

It is interesting that the Corinthians did not appeal to an Apostle living near-by, such as Andrew. They asked a non-Apostle, Linus the successor of Peter, to intervene.

ADDENDUM

A Christian named Hermes wrote an account of a series of visions he claimed to have experienced and this came to be known as ‘The Shepherd of Hermas’, or ‘The Shepherd’, or ‘Pastor’. Whether the visions were authentic or not does not concern us here, but at the end of the second vision we read words allegedly spoken by the apparition:

“Thou shalt therefore write two little books, and shalt send one to Clement, and one to Grapte. So Clement shall send to the foreign cities, for this is his duty; while Grapte shall instruct the widows and the orphans. But thou shalt read[the book] to this city along with the elders that preside over the Church”. ((SH II, 19 and JATR 320)).

From this excerpt, we learn it was the duty of a person named Clement to correspond with foreign cities. Lightfoot had called him: ‘the foreign secretary of the Roman church’ ((JATR 321)), and Robinson described him as: ‘the correspondent of external relations of the Roman Church’ ((JATR 333)). Edmundson, in his 1913 prestigious Bampton Lecture, pointed out that Clement was: ‘only the servant, not the head of the Church acting on his own initiative’ ((JATR 333)).

This would explain why it was Clement who wrote the letter of reply to the Corinthians on behalf of the Church at Rome, presumably after consulting Linus, who had become the bishop of Rome following the death of Peter. Clement, acting as foreign secretary to the Roman administration, would be consistent with the letter received by Pope Soter.

This evidence of Hermas supports the above argument that Clement of Rome could have written his letter to the Corinthians prior to 70 AD. According to Origen, `The Shepherd` was written by the Hermas who is mentioned in Paul`s epistle to the Romans 16: 14 ((JATR 320)) and Jerome agrees ((DVI chapter 10)).

When Clement in 5: 1 records the martyrdom of Peter and Paul, he speaks of it as `of our own generation`. As they were killed about 65 AD, is he likely to have written in this manner 30 years later?

The reason I have placed this evidence in an addendum, is because some claim the author was a different Hermas to the one known to Paul, and that Clement was a different Clement to the person ordained a bishop by Peter. This claim is based on a passage in the Muratorian Fragment saying that Hermas was a brother of Pope Pius who reigned from 140-155. There is nothing to confirm this statement in the Fragment, which is known to be full of obvious mistakes ((JATR 319)). It is very unlikely that a situation, where two people with the same names and in the same relationship as Clement and Hermes, would repeat itself half a century later.

Hermas gives details of his early life, his family and his sister, yet does not say his brother was the Pope. Irenaeus lived in Rome just 20 years after Pius died and quotes `The Shepherd` as if it was part of Scripture. This would have been most unlikely if it had been composed within his living memory. At the beginning of the 3rd Century, Tertullian argued strongly that `The Shepherd` was not part of Scripture. If it had been composed in the mid-second century this would have been a good argument, yet he does not use it.

Edmundson pointed out that the book was translated into Latin and published as: `Liber Pastoris` (i.e. The Book of The Shepherd) at the same time the fragment was being written. We are told in: `The Acts of Pastor and Timothy`, that Pius was: `the brother of Pastor`. This appears to have confused the author of the fragment ((GE 206-237 and JATR 320)).

Those who accept that Hermas was referring to Clement of Rome, will see it as confirming that Clement was the `foreign secretary` to the Roman Church prior to the destruction of Jerusalem. Those who hold that there were two Hermes and two Clements will not be convinced by the information in this addendum. But the argument of the earlier part of this chapter - that Clement was an assistant bishop of Rome for three years while the Temple was still standing - is unaffected.

A final thought: According to E. Massaux, Clement of Rome in this epistle frequently quotes from Matthew ((EM 35)). So if we accept that it was written pre-70, it would confirm the early composition of the Gospel of Matthew.

CHAPTER XV
PAPIAS; THE `Q' SOURCE; TONING DOWN MARK?
THE JERUSALEM PROPHECIES; ACCORDING TO ...

Bishop Papias

Although Markans usually reject the reliability of ancient historians, the words of Papias are quoted when they appear to undermine the credibility of the gospels. They claim that Papias mentioned John the Apostle and also a `John the Presbyter`. They then argue that the gospel may have been written by, `the Presbyter`, not by the Apostle. In a further attempt to undermine the reliability of the historical evidence, they claim that Eusebius considered Papias to be of small intelligence. It is worth noting how Markans will quote or misquote an historian if it suits their purposes, then say he was an unreliable historian when he writes details that do not conform to their theory.

To understand these words of Papias and Eusebius, it is necessary to look at the context in which they appear. The Gospel according to John is distinct in style from that of the Apocalypse, and many in the early Church doubted that they could be by the same author. After long debate, the problem was eventually resolved to the satisfaction of most people. But Eusebius was one of a few who continued to reject the Apocalypse as inspired by John. He was having great difficulty with heretical sects in his diocese and this, no doubt, greatly influenced his views. Papias not only recorded that John wrote the Apocalypse, but also held the opinion that after the resurrection of the dead, Christ would reign on earth for a thousand years. The heretics claimed this was part of the teaching of Christ, and were able to quote Papias as their authority against Eusebius.

Dionysius of Alexandria had earlier rejected the Apocalypse as having been written by John the Apostle, saying there were two graves at Ephesus dedicated to John. Eusebius used this report together with an ambiguous phrase of Papias in support of his argument that John the Apostle had not composed the Apocalypse. Eusebius quoted the following from Papias, adding his own comments:

“If then indeed someone who had followed the presbyters happened to come along, I used to enquire into the words of the presbyters – what Andrew or Peter had said, or what Philip, or what Thomas or James or what John or Matthew, or any other of the disciples of the Lord – and what Ariston and the presbyter John, disciples of the Lord, were still saying”.

Eusebius then comments: “It is here worth noting that he twice counts the name of John, ranking the former of them with Peter and James and Matthew and the rest of the apostles, clearly referring to the evangelist; but as regards to the other `John`, by separating the expression he lists him with others outside the number of the apostles, putting Ariston before him and clearly calling him a presbyter”. Eusebius then goes on to suggest there were two Johns. ((EH 3: 39.1-8)).

But Eusebius had not produced a strong argument. The point to notice is that Papias enquired what those in the first list HAD said. He then enquired what the two living witnesses were STILL saying.

This was the reason for separating the two lists, not the status of the individuals. Papias was explaining that in the past he had obtained information about the words of the disciples, whom he referred to as `presbyters`. As an after thought he adds that he is still gaining information from John and Ariston. To make clear the identity of this John he adds the title of `presbyter`. Papias called John a presbyter just as he had called him a presbyter a few words earlier. Ariston, although a source of information about the life of Christ, was not a presbyter. It may also be noted that the whole world knew the ascription `the Presbyter/Elder' in John`s second and third Epistles was referring to John the Apostle ((RO 183)).

The remark by Eusebius, critical of Papias, reads: “For he appears to have been a man of exceedingly small intelligence, ...he has been partly the cause of quite a large number of churchmen after him holding the same opinions as his, ...” ((EH 3: 39, 13)). This is obviously due to the frustration felt by Eusebius that the heretics were able to quote Papias in the theological argument. It is not in accord with the very high regard Eusebius expresses towards Papias in other parts of his book. Eusebius had set out to provide an account of the early successors of the apostles, who had preserved in writing the apostolic teachings. But in order to keep within manageable size he concentrated on those most important - Clement of Alexandria, Ignatius of Antioch and Papias ((RO 159)). So he viewed Papias very highly and devoted a whole chapter to him ((EH 3: 39)).

Markan books imply that Irenaeus and Clement of Alexandria relied solely on Papias for their sources. But both of them had travelled widely over the whole of the Roman Empire and, as mentioned in our chapter II, Clement refers to his sources in the plural. These historians had sources amongst elderly acquaintances and in their libraries. They would also have been aware of the absence of contrary traditions. Eusebius was also careful to check his information. As mentioned earlier when quoting Clement he compares his words with what Papias records ((EH 2: 15, 2)), showing that he knew that they were quoting from separate traditions ((EH 2: 15, 2)).

Eusebius also quoted Irenaeus who had obtained information from Polycarp, who personally had known John the Apostle. These writers were under constant scrutiny from Jews, Pagans and heretics looking for the slightest inconsistency. The position of Papias is discussed in greater detail by J. H.Chapman ((JHC)) and in less detail by Orchard ((RO. 172-184)). When discussing this, we should not lose sight of the fact that Papias, Irenaeus, Eusebius, Dionysius, and those heretics whom Eusebius was opposing, all agreed that John the Apostle wrote the Gospel. The disagreement concerned authorship of the Apocalypse. It is also worth noting that Papias was a young man in his 30`s when John the Apostle died.

The `Q` Source

There are verses in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke which are identical. The Markans claim the authors copied from Mark`s Gospel. They further assert that Matthew and Luke had no knowledge of each other. So where did they obtain their many identical verses that were not present in Mark`s Gospel? Markans say they copied from a lost document, which they call `Q` from the German word `Quelle` (Source).

There is not the slightest historical evidence, or even a hint, that `Q` or its author ever existed. If `Q` had existed, it would have been the most precious scroll of Christianity during the first 50-70 years of the new religion. According to the Markans we owe the preservation of `The Our Father` and `The Beatitudes` to `Q`. Mark did not bother to record them. If `Q` had been the key document containing the sayings of Christ, it would have been treasured, copied and passed from hand to hand and read at Services.

Markan priorists want us to believe that the community that produced `Q` later lost it, although it was so important that Matthew and Luke, unknown to each other, made much use of it. Then the communities of Matthew and Luke also lost it. It is hard to believe that only two copies were made of `Q` and these just happened to be in the possession of the isolated communities in which Matthew and Luke lived and these communities lost them. If more copies were made for many communities, Markans have to explain how all these copies of this key Christian document were lost. Also, how did `Q` disappear without leaving even a vague reference or echo in any piece of Christian or heretical literature?

Those who hold the Markan theory demand the most stringent proof for the historicity of the Gospels, for which we have much historical evidence. Yet they accept conjectures and theories about `Q`, based on further conjectures and theories for which there is no evidence at all. In reality `Q` was created in the 19th century, out of nothing, to fill a hole in the Markan priority theory.

Markans describe the period between the time of Christ and the writing of the Gospels as `A long dark tunnel`. Groups of dedicated Markans have spent years, at the expense of Universities, looking for `Q` and its author in this darkness. According to the historians and those who accept the Jerome or Clementine traditions, the period was short. The `long` is not a fact, but a further creation by Markans to bolster their theory. It is true that the Markans are working in a long dark tunnel. This is because they refuse to turn on the lights provided by the historians.

The Markans call the anonymous authors they have invented, by the names of actual people (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John). This makes them sound familiar, real and comforting but, if the Markans are correct, more appropriate names would be Saints Tom, Dick, Harry and Janette, while not forgetting the venerable `Q`. I have no wish to be facetious, but it is necessary to be blunt in order to bring home an important point. The use of familiar names to describe unknown alleged authors, emotionally clouds a clear understanding of what Markan priorists wish us to believe. I am not surprised when non-Christians are unconvinced by the Markan way of explaining the truth of Christianity.

Irenaeus, Eusebius, Tertullian and others had travelled throughout the Roman Empire, and were well educated, so why did they have no knowledge of the alleged anonymous authors or `Q`? Why were all the ancient historians and theologians completely ignorant of the great saints who had, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, produced the greatest writings of mankind? Also, why did they all come to believe that they were written by the same four other authors?

When the Deists first put forward the assertion that we could not know of the life of Jesus from the Gospels, they were asserting that the Gospels had been written 2-300 years after the life of Christ. Few today try to uphold this assertion, so place Matthew and Luke at about 85 AD and John about 95-100. But these were periods when many eyewitnesses and the children of eyewitnesses were alive and active in the Church. Although many of the old Deist arguments have now been discredited they still influence modern Markan thinking.

Toning Down Mark?

Markans often repeat the claim made by Abbott in 1879 that the gospel of Mark shows Christ and his apostles as having weaknesses of character and limitations of power. He then claimed that Matthew and Luke revised the verses of Mark so as to remove `stumbling blocks` for weak believers ((WRF 159)). His basis for this theory was the claim that as heroes fade into history their followers idolise them and remove negative aspects of character from their accounts. He believed this was a strong indication that Mark wrote first.

Abbott was building his claim on a succession of presumptions.

- It is true that the idolising of a hero may increase with the passing of time. But equally a person treated as a hero at his death, may lose his status when additional information becomes available, and his followers and the next generation look at his life with less emotion.
- According to the Markan theory, Matthew and Luke were unknown to each other. If so, it is most unlikely that both would have decided to falsify their gospels by changing them in the same manner.
- Abbott put forward nine instances to support his theory and today they are often repeated without examination. So let us look at some of them:
 - a). Mark 6: 5 reads: `he could do no mighty works there`.
Matthew 13: 58 reads: `he did not do many mighty works there`.
Luke omits the incident.

Abbott said the change of meaning from `could do no` to `did not do many` showed that Matthew was trying to combat the suggestion by Mark that Christ was powerless at times.

Comment: When we read the whole verse, we see that Mark qualified his `no` with the word `except...`, so explaining that at least a few were worked.

Matthew, by using `not many`, was implying that there were a few. There is therefore no real difference.

- b). Mark 1: 34 writes that: `he healed many ... cast out many demons.
Matthew 8: 16 says: `he cast out all spirits and healed all`.
Luke 4: 40 says that: `each one was healed`.

Abbot claimed both Matthew and Luke have enhanced what Jesus did.

Comment: Mark makes two statements. He says all the sick were brought; and that everyone in the town was there. Jesus could not have healed `everyone` because `everyone` was not sick, so Mark says `many`. Matthew and Luke do not mention the general population of the town, but the sick and demon possessed only. They report that all or each one of these were physically or spiritually cured. So again there is no basis for Abbott's construction.

From the Clementine perspective we see Peter, when reading the passages from Matthew and Luke, remembering the scene and adding colour by saying that the whole town was there.

- c). Mark 10: 35 implies that James and John were ambitious.
Matthew in 20: 20-21 shifts the blame to their mother.

Abbott claimed this was an effort to protect the character of the two apostles.

Comment: Matthew in 16: 23 writes of Peter acting like Satan, so he was unlikely to try to cover up two lesser disciples being ambitious. Mark could have omitted Matthew's remark about the mother because it was not important. From the Clementine viewpoint, Peter would have seen that Luke had not included this incident. So there was nothing to conflate. Peter therefore gives a reduced account based on Matthew and his own memory.

Answers to other claims by Abbott may be read elsewhere ((WRF 159-169)).

The Jerusalem Prophecies

In Matthew 24:15-16, Luke 21: 20-24 and Mark 13: 14, we read of Christ prophesying the destruction of Jerusalem and its Temple. Apart from Christ's death and resurrection, the destruction in 70 AD was the most momentous religious event in Jewish-Christian history. Yet there is not a word recording it in the Gospels, Epistles or Acts. The normal conclusion would be that these were written prior to the epoch making catastrophe.

If you are reading an account telling the story of Nazism which provides details of Hitler's birth, young life, the first war, his involvement in politics, gaining power, war with Poland, Britain, France and then his invasion of the Soviet Union, but stops as his armies approach Moscow, everyone would conclude that it was written prior to 1943. Why not use the same logic when reading the books of the New Testament?

Recognizing the force of this conclusion, Markans claim prophetic words were placed on the lips of Christ by the anonymous authors after the destruction had occurred. The prophecies are said to be ex-eventu (i.e. created after the event had already occurred). This claim is made without any supporting evidence but is needed in order to uphold their theory. So let us look at their assertions.

1. They say that Mark 13: 14 places the words from Daniel 9: 27: “When you see the Abomination of Desolation in the Holy of Holies” on the lips of Christ. But why would Mark do this when the Christians did not wait to see the Roman standard in the Temple? They had fled several years previously. There was not a law to stop Jesus quoting the words of a prophet in the Scriptures.
2. Is it likely that a Christian such as Luke would compose an `ex eventu` parable, as Luke 21: 20-21, in which he would symbolize the actions of the all-loving God by the actions of the armies of Emperor Nero?
3. We may ask why Matthew invented prophecies, such as 10: 23, 16: 28 and 24; 34, which were not seen to be clearly fulfilled?
4. In Matthew 24: 16, the words of Christ refer to: “fleeing to the mountains”. Why would these words have been invented ex-eventu at a time when everyone knew that the Christians had fled to Pella, which was situated on low lying ground by a river?
5. Words allegedly placed on the lips of Christ confuse the end of the Temple with the end of the world. If the authors wished to deceive their readers, would they not have picked clearer words?
6. Some Markans have come to accept that Mark wrote prior to 70 AD. This would mean that the prophecy he quoted was not ex eventu. This should undermine their acceptance of the alleged ex eventu passages in the other Gospels.

According to ...`

We may wish that each Gospel author had opened and closed with his name and other details. But would this be sufficient to silence the critics? There are 13 Epistles where Paul uses his name at the beginning or end, or at both. Yet his authorship is still denied.

There was one message of Good News, one Gospel – the Gospel of Christ. Justin Martyr used the word `Gospel` in the singular, but used the plural when he says the memoirs of the Apostles are called Gospels. This dual meaning had evolved by his time, although signs of it may be seen earlier in Rom.11:16, 16:25, Tim 2:8 and 2 Thess 2:14.

It was because four authors had given their separate accounts of the one Gospel, that the expression, `According to...` came to be used.

There is however another way to look at this subject. The early Christians were soaked in the traditions of the Old Testament. Christian artists in the Roman catacombs depicted scenes where the Old and New Scriptures were compared. The five Christian foundation scrolls (the four Gospels and Acts) were set beside the five scrolls of the Torah.

The Jewish Palestinian Talmud of the 5th century confirms that the Christians wrote in the same format as the Jews, so as to underline that the Christian books were of equal quality to the Torah ((CTJ 76-77)). According to Claude Tresmontant, when the Gospel of Matthew was translated from Hebrew into Greek, the same lexicon was used as that used for translating the Septuagint ((CTH 17-23)).

When we look at the Old Testament, we find that the authors of historical books do not give their names, while the authors of prophetic books do ((GS 276)). The Apocalypse is clearly framed on the model of the Old Testament. The transition from the third to the first person in the Apocalypse; `his servant John` and `I John` (1: 1, 1: 9, 21: 2, 22: 2) is parallel to the usage of Isaiah (1: 1, 2: 1, 6: 1, etc.), and of Daniel (1: 6, 7: 1, 2, 15, etc.).

So it was a matter of following Jewish tradition that the Christian author of a prophetic book should begin by giving his name.

We should not be surprised when the authors of the Gospels and Acts omit to give their names. John gives his name in his prophetic book, but not in his Gospel. Luke explains how he collected the historical material for his gospel and produced the clearly historical `Acts of the Apostles`. Yet in both cases he omits his name. It follows from this that the four authors considered their compositions to be historical books.

Notes: 1). The books we name as Josue, Samuel and Esdras do not refer to the authors, but to the subject matter. 2) Nehemias (alternatively called 2 Esdras) was a continuation of Esdras. The anonymous author had died so Nehemias divulged his own name when explaining that he was continuing the account. There was therefore a special reason for the traditional rule to be broken in this one case.

The early Church recognised that, `according to`, meant `written by`. We find this in the writings of Eusebius where he reports that the hearers of Peter besought Mark to leave them a written statement and: “so became the cause of the Scripture called the Gospel according to Mark” ((EH 2: 15, 2)).

CHAPTER XVI THE ROMAN WORLD; ARCHAEOLOGY; A NOVEL

THE ROMAN WORLD

Classical scholars have shown that texts, such as that by Homer, could be disseminated very quickly ((CTP 49)). The noted classical scholar W. Walker has pointed out that Christians are fortunate when searching for their roots, because a highly developed civilisation existed at the time of Christ. Walker has provided an interesting judgment: ``scientific" scepticism can easily be carried too far. Ancient traditions have sometimes been confirmed by archaeology; ancient writers sometimes meant what they said and occasionally even knew what they were talking about. Scepticism about scepticism is especially appropriate in the period from the first century BC to the second century of the Christian era, because this is the most learned, best informed, and most securely dateable period in history before modern times. ... The New Testament could not have been written at a time of greater literacy, education, or understanding` ((WW 126-7)).

The English Scripture scholar C. H. Dodd wrote in 1972: 'It is surely significant that when historians of the ancient world treat the gospels, they are quite unaffected by the sophistication of "Redaktionsgeschichte", and handle the documents as if they were what they profess to be'. ((JATR 360)). F. D. Gregory has noted that Markan authors `...have a hunger for uncertainty` ((AD Nov. 1994, page 15)).

The irony used by these authors is understandable. It is the exegetes and theologians with their `creative theology` and love of German theories, not the historians, who question the historicity of the New Testament.

The Roman Empire had a good system of roads free from marauders, and Augustus (27-44 BC) had cleared pirates from the Mediterranean. ((CTR 4)). So communications were reliable and fast. The shipwreck of Paul was exceptional. Normally it took ten days to sail from Rome to Palestine to Rome. Rome to Antioch and Alexandria was less. A voyage from Italy to Spain took 4-7 days ((MP 226)). In his book `Geography`, Strabo (64 BC - 19 AD) wrote that fish from the Sea of Galilee was prepared and salted in local factories to be exported to Rome ((CTJ 171-2)). Herod drank Italian wine in his palace at Masada. ((CTP 129)).

Letters were sent by post, and valuable documents by hired messenger or trusted servants. Colossians 4: 16, illustrates how Christians used the communication system. A newly written Gospel could be copied and in the hands of Christian leaders throughout the Empire within weeks. Yearly at Passover great numbers of Jews, including those who had accepted Christ as the Messiah, travelled to Jerusalem. The city became a centre for the exchange of news, and a hive of gossip.

The preaching of Jesus, his miracles, the turbulence this caused amongst the Jews and the steps taken to maintain the peace, would have been included in reports sent by Pontius Pilate to the emperor in Rome. In 150 AD Justin Martyr addressed: `The Defence of Christianity` to Emperor Antoninus Pius.

He wrote: `Now there is a village in the land of the Jews, 35 stadia from Jerusalem, in which Jesus Christ was born, as you can ascertain also from the registers of the taxing made under Cyrenius, your first Procurator in Judaea`. ((JMA Apologia 1: 34)).

He goes on to write of the life of Christ, his miracles and details of the crucifixion such as the casting of lots for his vesture. He then adds: `And that he did these things, you can learn from the Acts of Pontius Pilate`. ((JMA Apologia 1: 35)).

Later he lists the sort of miracles Christ performed. For confirmation he again writes: `And that he did those things, you can learn from the Acts of Pontius Pilate`. ((JMA Apologia 1: 48)).

If these reports of Cyrenius and Pilate had not been in the Roman archives, Justin would have been risking his life to suggest this action to the emperor. Documents such as `The Acts of Pilate` have not survived down the centuries. One with the same title appeared in the fifth century but is spurious. The references by Justin Martyr to these official reports do not directly assist our dating of the Gospels, but they do provide a further insight into the well-organized Roman world in which the New Testament books were composed.

Markans have no evidence that the authors of the Gospels and Acts lived out of touch with one another in isolated communities. There is no reason to think that the Christians did not live like others of their time. The Markan theory, relying on a presumption that it took a long time for an idea to travel from one community to another, has no basis in fact. Their theory becomes less plausible as we learn more about Roman society.

ARCHAEOLOGY

Although the Markan theory was gaining support during the early 19th century, it was not until after 1874, when Bismark promoted it in the German Universities, that it became a threat to traditional belief. In 1893 Pope Leo XIII issued; `Providentissimus Deus` to face `the difficulties and problems arising from the prejudice of a widely spreading rationalism` ((DAS 6)). He called for more research because at the time there had been only one or two excavations in the Holy Land regarding the New Testament ((DAS 16)).

The Markan theory was born and incubated in the closed world of German academia as it was 150 years ago. But since then there has been impressive progress in archaeological research and the understanding of ancient languages. It is this broad advance which has transformed the scene. Two archaeological sites have particularly added to our knowledge.

Since 1902 a mound at Oxyrhynchus in Egypt has gradually been excavated. Finds show that a rough popular Greek was widely used at the time of Christ. Scholars of the 18th and 19th century, who expected the New Testament to be in classical Greek, were therefore in error to treat it as in `bad Greek` or `degenerate Greek`. ((SNTW 159)). The non-literary Koiné Greek, as used by the lower classes, provides the setting for what has been described as the `poor Greek` of Mark when he was recording Peter`s talks.

In 1946 a large collection of Gnostic texts were found at Nag Hammadi, also in Egypt. The examination of this collection has confirmed the reliability of information provided by Irenaeus ((IDU introductory page)).

According to Jose O'Callaghan and Peter Thied, fragment 7Q5 found in the Qumran caves during 1947 is from Mark 6 : 52- 53. As the caves were closed in 68 AD they claim this proves the Gospel of Mark existed prior to 68 AD ((CTP 71)). I am not able to get excited over this suggestion. Even if the words found on 7Q5 are accepted as being the same as in the Gospel, this would not prove their claim. These words and those in the Gospel could have both come from a common minor source circulating in several copies at that time.

A NOVEL

While an historical novel must not be treated as a history book, the success of such a novel depends on the author bringing historical events alive. To do so, it is important to keep the historical background acceptable to his readership. `The Acts of Peter` was published about 180 AD ((AP)). In this novel we find a contest between Peter and Simon the Magician who is mentioned in Acts 8: 9-24.

The novel also tells of the story of Peter having to flee from Rome following a sermon on chastity and, when he meets Jesus, Peter is asked where he is going [Quo Vadis?]. Peter is ashamed so returns to Rome where he is crucified upside down. We know from other sources this form of execution was in use ((CTJ 210)). So the author was keeping his novel close to credible historical facts.

In chapter twenty of the same novel, we read of Peter entering a house and finding a passage in a Gospel describing the Transfiguration is being read [videt evangelium legi]. Peter rolls up the scroll and proceeds to show how the Holy Scriptures of our Lord should be preached [qualiter debeat Sancta Scriptura Domini nostri pronuntiari]. Saying: `What we have written`, he describes the Transfiguration from memory ((CTP 171)).

This story comes from an historical novel, not a history book. But what is interesting is that the author took it for granted that his readers would accept that a written Gospel was in existence while Peter was still alive.

CHAPTER XVII

FUNDAMENTALISM; ECUMENISM; TWO AUDIENCES; THE PONTIFICAL BIBLICAL COMMISSION

FUNDAMENTALISM

Many Markans picture themselves in the forefront of opposition to `Fundamentalism`. But recent history does not support their claim. During the last decades of the 19th century Markan priority took hold of much of the Protestant world and, in response, modern `Fundamentalism` was launched at a 1895 American Congress. This movement aimed to uphold the fundamental beliefs of the Christian faith against Markan priorist attacks. The method they adopted was to accept every word in both the old and new testaments, in a literal manner. They would have been more correct if they had named themselves as `Literalists`.

Only a part of the Protestant world chose to go down the literalist road. Much of the remainder found itself lacking clear biblical guidelines as to what should be considered as the fundamental beliefs of Christianity. In this manner modern non-doctrinal liberalism was born.

For over half a century the Pontifical Biblical Commission protected the Catholic world from these developments. But from the mid-60s, as Markan priority came to be tolerated, a small movement of Catholics towards fundamentalist sects was noticeable. Markan priority has not provided a defence against `Fundamentalism`. It caused its birth and is the major reason for its growth and persistence.

The internationally known Scripture scholar and author, Eta Linnemann, illustrates a similar reaction in Germany, where she had studied under Bultmann. She came to realise that for years she had been teaching unsupported assertions and circular arguments. It was only after a period of spiritual anguish that she regained her faith in the Word of God. But now she seems to reject the historical-critical method itself and has gone from Bultmannism to a form of Fundamentalism. ((EL 9-15 and 209-210)).

Discussion of the Old Testament is outside the scope of this booklet, but Catholics recognise that the earliest books were composed in pre-history. The authors used the literary conventions of their times, adapting existing legends to teach religious truths about the relationship between God and mankind. Authors of later books in the Old Testament also wrote according to the conventions of their respective periods.

R.E.Brown was haunted by a fear of Catholic youth being captured by Fundamentalist sects. He believed a rich liturgy; a firm Catechesis and marvellous personal devotions would be of little avail if the study of the Bible was ignored. ((RB 44-47)). We can agree with him and agree that he was correct in stating that this should be based on modern methods (Not forgetting the guidance of the Church). His mistake was to equate modern methods exclusively with Markan priority.

At Vatican II, Abbott Butler was the leading English-speaking advocate of allowing the use of modern methods of research in exegesis. He was also a leading defender of the Apostle Matthew being the writer of the first Gospel.

As the New Testament was written in historical times, we should read it according to the conventions of its day. It is unscientific to transfer literary conventions from one age to another. Michael Wrenn in 1985 pointed out this error: “There is a strange tendency which abuses comparisons with the Old Testament in order to depreciate the history of Salvation, especially Gospel history” ((RL page x)).

For Catholics the fundamental doctrines of Christianity were reaffirmed in the 1994 Catechism, while fundamentalist/ literalist methods of exegesis were rejected. ((CCC 126, 375-390)).

ECUMENISM

Markans claim their work has produced the beneficial effect of bringing Protestant and Catholic scholars together. But this is of little value if they have come together in error.

According to liberal Christians, Christ came to earth, preached, died and ascended into heaven. But, although highly intelligent, he made no provision, in either a Protestant or Catholic way, for future generations to know with certainty why he lived and what he taught.

Protestants, Catholics and Eastern Christians have much in common when combating `liberal` Christianity, and the Clementine tradition has a long history of ecumenical co-operation. Henry Owen, the pioneer in modern times, was an Anglican, while Griesbach, developer of the synoptic method, was an Evangelical Lutheran. Chapman and Butler, who did much to sustain opposition to Markan priority, were both Catholics.

In America it was a Methodist professor, W. R. Farmer, who in 1964 challenged the North American world. It was also he who highlighted the influence of 19th Century German politics on biblical studies. In 1987 Harold Riley as an Anglican, jointly produced a book with Bernard Orchard, a Catholic, which challenged the Markan consensus in England.

John Robinson, who concluded that all the Gospels were written prior to the destruction of Jerusalem, came from a life-long background of liberal Anglicanism. Thied the papyrologist is an Anglican co-operating with Jose O`Callaghan a Catholic. Meijboom, a Dutch Calvinist, led the rebuttal of Markan priority in 1866. When Kiwiet, a Baptist professor of theology translated Meijboom`s work in 1993, he was assisted by a Presbyterian, two Catholics and a Wesleyan. The researchers mentioned in chapter VI and gathered around A.J.Mc Nichol and D.B. Peabody are not of one church affiliation. We could go on, but this is enough to show that research into the Clementine and Jerome traditions is not a problem for ecumenism. In fact, it presents a marvellous opportunity for all Christians to work together to rebuild confidence in the Word of God in the face of doubt and disbelief.

TWO AUDIENCES

The Catholic Church claims she has the God given authority to decide which writings were inspired by the Holy Spirit and should therefore be included in the New Testament. She claims that this authority may be proved from a study of the New Testament.

At first sight it may appear she is arguing in a circle. That is: The Church authenticates the New Testament and The New Testament authenticates the Church. But this is not so. Catholics claim that the information in the Gospels, when treated as normal history, shows that Christ founded a visible organisation (now known as the Catholic Church based at Rome), which he promised to protect from teaching doctrinal error. On the basis of this claim, this Church has used her authority to pronounce that the Gospels are not mere historical records, but the inspired word of God.

This means that when the Church makes a statement on this subject she has to be aware of two audiences. In order to maintain that the Gospels are reliable historical documents, and so protect the basis of her position, she encourages research on the basis of scientific method and open debate, without wishing to pre-judge a scientific debate. But most Church members accept her claims for reasons not dependent on the historicity of the Gospels. So for their instruction she makes known her firm traditional teaching that: `two apostles and other men associated with the apostles`, wrote the four Gospels ((DV Paragraph 7)).

Catholic exegetes use reason (scientific knowledge and early history) to establish the historicity of the Gospels. But as Catholic exegetes they possess some knowledge through faith, and this enables them to see when a particular scientific theory is leading to error.

A Catholic does not accept doctrines as true because he judges the Bible to say so, but because his Church says they are the teachings of Christ. He studies and ponders scripture in order to deepen his understanding. A Protestant approaches the Bible in a different frame of mind and this needs to be remembered when studying together.

THE PONTIFICAL BIBLICAL COMMISSION (PBC)

Pope Leo XIII established this Commission 1902 and Pope Pius X issued `Praestantia Sacrae Scripturae` in 1907. A slightly amended version of this was published in 1910 and includes the passage:

`... We now declare and expressly enjoin that all without exception are bound by an obligation of conscience to submit to the decisions of the Pontifical Biblical Commission on matters of doctrine, whether already issued or to be issued hereafter, exactly as to the decrees of the Sacred Congregations approved by the Pope; nor can anyone who by word or writing attacks the said decrees avoid the note both of disobedience and of rashness or be therefore without grave fault`. ((CCHS 47c)).

A detailed explanation and analysis of the purpose and work of the Commission is provided on pages 67-75 of the 1953 Catholic Commentary on Holy Scripture.

Pius X had made the rulings of the Commission part of the normal teaching of the Church. This was acknowledged in 1993 when Cardinal Ratzinger contributed the preface to `The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church`. He wrote:

“The PBC, in its new form after the Second Vatican Council, is not an organ of the teaching office, but rather a commission of scholars who, ...take positions on important problems of scriptural interpretation ...”

Raymond Brown was a member of this new advisory body, constituted in 1971. He acknowledged that his membership did not mean papal approval for his ideas ((RB 27)).

It is beyond the scope of this book to discuss the relationship of the original PBC to the ordinary Magisterium of the Church. The original Commission was cautious. For example it did not say that Moses wrote the Pentateuch, but that arguments put forward against his authorship were not strong enough to justify teaching that he was not the author.

The Commission was facing a difficult problem. Deists were using `scientific findings` to challenge what the Church had always maintained regarding the historicity of the New Testament. Catholics and other Christians were confident that answers would be found but, in the meantime, the Commission had the task of keeping false theories from being taught in Catholic educational establishments. In 1907 the President of the Commission wrote that its duty was:

“Providing Catholic teaching with wise and safe norms`, and giving `a directive norm` to students ((CCHS 47f)).

An exegete could privately disagree with the statements of the Commission but not oppose them publicly while the Church was waiting for the problem to be solved. It was hoped it would not take long to explain the evidence being put forward by the Deists in another way. Unfortunately it was not till the second half of the 20th Century that Farmer, Tresmontant, Riley, Orchard and others were successful. By then many Catholic, and nearly all Protestant, exegetes had embraced the Deist interpretations and many had become modernists. In the confusion following the second Vatican Council this Modernism spread deeply into Catholic Educational Institutions.

While Catholic exegetes had had a greater degree of freedom of expression since the middle of the 20th century, Marcan priorists often exaggerate this freedom. `Divino Afflante Spiritu` of 1943 encouraged the use of the new methods of research which had been developed, but it also praised `Providentissimus Deus` and insisted that the basic Catholic principles set out by the Biblical Commission had not been revised.

Followers of Brown sometimes claim that in 1954 `the Secretary of the PBC announced, that Catholics now had complete freedom with regard to those earlier responses of the Commission, except where they touched faith and morals` ((RB 34 and 59)). Yet the `announcement`, which did not include the words `complete freedom`, was not made on behalf of the Commission. An anonymous individual contributing his personal views to a book signed himself: `AM`.

As the secretary of the PBC at the time was Fr. A Miller many presumed he was the contributor. He may have been responsible, but as his article was not published in Acta Apostolicae Sedis (AAS), it was not an official document, merely the personal opinion of `AM` ((LT July 2001, pages 1-9)).

CHAPTER XVIII THE EVENTS FALL INTO PLACE

When the evidence provided by the ancient historians is re-examined, in the light of the Clementine tradition, we find many problems faced by scripture scholars may be resolved. My suggestions are given below.

1. Two Editions of Mark

Clement of Alexandria tells us: “The audience, which was numerous, begged Mark ...to write down the things he [Peter] had said. And he did so ...”. Mark, as Peter’s secretary, would have had a team of scribes. So he would have been able to quickly publish this short record of Peter’s words. We are told that Peter showed little interest but, from another book by Clement, we know that when Peter became aware of its favourable reception, he approved it for use in the churches.

This indicates that Mark’s short Gospel was published in two editions – an unauthorized informal one and a second endorsed by Peter for use in the churches. Clement informs us that Mark issued the words of Peter while Peter was still alive, yet Irenaeus says that Mark published after the death of Peter. This again points to there having been two editions.

Luke, a newcomer recently arrived in Rome, would have taken longer to gather together a team of scribes to copy his full scroll length gospel. So it would have been published after Mark’s first edition but before the second edition. Mark’s team would have been busy following the death of Peter so delaying publication of Mark’s second edition. Librarians in the churches would have filed the Gospels side by side in pigeonholes. Some would have quickly received Mark’s first edition, others obtained the second edition after Luke’s gospel. This would explain how the Matthew-Mark-Luke tradition came into existence in some churches and the Matthew-Luke-Mark-John in others.

The existence of two traditions would have caused discussion and explain why Clement had to clarify which gospels were first: He stated that: “...**the first written of the gospels were those having the genealogies.**” He didn’t mention the order of their publication.

When Jerome wrote his ‘Prologue to the Four Gospels’, he did not say they were **written** in the Matthew-Mark-Luke-John sequence, but that they had been **published** [adidit] in this order. So the statements of Clement and Jerome do not conflict.

2. The Last Verses of Mark

Mark’s Gospel breaks off abruptly at 16: 8, before continuing with twelve more verses. This break involves ending with an enclitic form of Greek grammar, and this is inappropriate for the ending of a paragraph, never mind a book. Many suggestions have been put forward in explanation of these additional verses. As mentioned in our Chapter VII, Orchard suggested that they might have been notes for a further talk that was not delivered.

My suggestion is as follows: The audience listening to Peter would have already known the information provided in Matthew’s Gospel. But for most of them the gospel of Luke contained new material.

As Orchard has pointed out, Peter stopped at the point his personal eyewitness of the earthly life of Christ ended ((RO 271-8)). Peter had not commented on all the new interesting pieces of information provided by Luke. I suggest that the audience would have asked questions, and these last verses record the answers supplied by Peter.

To illustrate: As the 'he' of verse 9 does not refer to the young man in verse 5, one would have expected to read 'Jesus'. But if the name of the Lord had been contained in a question, the use of 'he' would be correct.

Matthew in 28: 1-10 says that Mary Magdalene was, with another woman, the first to see Jesus, and Luke 24: 10 confirms this. But earlier Luke had mentioned a woman of the same name, 'a Mary who is called Magdalene', who had been possessed by seven devils (Luke 8: 2). We should not be surprised if someone, noting her history, asked if this was the same person. Peter replies that it was (Mark 16: 9). He then confirms that Luke was also correct when he wrote that it was she who told the Apostles.

Matthew had not reported that Christ had appeared to two men walking, but Luke gives this incident much space (Luke 24: 13-31). Should the audience accept this story as true? As Peter was not one of the two, he was unable to confirm all the details, but he does confirm that Christ did appear to two disciples walking in the countryside (Mark 16: 12).

Luke then tells the story of Christ appearing to the eleven (24: 33-36). Yet Matthew has not mentioned this. Was it true? Peter, being there, is able to confirm that it was (Mark 16: 14).

Matthew says followers of Christ were to teach and baptise (28: 19), but Luke says they are to preach penance and forgiveness (Luke 24: 47). Was there a discrepancy here? Peter explains how baptism follows on from successful preaching (Mark 15: 15-16).

In his second volume, Luke says that Paul was able to cast out a devil (Acts 16: 18). There was no mention of this power in Matthew. So was it true? Peter, not being present at the incident, could not confirm it, but gives it credibility by saying Christ had foretold that such happenings would occur (Mark 16: 17).

In Acts 2: 4 and 10: 46, Luke reports Peter as having been present on two occasions when speaking in tongues had taken place. Matthew had not reported these events. Peter is able to confirm them in his response to the question about casting out the devils (Mark 16: 17).

The audience had read in Acts 28: 5, that Paul was impervious to the poison of a snake. Matthew had not recorded such an incident. Could it be true? Not being present at the incident, all Peter can do is again refer to the words of Christ. We then read of a similar question regarding the laying on of hands. He answers (Mark 16: 18) in the same way.

Luke in 24: 51 and Acts 1: 9 describes how Christ ascended to heaven. As Matthew had not described this, the audience would have found it of great interest. Peter, having been an eyewitness, was able to confirm and slightly embellish the account of Luke. (Mark 16: 19).

A person's style of speaking will be different when answering questions from when he is giving a talk. The different style of these final verses has often been noted.

If the above suggestion is accepted, it would point to Acts, as well as Luke's gospel, having been seen by some of the audience prior to or during the period of the talks. In addition to Mark, the audience is likely to have included Paul, his guard, Luke, Linus, Cletus, Clement of Rome, Alexander, Rufus and Hermas.

3. Two Editions of Mark

Today we often see an edition of a talk circulated without the answers to any questions. Then, after a time, an edition including the answers is published. On other occasions the first edition includes the answers, but they are omitted in the second

There is historical evidence this occurred with Mark's gospel. Early copies of Mark's Gospel have been found with the last twelve verses replaced by a short ending. Clement of Alexandria tells us that Mark first issued Peter's words while Peter was still alive. Irenaeus informs us that Mark published after the death of Peter.

I suggest that as Peter authorized both editions, both were circulated but the one with the answers became the most popular.

4. The Poor Greek Of Mark

The foundation-stone of the Markan priority theory is the alleged inability of Mark (the secretary of the bishop of Rome) to write in good Greek. But if we accept Orchard and the Clementine tradition, an alternative explanation comes to mind.

Extremists among the Judaizing Party would not have been pleased at the acceptance by Peter of Luke's Gentile gospel. We know today that when a religious or political leader makes a statement on a disputed subject, some in the losing party will be suspicious that their leader has been misquoted. They will demand to know exactly what the leader has said.

I suggest that diehard members of the Judaic party would have wanted to read an unedited verbatim record of the exact words of Peter. An edited, `improved` version would not have been acceptable. So the scriptural misquotation and poor grammar had to be left unchanged in the published document. The early Christian communities already had two long carefully designed gospels. So the literary style of a transcript of a series of talks, would not have been seen as of great importance or an embarrassment for the Church.

The problem of the poor Greek of Mark is more acute for the upholders of Markan priority. They claim it was the only gospel in existence for 20 or more years. As the key document of a new dynamic religion, it would have presented a very negative portrait of the intelligence, education and capability of its leaders. So why did the Christian Community leave the obvious misquotations and grammatical errors uncorrected?

5. The Source of the Gospel according to Mark. Those upholding the Jerome sequence, often assume that Mark, when writing his gospel, used words he had heard Peter preach over many years. But if we accept the view of Orchard and others, a fresh look at the evidence is required.

John the Apostle and Papias report that Mark had the intention of not leaving out anything he had heard. `Nothing was left out` ((EH 3: 39, 15)). Yet we cannot accept that Mark's Gospel contains everything Peter preached over twenty or more years. The words of Papias would more accurately describe Mark reporting word for word a talk, or a limited series of talks.

Clement of Alexandria says Mark was begged to produce a record of what Peter had preached to a specific audience including Caesar's knights. Later he says Peter's hearers were not satisfied with a **'once only'** hearing. ((EH 2:15, 1)).

Yet the Christians in Rome must have heard Peter preaching on many occasions. So the words of Clement again suggest a once only delivery of something special.

Clement says: "the audience, which was numerous", [or in another translation, "the many who had been present"]. ((EH 6: 14, 7)). The word 'audience' is in the singular so again points to one talk or a set series of talks. It does not suggest many different audiences spread over many years. The word 'numerous' would be superfluous unless Clement is referring to one well attended event.

The opening words of `The Muratorian Fragment` indicate that the author of what was listed as the second Gospel, `was present` at some event.

These reports confirm that the Gospel of Mark was composed due to a once only special event, consisting of a talk or series of talks by Peter.

6. The Acts of the Apostles

If Peter answered questions regarding `Acts`, he would be granting it tacit approval and copies would have been made and distributed. Luke would have then been unlikely to add anything once the book had been given this approval. If Luke had accompanied Paul to Spain he might have decided to compose another book. But there is no hint in tradition that he went with Paul, or that he wrote a third book. The Acts of Luke, stopping where it does, is consistent with the Clementine / Orchard tradition.

7. The Spanish Mission

Orchard has suggested that Paul asked Peter to endorse the writing of Luke as a sign of the equality of Jew and Gentile within the Church. It would also officially recognise the mission of Paul to the Gentiles ((RO 250-254)). I would like to suggest that while this is correct, there may have also been an immediate need for this endorsement.

As explained in chapter XII, Paul used Rome as a place to prepare his team of missionaries destined for work in Spain. Up until this time, when Christian missionaries arrived in a new town, they would go first to a synagogue to preach the Good News to the Jews (Acts chapters 13-19). The Gospel of Matthew, with its emphasis on explaining the fulfilment of Jewish prophecies, was of central importance in gaining a first nucleus of converts.

This method would not have been useable in Spain where there were few, if any, synagogues ((MP 134)). The Gospel of Luke, written with Gentiles in mind, would be likely to be more effective. I suggest his impending departure for Spain, could have been an immediate cause of Paul asking Peter to endorse Luke's Gospel.

8. The Epistle To The Hebrews

The psychological blow suffered by every Jew when God permitted the Temple sacrifice to cease forever, cannot be exaggerated. Christians could claim they had been vindicated. It showed that God wanted the new sacrifice of the Eucharist to replace that of animals.

I suggest that Paul asked Luke to translate a recent letter of his to Jerusalem (The Epistle to the Hebrews) into Greek. Clement of Alexandria says it was Luke who translated this epistle. ((EH 6: 14, 2)). I suggest that the now redundant introductory and closing words were omitted, so transforming the letter into something like a sermon. Many today consider it reads like a sermon. I would also suggest that the Christian community would have been keen to publish a commentary on the events of 70AD. Yet, if we do not accept this course of events, there is no evidence of any attempt to do this.

9. The Last Chapter of John

In chapter XII, it was explained that the most of this Gospel was written before 70 AD and the last chapter added about 96 AD. The contemporary situation may explain the addition.

Nineteen of the twenty-five new verses refer to Peter who had been dead for thirty years. Three bishops ordained by Peter had succeeded to his Roman bishopric: Linus in 65 AD, Cletus in 81 AD and Clement from about 93 ((EH 3: 13, 1)). According to archaeological finds and legends, Clement was sent to the stone quarries in the Crimea, where he was martyred in 100 or 101 AD ((BC 214-5 and 234)). His exile would have produced a vacuum in leadership and a constitutional crisis in the Church. Christ had **promised** to appoint the Apostles as leaders of his Church under the headship of Peter (Mt. 16: 18-20). The Gospel records Christ actually **commissioning** the apostles as a group (Mt. 28: 16-20), but does not report the formal **commissioning** of Peter in his special position.

The long enforced absence of Peter would have raised two questions. Firstly, could the successors of the Apostles (the bishops) replace a successor of Peter without obtaining his agreement? Secondly, if John was not going to die, why not elect him? At this point John intervenes. He informs his readers of the words used by Christ when he did in fact **commission** Peter (John 21: 15-17).

John is thereby supporting the position that Clement was not dependent on the continuing approval of the bishops. He then says there is no foundation for the rumour about him not dying. This would be another example of John supplementing and clarifying.

10. The Greek version of Matthew gospel

We will probably never know who translated Matthew's Gospel into Greek But it would seem likely that once a Hebrew version came into circulation, Greek speakers would have requested a copy in their own language. Matthew could have prepared this himself or overseen an assistant. This would not have taken a long period of time.

CHAPTER XIX

THE ATTITUDE OF THE CHURCH

As the Gospels were originally written on separate scrolls and stored in pigeonholes, church librarians placed them in whichever order they wished. This could have been in the order in which they were acquired, by frequency of use or by honour. In Egypt it appears that John, as `a pillar of the Church` (Gal. 2: 90), took precedence, followed by Matthew (another Apostle), Mark (recorder of Peter) and then Luke. In the Greek speaking Eastern part of the Church the order was Matthew-Mark-Luke and John. When translations were made into Latin for the West, the normal order was Matthew-John-Luke-Mark. But whichever sequence was adopted, Matthew was invariably placed prior to Mark.

As explained in chapter II, Clement of Alexandria gives the earliest specific information regarding the order in which the gospels were composed. He wrote that Matthew and Luke were the first to write. Both Irenaeus and Tertullian, a generation earlier, had used this same `Clementine sequence` of Matthew-Luke-Mark ((See Our Chapter IIc and i)).

As also explained in Chapter II, Jerome`s Vulgate translation was made the official version of the New Testament at the end of the 4th century. Although the older versions were still in use during the following centuries there is no trace of academic discussion regarding the order of composition. But we do know that Sedulius Scottus, an Irish monk of the 9th century, upheld the Clementine Tradition in his `Explanatiuncula`. ((DBP 53)).

In 1546, during the 4th session of the Council of Trent under Paul III, the following decree dated 8th April, was issued:

“[The council] has thought it proper, moreover, to insert in this decree a list of the sacred books ...received by this council`. [After listing those in the Old Testament it continues]. `Of the New Testament, the four Gospels, according to Matthew, Mark, Luke and John; the Acts of the Apostles written by Luke the Evangelist; fourteen Epistles of Paul the Apostle, to the Romans, two to the Corinthians, to the Galatians, to the Ephesians, to the Philippians, to the Colossians, two to the Thessalonians, two to Timothy, to Titus, to Philemon, to the Hebrews; two of Peter the Apostle, three of John the Apostle, one of James the Apostle, one of Jude the Apostle, and the Apocalypse of John the Apostle”.

“If anyone does not accept as sacred and canonical the aforesaid books in their entirety and with all their parts, as they have been accustomed to be read in the Catholic Church and as they are contained in the old Latin Vulgate Edition, and knowingly and deliberately rejects the aforesaid traditions, let him be anathema”. ((TR)).

The Council used the normally accepted titles, authorship and order when decreeing that they were Sacred. This does not mean there was an intention to attribute doctrinally the authorship of any book. But it does illustrate the tradition held at that time.

It was Dr. Henry Owen, Rector of St. Olave in Hart Street, London, who shattered the long silence regarding the order in which the Gospels were written. In a small 1764 book, he proposed the hypothesis that Mark used material from the Gospels of Matthew and Luke ((HO 62)). Owen devoted most of his time to pastoral work in North London, so his book was not noticed in England. But J.J.Griesbach purchased a copy and published an expanded version in Germany. It became known as `The Griesbach Hypothesis`, and caused controversy in the German academic world.

Griesbach had to face the opposition of those upholding the Jerome tradition. It asserted that as `The Fathers of The Church` (i.e. The early historians and theologians) had accepted the Matthew-Mark-Luke-John order, it was not to be questioned.

Unfortunately Griesbach did not challenge this historical evidence to see if there was an alternative tradition. He accepted the assertion of the conservatives and said that as his new theory was correct, the historical writings must be, `worthless fables`. It was Griesbach who, in the world of biblical debate, set `Science` against `History`, an antagonism soon to be copied by Markan priorists.

During this period Deism, under the cloak of `The Enlightenment`, was appearing in the Universities. Deists believed in God but rejected Christianity. They also rejected the possibility of miracles, prophecies and of being able to know what Christ had taught. In 1760 Herman Reimarus wrote to Gotthold Lessing: "Our task is completely to separate what the Apostles presented in their writings (i.e. in the Gospels) from what Jesus himself actually said and taught during his lifetime" ((WGK 89)). During 1792 Evanson, an English Deist, argued that John was not the author of the fourth Gospel ((CCHS 777a)).

The German Lutheran Church was the first to suffer from the arguments of the Deists. Most of the fathers of German atheism, like Feuerbach, began life as Lutheran theological students ((PT 149)). But one of them, Friedrich Schleiermacher, while accepting the modern theories, also wished to be religious. He took the position that religion is not knowledge, creeds, doctrines or sacred books. Nor did it need philosophical reflection.

It has been said: `For Schleiermacher, the essence of religion was piety and piety was feeling. With him every essential of modernism had arrived. Radical biblical scholarship destroys belief and there follows a desperate attempt to construct a gimcrack religious shelter out of the ruins with the help of some form of modern philosophical subjectivism. ... Schleiermacher is the real founder father of modernism` ((PT17: 150-151)).

In 1838 Christian Weisse proposed that Mark had been written prior to both Matthew and Luke ((JJK 12)). This would place the Gospels at such a late date that they could not have been written by any of the Apostles or their secretaries. The theory would also destroy the reliability of the ancient historians and therefore also of the dating of the Gospel according to John.

This was the perfect argument the Deists were looking for. They were a ready-made pressure group eager to provide Weisse with support. Weisse had provided these anti-Christians with a powerful motive to become exegetes of Scripture. And so began the tradition of anti-Christians, supported by university funds, acting as `experts` in Biblical Studies. These experts could wreak havoc by appearing to be dedicated Christians searching for the real Jesus.

It is interesting that Lessing admitted this tactic in writing. He was financially dependent on his father, a Lutheran minister, so concealed his hatred of Christianity. ((EL 12)). He wrote to a friend that all he could do to overthrow, `this hateful edifice of nonsense ... was to hide behind the pretence of furnishing new bases for it`. ((EL 40)).

In 1863 H.J.Holtzmann published a further development of the Markan priority theory. But three years later Hajo Uden Meijboom, exposed the unscientific character of Holtzmann`s work ((JJK xxv)). Under the criticism of free and scholarly debate the Markan priority theory may have disappeared, but the Deists kept it alive until politics intervened in a major way.

Bismarck, the nationalist and anti-Catholic Chancellor (Prime Minister) of Germany, came to power in 1870. He aimed to destroy the independence of the Catholic Church and her educational system. During Bismarck`s campaign, known as the `Kulturkampf` [the culture war], the Catholic Centre Party expanded. When the Socialists gained more seats in the Protestant areas, Bismarck needed Centre Party support in order to remain in power. In 1887, under this political pressure he lifted the threat to Catholic schools, while personally remaining bitterly anti-Catholic.

During this Kulturkampf period the Catholics had used quotations, mainly from the Gospel of Matthew, to maintain their God-given right to maintain schools for Catholic children. So the Markan priority hypothesis, which held that the Gospel of Matthew was a late anonymous non-eyewitness composition, became of great interest to Bismarck. The universities in Germany were government controlled and in 1874, at the height of the Kulturkampf, the young patriotic and nationalist Holtzmann was appointed to the prestigious position of head of New Testament Studies at Strasbourg University. ((WRFB 2478)).

His 1863 book was widely seen as the reason for this sudden promotion. Deists and ambitious lecturers, including a few liberal Catholics, saw their opportunity to gain promotion ahead of more independent minded colleagues. A person upholding the priority of Matthew was seen as pro-Catholic and unpatriotic at a time of nationalist fervour. `... any German scholar who would openly question the Markan hypothesis ... would be perceived as endangering "the foundations of the state"`. ((WRFB 2493)).

Within a generation, the Markan priority theory dominated the Scripture departments of the German Universities. Evangelicals were not indifferent to this development, and many of their professors, such as Adolf Hilgenfeld, held to their principles and suffered alongside pro-papal Catholics ((WRFB 2492)).

During the 1870 Vatican Council, the decree of Trent regarding the extent of Sacred Scripture was endorsed as part of 'Revelation', paragraphs 5 and 6 ((VAT)).

At the turn of the century, English academic circles became aware of the teachings in the German universities and presumed that these had emerged due to unbiased extensive research and open debate. Accepting the Germans as their academic superiors in this subject, English scholars led by B.H.Streeter, adopted the Markan priority hypothesis as: "The assured results of modern scholarship". ((RO 3)).

Holtzmann could be called: 'The farther of Markan priority'. Yet in later life, while continuing to maintain Markan priority, he accepted that Luke had used the gospel of Matthew. Streeter refused to accept this because in his opinion it destroyed the need for 'Q' ((AJM xi)). In this manner Markan priority and 'Q' came to extensively permeate England and provide a basis for the growth of liberal theology within the Anglican Communion.

By now Rome had become alarmed and in 1893 Pope Leo wrote 'Providentissimus Deus'. We read at the end of Section 17: 'It is clear, ... that *in historical questions, such as the origin and handing down of writings, the witness of history is of primary importance; ... internal evidence is seldom of great value except as confirmation.*'

Then in 1902 he established the Pontifical Biblical Commission aiming to guide teachers at all levels. Its function was to procure that holy Writ should be preserved 'not only from any breath of error', but also 'from all rash opinions'. ((CCHS 47b)). This defensive aim and ethos expressed itself in a policy of caution, prudence, 'playing safe' and suspicion of innovation.

In 1909 Pope Pius X established the Pontifical Biblical Institute in Rome as a centre of advanced scriptural studies ((DAS 9)).

In 1911, amongst other things, the PBC reaffirmed that the apostle Matthew authored the Gospel to which his name was attached. It said that there was adequate supporting tradition to form the view that it was the first to be written, and had been composed in the native language of Palestine prior to the destruction of Jerusalem. In 1912 it said it was not permissible to depart from the opinion that Matthew, Mark and Luke were composed in that order ((CCHS 50 a-1)). Scholars were allowed to privately disagree with this ruling, but not teach an alternative to the official opinion.

It is noteworthy that the statement endorses the priority of Matthew as Catholic 'tradition', while the chronological order of Mark and Luke was treated as an 'opinion'. But while intended to prevent the spread of Markan priority, it had the unfortunate side effect of hindering the open advocacy of the Clementine 'opinion'. In doing so, it contributed to the delay in solving of the problem quickly. But it needs to be recognized that the guidance provided in 1911 and 1912, on a wide range of issues concerning the New Testament, provided the urgently needed steadying effect required at that time. The priorities of Rome, thinking of the schools, were different to those of the exegetes.

This was expressed by Pius XII in 1943: `For God did not grant the Sacred Books to men to satisfy their curiosity or to provide them with an object of study and research, ...[but to] instruct to salvation ...` ((DAS 51)).

In the first half of the 20th century, the Protestant world came to accept that `Science` had shown the early Christian historians to be in error. This is why early Christian history is so often neglected today. At the same time the historical tradition was taught in Catholic establishments as if it was part of unchangeable Church doctrine. In this polarisation of the intellectual atmosphere, most young students chose `Science` rather than `History` and eventually produced a generation of frustrated Catholic biblical students.

In 1933, Pius XI built the St. Jerome monastery in Rome with a richly endowed library, to specialise in biblical work ((DAS 11)). The 1943 Encyclical `Divino Afflante Spiritu` by Pius XII accepted that literary analysis, which in 1893 had been used in an arbitrary manner and with preconceived opinions, had now achieved such stability and sureness of principles that it had become an excellent tool for research ((DAS 23 and 24)). It also called on everyone to continue with the one secure method prescribed by Leo XIII which had stood the test of experience ((DAS 15)).

Two Catholics, J. Chapman in 1937 and B.C. Butler in 1951, wrote books successfully challenging Markan priority. But by adhering to the Jerome sequence they were unable to convincingly offer an alternative. It is interesting to reflect that if they had been `cradle Catholics`, they would almost certainly not have had the knowledge to challenge the Markans. They had learnt literary analysis and the arguments associated with the subject during their early years as Anglican clerics.

On the other hand, the Radical Protestants Martin Dibelius and Ralph Bultmann led a campaign to `demythologise` the Gospels. Bultmann (1884-1976) claimed amongst other things that the words of Jesus were not recorded in the Gospels, but were created by preachers speaking in his name.

‘The whole theory of Dibelius and Bultmann is built on the supposition that the early Christians had no biographical interest in the life of Jesus and that a strange transformation of the portrait of Jesus occurred at a time when plenty of eyewitnesses were still alive`. ((CCHS 609d)).

On 11th October 1962 the Second Vatican Council was opened with the aim of renewing the Church so as to make her more effective in proclaiming Christ to the modern world.

The Biblical Commission issued a short letter of guidance for the use of the bishops. As the bishops were about to formulate the wording of `Dei Verbum` [The Word of God], it was deliberately ambiguous and became redundant with the passing of the decrees of the Council. Yet some today quote from it as if it is authoritative, while ignoring `Dei Verbum` itself, the Vatican II Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation.

In April 1964 the PBC issued, `An Instruction on the Historical Truth of the Gospels`. This was a more substantial document and the Commission was still a teaching organ of the Church with binding authority. A few excerpts will indicate its tone:

`Let the Catholic exegete ...diligently employ the new exegetical aids, above all those which the historical method, taken in its widest sense, offers to him-...the interpreter may examine what reasonable elements are contained in the `Form-Critical method` ...But ... theological principles have often come to be mixed with this method, ...some proponents ...begin with a false idea of faith, as if it had nothing to do with historical truth-or rather were incompatible with it.

Others deny the historical value and nature of the documents of revelation almost a priori. Finally, others make light of the authority of the apostles as witnesses to Christ, and of their task and influence in the primitive community, extolling rather the creative power of that community. All such views are not only opposed to Catholic doctrine, but are also devoid of scientific basis and alien to the correct principles of historical method`
((PBCG 925 and 926)).

It quotes John Chrysostom: `For the truth of the story is not at all affected by the fact that the Evangelists relate the words and deeds of the Lord in a different order` ((PBCG 930)). Later it adds: `Those who instruct the Christian people in sacred sermons ...are to refrain entirely from proposing vain or insufficiently established novelties. ...those who publish for the faithful ...should consider it a sacred duty never to depart in the slightest degree from the common doctrine and tradition of the Church`. ((PBCG 934 and 935)).

The Council was seen as primarily a pastoral council examining ways to converse with the modern world, but two Doctrinal Constitutions were also issued. One of these, `Dei Verbum`, reiterated traditional teaching, as the following makes clear:

Section 7: `Christ ...commissioned the Apostles to preach to all men that Gospel ...This commission was faithfully fulfilled by the Apostles who ... handed on **what they had received from the lips of Christ, from living with Him, and from what He did,** ...The commission was fulfilled, too, by those apostles and apostolic men who ...committed the message of salvation to writing` ((va)).

Section 18: `The Church has always and everywhere held and continues to hold, that the four Gospels are of apostolic origin. For what **the Apostles preached,** in fulfillment of the commission of Christ, **afterwards they themselves and apostolic men, ... handed onto us in writing:** ... the fourfold Gospel, according to Matthew, Mark, Luke and John`. ((va))

Section 19: `Holy Mother Church has firmly and with absolute consistency held and continues to hold, that **the four Gospels just named, whose historical character the Church unhesitatingly asserts,** faithfully hand on what Jesus Christ, while living among men, really did and taught for their eternal salvation ...((va)).

Section 18 then refers the reader to Adversus Haereses 3: 11, 8 by Irenaeus, which opens:

‘Matthew also brought out a written Gospel among the Jews in their own tongue...’.
[For a fuller quotation see chapter II of this booklet].

Section 19 continued:

‘The sacred authors wrote the four Gospels, ... they told us the honest truth about Jesus. ... Their intention in writing was that either **from their own memory and recollections**, ... we might know the “truth”...’((va))

When section 19 was being drafted, it was suggested that, ‘believed and continues to believe’, should replace ‘held and continues to hold’, since this was a truth always accepted in the Church through an act of faith. But a revision was not made because the historicity of the gospels was a truth which could be accessed both by faith and reason, and not just by faith alone ((TMH 7)). Chapter XVII of this booklet touched on this aspect. [The words: ‘held’ and ‘hold’ may be translated as ‘maintained’ and ‘maintain’].

An early draft of another part of section 19 read: ‘they always tell us true and sincere things about Jesus’. But Pope Paul on the 18th October 1965, informed the theological Commission that it did not ‘guarantee the real historicity of the gospels; and on this point, as is obvious, the Holy Father could not approve a formula which would leave the slightest doubt about the historicity of these most holy books’. The Commission proposed the phrase ‘whose historicity she unhesitatingly affirms’, and the Council approved this. ((GC 228ff and TMH 28)).

The words in this section which explain HOW the Gospels were composed, are not inconsistent with the teaching of WHO composed them.

This Doctrinal Constitution as revised was agreed overwhelmingly by the bishops and promulgated on the 18th of November 1965. It is the official teaching of the Catholic Church. It may be noted that the rejected drafts were not advocating Church acceptance of the Markan Priority theory but, if used, could have raised doubt of the historical character of the Gospels.

It should be noticed that the wording was agreed after extensive discussion so as to find words to convey a precise meaning. This background, together with the words being part of a **Dogmatic Constitution**, means that these words must be read with great attention.

Quotations have been taken from the English translation on www.vatican.va/Click on English, then Site Map, then B, then Bible, then Docs of II Vat Council.

Nearly identical wording is to be found in ‘The Documents of Vatican II’, edited by Walter Abbott, 1965.

A less accurate translation is to be found in: ‘Vatican Council II’, edited by Austin Flannery, 1975. The important differences in the translations are explained in our separate leaflet: [What does Section 7 of Dei Verbum teach?].

THE CONSISTENCY OF ROME

The mind of the Church, as expressed in her official statements and in the words of her representatives at the highest level, has consistently adhered to the teaching of the 1965 Council. There are many examples of this:

1. In April 1971 the Sacred Congregation of the Clergy issued `The General Catechetical Directory`.

Paragraph 12 reads: `...the ministry of the word ... which has been given to us by Jesus himself and by the first disciples and especially the apostles, who were witnesses of the events`.

Paragraph 13 reads: `...the divine revelation which ...was completed at the time of the apostles ...`. ((GCD)).

2. In October 1979 Pope John Paul II issued `Catechesi Tradendae`. We read:

In section 10: `Saint John bears witness to this in his Gospel when he reports the words of Jesus`. ((JPCT 10)).

Section 61 reads: `exegetes have a duty to take great care that people do not take for certainty what ...belongs to the area of question and opinion`. ((JPCT 61)).

Section 62 reads: `...the letters of Saint Paul to his companions in the Gospel, Titus and Timothy, ...` ((JPCT 62)). [The question of the alleged pseudonymity of the Pastoral Epistles was discussed in our Chapter XIII].

3. In 1983 Cardinal Ratzinger, Head of the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith and President of the Pontifical Biblical Commission, said the mentality behind many of the current hypotheses about the `Christ of Faith` etc:

`seems to be congealed within the framework of a particular intellectual world which may no longer even exist`. ((CTH xiii)).

4. In 1984 the same Cardinal pointed out that the form of `Liberation Theology`, which was corrupting the Christian message in the third world, did not originate there. He said this theology was a creation of European and North American intellectuals combining Bultmann`s exegesis, of an historical Jesus separated from the Christ of Faith, with a Marxist interpretation of history.

His complete statement, implicating false exegesis as one of the roots of a false `Liberation Theology`, may be seen elsewhere ((JRA 174-186 or on the web at JRLT)).

5. Cardinal Ratzinger gave an interview in August 1984. An English translation, 'The Ratzinger Report' was published in 1985. ((JRA)). In one place the Cardinal says:

'In fact a church without a credible biblical foundation is only a chance historical product, one organization among others ...'

A longer extract is available on the "Christendom Awake" web site. See ((TMM [29])).

6. During the same year Ratzinger wrote a Preface to a book by R. Laurentin

`The continuity of tradition underwent a great shock in the Catholic Church at the time of Vatican II; ... It became apparent then that traditional apologetics had been too simplistic in its opposition to the application of the methods of literary criticism ... This naïve realism became untenable in the light of newly-acquired knowledge about these texts.

Thus, over the past several years, we have witnessed an almost total capitulation in the face of the thought patterns which arose out of the Enlightenment. The infancy Gospels came to be considered as *theologoumena* [They expressed a theological idea in the form of a narrative], behind which one should not seek historical reality, since they are only imaged expressions of the Christology of the Evangelists`. ((RL xiii-xiv)).

[It is noteworthy that he saw the thought patterns of `The Enlightenment`, as promoted by the Deists, to be the source of modern problems].

7. In the same book, Laurentin expressed his own judgement:

`The belated conversion of Catholics to scientific methodologies has often been accompanied by a conversion to the ideologies behind them. The slogan of **theologoumena** has enjoyed great popularity, without a reappraisal of its arguments or presuppositions. The infancy Gospels were reduced to the status of fable in the minds of certain people. Some priests, hastily `initiated` into these so-called scientific explanations, dared no longer to preach the Christmas Gospel, knowing that it was a myth`.

`It is thus important to take up the scientific tools of exegesis in the service, not to the detriment, of the text. A century and a half of critical labour has not been lost; the gains are considerable. But it is necessary to eliminate the blunders and pretences which have often masked authentic discoveries. Discernment is an immense, a Herculean, task. How many learned stupidities, without foundation or future, have been repeated over and over again in articles and other publications whose ideologies distort the objective focus of the Gospel!`. ((RL xviii and xix)).

8. At the 1985 Extraordinary Synod of Bishops, Cardinal William Baum, Prefect of the Congregation for Catholic Education, dedicated almost his entire report to the grave situation in many Catholic seminaries and universities resulting from widespread trends in exegesis:

‘There is a rupture between Bible and Church, ...in the name of Science, many exegetes no longer wish to interpret Scripture in the light of the faith, ...The results of this so called scientific exegesis are being diffused in seminaries, faculties and Universities, and even among the faithful, also by means of catechesis and sometimes even in preaching ...’.

((LT, January 1997 page 2)).

9. At this time the Markans were claiming credit for the upsurge in biblical activity. But much of this upsurge was being deformed by them as they promote their own agendas. Both the 1985 Synod of Bishops ((ESB section B, a, 1, and in a CTS pamphlet)), and the Pope on 8th April 1986, ((LOR)), said Dei Verbum had been neglected for twenty years ((TMM [2], web ca)).

10. The 1986 Encyclical, ‘Dominum et Vivificantem’, Part 1; 3, reads:

‘When the time for Jesus to leave this world had almost come, he told the Apostles of ‘another Counsellor’. The evangelist John, who was present, writes that, during the Last Supper before the day of his Passion and Death, Jesus addressed the Apostles with these words’. ((JPDV part 1: 3)). [An extract from the Gospel according to John is then quoted].

11. Section 12 of the 1987 Encyclical ‘Redemptoris Mater’ reads:

‘Immediately after the narration of the annunciation, the Evangelist Luke guides us in the footsteps of the Virgin of Nazareth towards “a city of Judah” (Luke 1: 39). According to scholars this city would be the modern Ain Karem, situated in the mountains, not far from Jerusalem’. ((JPRM 12)). [So the historicity of this section of the nativity passage is accepted].

12. During 1988 Monsignor Michael Wrenn, the leading Catechetical authority in the diocese of New York, translated Carmignac’s 1987 book and praised the work of John Robinson. Both were dating the four Gospels as pre-70 AD. He also publicly supported the judgement of Tresmontant that John wrote his Gospel prior to 70 AD. ((CTG 2)). Wrenn also quoted, with approval, an observation made by Carmignac:

‘If the Jesus of History is practically unattainable, then it will be the Christ of Faith who will very quickly be rejected!’ ((CTG 4)).

While Tresmontant does not appear to have taken a public stand regarding the ‘Order of the Synoptics’, on one page of his writings he refers to them four times in the order of Matthew-Luke-Mark ((CTG 14)).

13. On 27th January 1988, Cardinal Ratzinger gave a lecture entitled: 'Biblical Interpretation in Crisis'. In his opening paragraphs he said:

"To speak of the crisis of the historical-critical method today is practically a truism. This, despite the fact that it had gotten off to so optimistic a start. ... equipped with a methodology which promised strict objectivity, ... we were finally going to be able to hear again the clear and unmistakable voice of the original message of Jesus.

Gradually, however, the picture became more and more confused. The various theories increased and multiplied and separated one from the other and became a veritable fence which blocked access to the Bible for all the uninitiated. Those who were initiated were no longer reading the Bible anyway, but were dissecting it into the various parts from which it had to have been composed.

... No one should really be surprised that this procedure leads to the sprouting of ever more numerous hypotheses until finally they turn into a jungle of contradictions. In the end, one no longer learns what the text says, but what it should have said, ..." ((JRL 1-4)).

14. The Apostolic Exhortation, 'Redemptoris Custos' of 1989 accepts the historicity of the narrative stories in the two Gospels.

In section 9 it describes the journey to Bethlehem and Jesus being registered in the census as: 'this historical fact'.

In section 10: 'Joseph ... witnessed the homage of the magi'.

Section 14 has: 'Herod learned from the magi' and he 'killed all the male children in Bethlehem ...'.

Section 21 speaks of: 'The Holy Family's life first in the poverty of Bethlehem, then in their exile in Egypt and later in the house of Nazareth'. ((JPRC)).

15. The 1992 Catechism of the Catholic Church, paragraph 76, reads:

In keeping with the Lord's command, the Gospel was handed on in two ways:

orally "by the apostles who handed on, by the spoken word.....";
in writing "by those apostles and other men associated with the apostles who, under the inspiration of the same Holy Spirit, committed the message of salvation in writing"

A footnote refers the reader to Dei Verbum, paragraph 7. So the Catechism is reaffirming that some of the apostles themselves committed the message to writing.

Paragraph 126 reproduces nearly the whole of paragraph 19 of *Dei Verbum*. This includes such phrases as, ‘whose historicity she unhesitatingly affirms’; ‘what Jesus ... really did and taught ...’; ‘told us the honest truth about Jesus’.

When the English edition of the Catechism was published, a footnote to item 1864 referred to the gospels in the order of Mark, Matthew and Luke. In 1997, The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith corrected this by placing them in the traditional sequence. ((CCCC)).

16. In 1994 the Pontifical Biblical Commission, now a purely advisory body, issued: ‘The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church’. The critical-historical method was encouraged as a valuable tool but, as the document was mainly concerned with the Old Testament, it added little to the subject of this booklet ((PBCB)).

17. In May 1996 Cardinal Ratzinger, at a meeting with CELAM in Mexico, observed that

‘Relativism has thus become in fact the fundamental problem for faith in our time’. He identified the underlying source of this faith-dissolving relativism as ‘a combination of Kantian Philosophy and powerful trends in modern biblical exegesis’. ((LT Jan 1997)).

18. The 1998 Encyclical: ‘Faith and Reason’, section 55, warned Scripture scholars:

‘Moreover, one should not underestimate the danger inherent in seeking to derive the truth of Sacred Scripture from the use of one method alone, ignoring the need for a more comprehensive exegesis which enables the exegete, together with the whole Church, to arrive at the full sense of the texts. Those who devote themselves to the study of Sacred Scripture should always remember that the various hermeneutical [interpretive] approaches have their own philosophical underpinnings, which need to be carefully evaluated before they are applied to the sacred texts’. In the same section we read a warning against *fideism*: ((JPFR)).

The Catholic Encyclopaedia explains that: ‘Fideism owes its origin to distrust in human reason and follows from the logical sequence of such an attitude as scepticism. It is often based on the separation of reason and belief, between science and religion. Fideism is rejected by the Catholic Church, which upholds both reason and belief. ((CE fideism)).

19. The Rev. Dom Bernard Orchard O.S.B., who used both literary analysis and early history to vindicate the Matthew-Luke-Mark order, was at the forefront of Scriptural Study for over half a century. He was editor of the 1953, ‘A Catholic Commentary on Holy Scripture’, Chairman of the Editorial Committee of the 1969 ‘A New Catholic Commentary of Holy Scripture’ and joint editor of the RSV Bible (Catholic edition).

20. In this booklet there have been several references to Irenaeus. His name is not well known today because the Markans say his history is unreliable. But the great esteem Irenaeus has in the eyes of the Church may be judged from the Documents of the Second Vatican Council, where he is the most quoted author apart from Augustine of Hippo. In, 'The Catechism of The Catholic Church', quotations from his writings are only exceeded by Thomas Aquinas and Augustine.

21. On 9th October 2002, Cardinal Ratzinger, celebrating the tenth anniversary of the Catechism, reported that it had been widely welcomed. But he then quoted the critics:

'It was said that the Catechism failed to take into account ...developments of the last century, particularly exegetical Particularly strong attacks were directed against the use of Scriptures in the Catechism ... it was said that this work did not take into account a whole century of exegetical work; for example, how could it be so naïve as to use passages from the Gospel of John to speak of the historical figure of Jesus; it would be shaped by a literalist faith which could be called fundamentalist, etc'. ((JRC)).

The Cardinal continued:

'... the Council can be designated as a return to a moral teaching interpreted in an essentially biblical, Christocentric manner, nevertheless in the post-conciliar period a radical reversal soon took place`. [The critics said that] `The Bible could not absolutely convey any "categorical" moral teaching; the contents of moral teaching had always to be mediated in a purely rational manner. The importance of the Bible would be found on the level of motivation, not content`. ((JRC)).

Interestingly the strongest attacks on the Catechism had come from biblical scholars.

22. Archbishop (Later Cardinal) Levada, Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith spoke on 10th October 2005, at the opening of the academic year of the Athenaeum of St. Anselm. He complained of inaccurate translations of Dei Verbum, such as Flannery's rendering of Section 12. He confirmed that Abbott's original translation had reflected the authentic meaning.

ADDENDUM

We may ask how the Markan Priority theory achieved such prominence in Catholic Institutions. Brian Harrison has researched this period and his findings form the basis for the following outline.

When, in the first half of the twentieth century, the Protestant World accepted Markan Priority and late dating, many Catholic exegetes privately accepted the same `scientific findings`. Whether every aspect of the workings of the Pontifical Biblical Commission was perfect is open for discussion, but it must be given credit for preventing the teaching of the Markan priority theory in Catholic educational establishments for over fifty years.

During the hundred years prior to the second Vatican Council held in the 1960s, there had been a massive increase in educational levels and the circulation of literature. The Church had been at the forefront of this development and the bishops at the Council recognised that Catholics were now prepared for a greater intellectual freedom and more open discussion on a wide range of subjects.

The Markans saw an opportunity in this atmosphere to persuade the bishops to leave open the question of Gospel historicity. Although unsuccessful, they did influence the tone of Dei Verbum. The essential traditions of the Church were upheld, but were not expressed as clearly as many bishops would have liked. In order to grasp the full meaning of some passages, it is necessary to refer to the footnotes, or to clarifications made at the time by the Theological Commission. Even so, on the key issue of historicity the Markans had been defeated at the Council.

But, as Brian Harrison has explained in his: 'Pope Paul VI and the Truth of Sacred Scripture', chapter IV (a) including note 16, the following year they won a momentous Public Relations victory. In June 1961 a Monitum (warning) had been issued against trends questioning the historicity of the Gospels. In the September of that year, two professors were suspended from their teaching posts because of their attempts to undermine the historicity of the Gospels. When Cardinal Montini was elected Pope Paul VI, the Council was still in progress, and he was keen to continue in the spirit of intellectual openness. So, when persuaded that the two men had been victims of reactionary prejudice, he arranged for them to be reinstated.

Cardinal König, at the time a member of the PBC, later commented: 'The re-establishment of the two Jesuits, Lyonnet and Zerwick, caused much astonishment at that time and was understood by witnesses that Paul VI did not agree with the decisions of the Holy Office'. It appeared that the Pope was granting permission for the acceptance of Markan priority over the head of the PBC ((LT Jan 1997)).

The de facto message sent around the world and spread by means of the modern media was that 'actions speak louder than words'. So, regardless of what was being said officially by Rome and the Council, many exegetes considered that they were now free to hold and propagate whatever they wished.

The media did not report that the return of the two professors to their posts appeared to be conditional. They never taught or published their views again.

It should be noted that Pope Paul consistently treated the Gospels as historical ((LT Jan 1997)). It was he who had insisted on the revisions to the draft of paragraph 19 of Dei Verbum showing he had no sympathy for Markan priority.

To understand why this one small disciplinary case caused such widespread confusion, it is necessary to remember that many leading Catholic exegetes considered that they had been frustrated in their biblical research by the Pontifical Biblical Commission. They had been prevented from accepting the findings of 'Science'. Their embarrassment when meeting Deist and Protestant exegetes produced a feeling of inferiority and of resentment towards Rome.

They felt justified in opposing the PBC because in their eyes it was refusing to accept scientific facts. In their eyes the PBC was preventing the Church from being accepted by the modern world and stood in the way of ecumenical biblical dialogue. The moment it appeared that they no longer had to obey the words of the PBC, they rushed out with zeal to bring Catholics 'up to date'.

Orchard has also observed that hope existed at the time, in some circles, that unpressured discussion of the Markan priority hypothesis would lead to establishing the truth ((BOD 8)).

ADDENDUM TO THE ADDENDUM

An example of methods used by Markan priorists, to have their views tolerated within the Catholic Community, emerged with the publication of the 1989 'New Jerome Biblical Commentary'. The authors were Raymond Brown, Joseph Fitzmyer and Roland Murphy. They were the three leading Catholic Markan priorists in America. It contained a vast volume of informative and interesting details, but a review by John Young led him to write:

'... a logical person who accepted its conclusions would consider himself bound to reject the Catholic Church as a reliable guide to the Bible'. ((TW second paragraph)).

The book boasted three 'Nihil Obstat', meaning that three church censors had declared it to be free of doctrinal error. It claimed it was being published in memory of Pope Pius XII, 'The great promoter of Catholic biblical studies', and of Pope Paul VI, 'Who defended and solidified progress in these studies'. One of the two 'Forewards' was by Cardinal Bea.

But Young pointed out that the three censors of this book by Raymond Brown, Joseph Fitzmyer and Roland Murphy, were Raymond Brown, Joseph Fitzmyer and Roland Murphy !!! The writers had judged themselves to be free from error. ((TW fourth paragraph)).

The two Popes mentioned were strong upholders of the historicity of the Gospels and, as mentioned above, Paul VI had gone to great lengths to ensure the wording of Dei Verbum would leave no ambiguity. The three authors had no right to imply that the Popes, if they had still been alive, would have been pleased to read the theories and claims made in their Commentary. These two Popes had urged the use of modern methods of biblical study but never endorsed the Markan priority theory.

Cardinal Bea had written the Foreword to the 1968 'Jerome Biblical Commentary' but, according to the rear cover of the new paperback edition, the 1989 version was 'almost two-thirds new'. As the book was greatly changed, what right had the authors to use the old 'Foreword' to promote a book propagating their personal theories, twenty years after the Cardinal had died?

CHAPTER XX

A ROOF WITHOUT WALLS

In the previous chapter the attitude of the Church to dating the Gospels has been recounted and how Catholic exegetes suddenly felt themselves to be free to teach Markan priority. In this chapter we will look at the effect of this on Catholic life.

The word `New` in the title of the 1969 New Catholic Commentary could imply that its ideas on the Scriptures have superseded those of the 1953 Commentary. But as the earlier edition conforms to history, the Church Fathers and the decrees of Church Councils, it is still valid and of use. A Markan priorist ((NCCHS 709fg)) wrote the commentaries in the 1969 edition on the Gospels of Matthew and Mark, Acts, 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus

Other Markans covered Luke and John. This edition should not be treated as if it makes the information in the 1953 edition out of date. The new edition merely provided an alternative presentation based on Markan priority. The coming years will show which stands the test of time.

As explained in the previous chapter, by the late 1960s leading Catholic scholars were openly teaching that science had proved the gospels were not historical. They also taught that the 2000-year-old historical evidence and the traditional exegesis were now accepted by Rome as debatable. While the faith of many was undermined and some parted from the Church, others loved Christ and his church too much to leave.

A group of Americans led by Fr. Raymond E. Brown set out to develop theories which would reconcile Catholic belief with the `scientific fact` of Markan priority. As many Protestant scholars considered the Gospels to have been composed in the second century, the attempt of Brown to place them in the first century appeared as pioneering work to find a middle way. Those sharing the same intellectual dilemma as Brown eagerly welcomed his theories.

But, being based on his belief that Markan priority was a scientific fact, his ideas spread Markan priority to even wider circles. In this atmosphere it was easy to adopt a form of fideism where `religious experiences` and `feelings` replaced logic and reason. Today we hear much of `Gospel Values` but rarely of `Gospel Truths`. Yet how long will one last without the other?

In 2003 Philip Trower wrote, `Radical Bible scholarship shook or destroyed belief, and some kind of philosophical subjectivism was then called in to shore up the ruins, with dogmas as symbolic expressions of personal experience`. When comparing Radical Scholarship with the effect of the theory of evolution, Trower added:

`Although, in the destruction of belief, the part played by radical biblical scholarship was in the end to be greater, it took longer for the consequences to be felt. The effect of Darwin`s books was instantaneous`. ((PT 160-161)).

Leonard Johnson, a leading English Catholic scripture scholar, had earlier foreseen the danger of relying on personal experience and fideism. When introducing a book in 1960, he pointed out that the Gospel taught, 'the Word became flesh'. But it would be of little value if, after a few years of Christ's mortal existence, we lost contact with him and all we were left with was 'the Christ of Faith'. He continued:

'There are people who claim that it was the faith of the Church that created the gospels; that the gospels are wonderful legends, pious imaginations in which the Church expressed its devotion to its leader. They then dismantle the solid edifice of the gospels in an attempt to get back to the Christ of history behind the Christ of faith. And when they find that their meddling brings down the building in ruins about their ears, they console themselves with the theory that it is after all faith alone which counts—like people who would have a roof over their heads with nothing to support it. [i.e. A roof without walls].

But the Christ of faith **is** the Christ of history. It is not the devotion of the Church which produced the gospels, but exactly the opposite—the gospels are the firm foundation of the Church's faith'. ((LC xv)).

He was writing these warning words two years before the Vatican Council assembled.

There is a sad and ironic aspect concerning the work of Brown and his associates. They sincerely tried to reconcile Christian beliefs to the 'scientific facts'. But while they were engaged in this endeavour the upholders of Markan priority abandoned the arguments that had been used by people like Streeter to 'prove' these facts. Markans today place their confidence in other 'proofs' ((DBP 10)).

In retrospect it would be easy to criticise the work of the Biblical Commission at the turn of the century as being overcautious and hampering research. But we need to remember that the Church is primarily a teaching body assisting people to know, love and serve God. It is not a society for theological research and debate however important. As such, She had to exercise great care regarding unproved theories being taught in Catholic schools. Some may judge the Commission to have been too prudent, but this prudence did preserve generations of Catholics from the devastation that Markan priority was causing throughout the Protestant world.

We should also recognise that the efforts of people like Brown were not wasted. Some of their insights have made useful contributions to biblical understanding. To continue with Johnson's simile, we need to preserve beautiful embellishments made by some Markans to the roof, whilst putting in place stronger walls.

THE ENGLISH SCENE

The effects of Markan priority in England may be illustrated by the stories of two priests. The first, Charles Davis, was an intelligent young theologian who considered that as Europe had rejected monarchy and hierarchy as a political system, the continuing hierarchal structure of Pope, bishops, priests and laity was a barrier to conversion.

In late 1966 Davis examined biblical criticism and saw how most exegetes, including many Catholics, had come to accept Markan priority and the late dating of the gospels. This meant that none of the Gospels had been written by eyewitnesses. Davis judged that the evidence for Christ establishing a hierarchical Church was therefore absent. He left the Church in December 1966 and in his subsequent book, devoted five chapters to Markan priority with one entitled: 'The origin of my doubts' ((CD 126)).

The second priest, although the main Markan priority contributor to the 1969 'New Catholic Commentary', remained within the Church to devote his life to Christ. But the logic of his views eventually bore fruit.

At a meeting in Jerusalem during 2002 he suggested that: 'in the first generation of Christians the focus of overall authority was the church at Jerusalem not Peter'. He added: '...Peter seems to have lost his overriding authority at least after leaving Jerusalem and ... [the] probable reason for the authority of Rome in ecclesiastical matters is its overwhelming secular importance as the capital of the empire' ((HWF)). It is difficult to see how this opinion may be reconciled with a decree of the First Vatican Council, Session 4, Chapter I, sections 3, 4 and 6:

'And it was to Peter alone that Jesus after his resurrection confided the jurisdiction of supreme pastor and ruler of his whole fold, [3] ... the Sacred Scriptures ... are clearly opposed to the distorted opinions of those who ... deny that Peter, ... was endowed by Christ with a true and proper primacy of jurisdiction. [4]. Therefore if anyone says that ...it was ...not ...proper jurisdiction that he directly and immediately received from our Lord Jesus Christ himself ... let him be anathema'. [6] ((VAT)).

In a guide for teenage students, the same author teaches that 'the beloved disciple', was neither John the Apostle nor anyone else. It was an image of a perfect disciple of Christ created by an unknown author living in an unknown place at an unknown time. The students are not informed of traditional teaching or of Dei Verbum, paragraphs 7 and 18. The author did find room to inform the students of: 'the great Rudolf Bultmann'. ((HWG 11 and 45)).

Such ideas are not new. In the early 20th Century, Alfred Loisy denied 'the beloved disciple' was an historical person. 'He is the young Church, to whom was entrusted the heritage of Judaism and Jewish Christianity'. Loisy was excommunicated ((CCHS607m))

MODERNISM AND MODERNISTS

A Modernist claims there is a difference between 'the Jesus of history' and the 'Christ of Faith', so no one can know what Jesus taught. Denying the existence of anything unable to be proved 'scientifically', he often rejects angels and miracles.

Modernists say that there are no irrevocable doctrines and morality can change. What religious practice or feeling / experience remains with him is not supported by a rational basis.

We may ask whether Modernism is a fruit of the rejection of the historicity of the gospels, or whether rejection of the gospels is a fruit of Modernism. For the individual Christian, the rejection of the historicity of the New Testament is often the gateway to the heresy of 'Modernism'. But from the academic viewpoint, it was the philosophy of unbelieving Deism that over a long period undermined belief in the New Testament.

However, although Modernism is an evil heresy, individual Modernists must not be seen as malign or insincere people. An insidious aspect of Markan priority/ Modernism is that it often infects some of those who love God and His holy Bible greatly. Once they accept the apparently harmless presumption that Mark's 'poor-Greek' was due to him writing first (rather than that he was taking down the spoken word), the plausible and logical step by step seduction, as set out in Chapter V (section 8), takes over and they are led to views undermining of the Word of God which they had set out to know and love more deeply.

How many Catholics, Anglicans or Evangelicals have enrolled in a course to obtain a better knowledge of the bible, only to find disillusionment? Eta Linnemann, who for many years was a devoted follower of Bultmann, has deplored precisely the same thing happening to young Lutherans studying to be pastors in Germany ((EL 209-210)). The Christian virtues of an honest search for truth, and a willingness to be open to new insights, are the ones manipulated by this seduction.

Philip Trower has pointed out:

‘... as a system of ideas, modernism was not a Catholic invention. Its foundations had been laid a good sixty years earlier in Germany when Lutheran scholars started applying the critical method to the Bible’. ((PT 142)).

THE NEW CATECHETICS

For 2000 years the Faith has been passed down the generations through the parish church, within the family and sometimes by the ethos of society. The deeper aspects of doctrine and theology were available to few. It was the emergence of universal education during the first half of the 20th century that provided the opportunity to teach doctrine widely.

The method used was centred on the 'Penny Catechism' of question and answer and it was very effective. But during this same period the parish lost its central role in local life and the ethos of family life and society became secular. This resulted in many children receiving a religious education where their proficiency in doctrine was not matched by a living relationship with Christ.

Voices called for a fresh framework for religious education and by the 1960s teachers and clergy had developed the principles required for a 'New Catechetics'. In England these were developed before the Vatican Council met and, following a series of lectures in Liverpool during 1963, were published in 1965 by Fr. Francis Ripley as; 'A Basic Guide to Religious Instruction'.

It proposed to replace the traditional method by the kerygmatic approach that aimed to move the Will. Teachers should not give a doctrinal statement and then explain it, but use scripture and stories to lead up to the doctrine. Old Testament stories should not be taught in isolation but shown to be a prefiguring of the New. The teacher had to bridge the gap between understanding Christianity and living it. Teaching should be Scriptural with the Church seen as Christ, not an organisation.

Fear and an attitude of detachment from life should be avoided. The object of each lesson must be to get the pupils to respond in some practical way. A good teacher begins from where the pupil is at, not from where he wants him to be or where he ought to be or where he thinks he is. Memory work would be less but not ruled-out ((FJR 12-23)). Knowledge was to be presented in a systematic way and there was no suggestion that doctrine should be omitted. The whole point of the renewal was to help students absorb the Faith better.

So in 1965 the aims of the English Catechetical Movement were clear and there were many dedicated teachers ready to put them into practice. The bishops, returning from the Council and realising how they harmonised with the thinking of the Council, supported immediate implementation. So why was there so much opposition, controversy and confusion? For an answer we need to recall how the `New Catechetics` was introduced.

CORPUS CHRISTI COLLEGE

In early 1966 the bishops of England and Wales established a National Catechetical Centre at Corpus Christi College in London. Cardinal Heenan saw that a deeper knowledge of Scripture was central to the new approach so, instead of appointing the experienced priests and teachers who had pioneered the new ideas, he chose two academics in the field of Scripture to run the courses.

They were without experience in a state school ((AH 372)), but if experienced teachers had been appointed as supporting members of staff this lack of experience could have been overcome.

The two academics, Hubert Richards and Peter De Rosa, had been lecturing at the Westminster Diocesan seminary. With their friend Charles Davies they had been at the centre of some disquiet ((AH 372)). But the bishops were trying to give greater freedom to young and adventurous people while taking their basic doctrinal reliability for granted. The college was established in March 1966 with plans to open in September.

Richards and De Rosa gave nine lectures at a National Catechetical Study week held in Manchester during July ((HRPD)). These were in full accord with the Catechetical tradition in England and the teachings of Vatican II. No hint was given that the speakers had accepted Markan priority and were planning a revolution in September. Cardinal Heenan, responsible for the college was not alerted to any danger in placing the renewal of Catechetics in their hands.

The Principal and his deputy considered Markan priority and its corollaries as the foundation for `renewal`. The Gospels were merely providing the thoughts of `creative` theologians at the end of the first century, rather than being historical eyewitness accounts of the life and teaching of Christ. “When the study syllabus was published, it provided ample evidence that the new college was not going to confine its activities to catechetical formation”. It had, “an aura of an institute of speculative theology”. ((AH 372)). Doctrines disappeared or were demoted to subjects for discussion and doubt. The courses attracted priests and nuns rather than teachers.

Within months, De Rosa and another member of staff had abandoned their vocations, and in the following years an alarming proportion of students were also found to be leaving the priesthood or their convent. Faced with protests from all over the country, Cardinal Heenan intervened in 1971, and Richards responded by leaving the priesthood.

Richards, in his letter of resignation, wrote that he intended to remain a Catholic, but regarded his vocation to be: “to make the results of theological scholarship available to teachers and students, ...”. It should be noticed how different this was from the reason he had been appointed to run the college. He found a post as a New Testament lecturer in a non-Catholic college ((CR 52-53)) and, following laicisation, married a former nun who had been a student at Corpus Christi. His wife later wrote a school textbook based on the teachings of her husband. It purported to teach Roman Catholicism, but Rome ordered the removal of its Imprimatur.

In 1974 De Rosa published a book of seventy-one short chapters based on `the latest scriptural research`. This book rejected the historical truth of the Gospels. He wrote: “They tell us not simply what Jesus said and did but what the Christian Community believed him to be”. In the last chapter, entitled, `The meal at Emmaus`, we read:

“This book will have been to some extent successful if the reader sees that this beautiful story is not a piece of history, but part of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

It is an early eucharistic story” ((PDR 260)).

It may be noticed how this differs from the words of Pius XII in *Divino Afflante Spiritu*:

‘...let [professors of Sacred Scripture] set forth this literal, and especially theological, sense so soundly ...that their students may in some sort share the experience of the disciples of Jesus Christ on the way to Emmaus who... exclaimed, “Was not our heart burning within us while he ...opened to us the Scriptures?”’ (Luke 24: 32) ((DAS 56)).

These examples indicate how Markan priority had been taught at the college under the name of `Renewal of Catechetics`. In 1965 the Cardinal had hoped the college `would train Catholic teachers to deliver the message of Vatican II to the schools` ((AH 372)). But *Dei Verbum* was ignored and replaced with Markan priority. Not only this, but the destructive theory was entwined, like cockle, around the renewal of Catechetical methods.

It was a modern example of weeds being sowed amongst wheat (Matt 13: 24-30). Cardinal Wright, when Prefect of the Congregation of the Clergy, wrote:

‘...the wheat, the harvest of the Council, is rich and abundant, but some enemies, not all outside the Church, have sown cockle in the midst of the wheat’. ((JW 50)).

He quoted Cardinal Heenan’s public statement of May 1971 recognising the ‘many and grave errors’ in the new catechetics while trusting that they would be corrected in time ((JW 50)). By 1971, the year he intervened at Corpus Christi, Heenan lamented in a letter to Cardinal Wright, ‘Some of our Catechists are teaching a theology of their own’, and that ‘the great danger is that the faithful will be led to believe that there is no dogmatic theology left and that everything is a matter of free speculation’. ((AH 173)).

The book published by Ripley had not contained the slightest hint of Markan priority. It accepted the historicity of the Gospels and the traditional doctrines of the Church. The book received its Nihil Obstat from Leonard Johnson, whose scornful response to Markan priority is printed above. The principles put forward were later encouraged by Pope Paul in *Evangelii Nuntiandi* of 1975 and by Pope John Paul II in *Catechesi Tradendae* of 1979 ((MJW 90 and 205)). Markan priority, with its vague doctrinal ethos is not a true part of modern catechetics. The traditional belief in the historicity of the Gospels is compatible with Christ centred teaching and the realistic assessment of the capability of each child. Its historical foundation provides a firm basis for the doctrines taught.

AMERICA

In 1968 the American Fr. Anthony Wilhelm wrote: ‘Christ Among Us’, which purported to explain the Catholic Faith. But Wilhelm had adopted Markan priority regarding the authors of the New Testament, so wrote on page 66: ‘They are not greatly concerned about when or where a thing happened, the details of what happened, the exact words Christ used, etc’. Monsignor Wrenn commented:

‘This of course, is the viewpoint of those scholars who think the Gospels were all written late and composed using “legends” accumulated in the early Church’ ((MJW 128)).

Wrenn then pointed out how Wilhelm builds his ideas on ‘a favourite notion of a certain type of modern Scripture scholar even while it is quite plainly at variance with the entire Catholic tradition’ ((MJW 128)). The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith examined the book and ordered the removal of its Imprimatur ((MJW 124-125)). The author abandoned the priesthood. Monsignor Wrenn was appointed as Archbishop of New York in 2006.

SCHOOL BOOKS

The effects of Corpus Christi College and Markan priority are still to be seen in many schools. Rome has pleaded for the implementation of the teachings of the Second Vatican Council. Yet sections 7, 18 and 19 of *Dei Verbum* are often ignored, as are paragraphs 26 and 172 of the Catechism ((CCC)).

Those who have rejected the decree of the Council of Trent; its endorsement by the First Vatican Council; The Doctrinal Constitution Dei Verbum sections 7, 18 and 19; The Catechism of 1992 and repeated statements from Rome, may claim that these are `not infallible`, so do not apply to themselves. A discussion of the relationship of the Magisterium (teaching authority) of the Church to infallibility is outside the scope of this booklet. What is clear, however, is that the contents of these documents are intended to be the normative teaching in every Catholic educational establishment.

Sometimes statements like the following are put forward as expressing Catholic teaching:

‘The important truth is that all the gospels issue from the apostolic community as the foundation documents of the Church, expressing the belief of the first generation of Christians, so normative for us all’.

Such statements do not appear in official Catholic documents. They are evasive and ambiguous substitutes for the unambiguous words of Dei Verbum ((DV)). As explained in the previous chapter the wording of Dei Verbum, on the disputed issues, was chosen specifically to make clear the historicity of the Gospels. Dei Verbum does not teach that the gospels merely express, ‘the beliefs of the first generation’.

THE END OF A QUEST

I was prompted to study the historicity and authorship of the Gospels due to the conflicting messages coming from within the Catholic Community. I now have complete confidence that the Apostles Matthew and John, eyewitnesses of the life of Christ, wrote two of the Gospels. Also that Luke and Mark, secretaries to Paul and Peter wrote the other two. I also accept that Luke composed ‘Acts’ and that the epistles were written by those whose names have been traditionally attached to them. I have also become aware of the endorsement the Catholic Church gives to these views.

In the course of this quest, I have come to accept the evidence of Clement of Alexandria and the other early historians and its confirmation by modern literary analysis. This is that the Gospels were written in the order of Matthew, Luke, Mark and John, but published in the order of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. I also accept that Mark conflated the Gospels of Matthew and Luke in a manner that explains his allegedly ‘poor Greek’. I find that two gospels were composed by eyewitnesses to Christ’s public life, while the other two were authenticated by the eyewitness Peter. I see the Markan priority theory, which was created to explain the alleged ‘poor Greek’ of Mark, as unnecessary, redundant and dangerous.

I wish to thank all who have assisted me by bringing books and articles to my attention. Also to offer a word of thanks to my wife for the patience she has shown when watching her Living Room being submerged in documents, folders, notepads and books.

May God bless those who have read these words. I hope they have found them of interest and will include me in their prayers. Thank you.

Please see Addendum on pages 120 and 121.

CHAPTER XXI THE UNFOLDING OF EVENTS

Undisputed dates in the list below are indicated in bold type. The sequence of events concerning the Christian Community have been inserted, some only tentatively, within this framework.

Year AD	Event
	The Resurrection. The leaders of the Jews persecute the first Christians. Saul/Paul is converted. Matthew composes his Hebrew gospel/ liturgy in Palestine. Matthew's gospel is translated into Greek. King Herod Agrippa executes the Apostle James the Great. Peter escapes and flees to Rome. The other apostles spread out from Palestine.
44	King Herod Agrippa dies.
49	Jews and Christians expelled from Rome following riots. Luke writes his gospel, partly based on Matthew's gospel, for the Gentiles. First of Paul's epistles; some influenced by Matthew's gospel. Paul imprisoned by Romans.
52	Thomas the Apostle takes Matthew's Gospel to Kerala, India.
54	Nero becomes emperor. The Apostle James the Less, bishop of Jerusalem, killed by stoning. The Christians are expelled from the Temple. Luke completes his `Acts of the Apostles`. Paul asks Timothy to join him on a mission to Spain. Paul released from prison. Peter ordains Linus, Cletus and Clement as assistant bishops. Peter endorses Luke's gospel by using it in a series of talks. Mark issues a first transcript of Peter's talks (First Edition). Peter approves Mark's transcript. To be used as a Gospel. Luke's gospel published as an authorised gospel. Acts issued with authorisation of Peter and Paul. John writes twenty chapters of his gospel.
64 July	Rome devastated by fire.
65 Spring	Nero commences persecution of Christians. Peter martyred. Linus replaces Peter as bishop of Rome. Mark reissues Peter's talks (Second Edition).
66	Jewish rebellion in Palestine. Paul goes to Spain.
68 early	Jerusalem surrounded for first time by Romans.
68 June	Suicide of Emperor Nero followed by civil strife. This leads to the Roman troops being withdrawn from around Jerusalem.

- Paul returns from Spain and visits Asia and Crete.
 Paul writes an epistle to the Hebrew Christians in Jerusalem.
 The Hebrew Christians flee from Jerusalem to Pella.
 Paul again imprisoned in Rome and then martyred.
- 69 Galba, Vitellius and Otho die trying to become emperors.**
- 69 Vespasian becomes emperor and renews war in Palestine.**
- 69 Romans surround Jerusalem for second time.**
 Clement of Rome replies to Corinthians on behalf of Linus.
- 70 Aug. Jerusalem, including its Temple, is destroyed.**
 Luke translates the epistle of Paul to the Hebrews into Greek.
- 79 June Titus becomes emperor.**
- 81 Dec. Domitian becomes emperor**
 Linus dies (about 81). Cletus becomes bishop of Rome.
- 91 Domitian starts persecution.**
 Cletus dies (about 92). Clement becomes bishop of Rome.
 Jewish leaders (about 96) hold a conference at Jamnia.
 Clement, bishop of Rome, exiled by Romans to the Crimea.
 John the Apostle (About 96) adds final chapter to his gospel.
 John the Apostle dies.
- 98 Trojan becomes emperor.**
 Clement dies and Evaristus becomes bishop of Rome.
 About 130 Papias records that Mark wrote down Peter`s words.
 About 180 Ireneus familiar with the Matthew-Luke-Mark sequence.
 About 200 First Latin translations (prologues). Matthew-John-Luke-Mark sequence.
 About 200 Clement of Alexandria says gospels of Matthew and Luke written first.
 About 212 Tertullian uses Luke prior to Mark sequence.
 About 250 Origen popularises Matthew-Mark-Luke sequence.
- 312-323 Eusebius writes his `Ecclesiastical History`.**
 About 380 Augustine accepts Matthew-Mark-Luke sequence as `received`.
 About 383 Jerome uses this sequence for his New Testament (The Vulgate).
 About 420 Augustine judges that Matthew and Luke wrote prior to Mark.
 About 480 Ambrosiaster refers to Clementine`s sequence.
- 1546 **Council of Trent confirms which books are Sacred.**
- 18th C. The skill of Literary Analysis develops.**
- 18th C. Owen proposes Matthew-Luke-Mark sequence.**
- 19th C. Deists and Bismark promote Markan priority in Germany.**
- 19th C. Markan priority theory triumphs in Germany, but rejected by Rome.**
- 1870 First Vatican Council endorses decree of Council of Trent.**
- 1902 Pontifical Biblical Commission established.**
- 20th C. Markan priority becomes popular in English speaking countries.**
- 1965 Nov. 2nd Vatican Council affirms historicity of the gospels.**
- 1970-2000 Markan priority and Modernism spread within Catholic Community**
- 2000 plus A growing appreciation of the historicity of the New Testament.**

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 H&PR=Homeletic and Pastoral Review. DR=Downside Review.

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`Turmoil and Truth` by Philip Trower (see above) provides the historical background and philosophical context for the events and ideas mentioned in this booklet.

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ADDENDUM

Previous editions of this booklet have raised two interesting questions. These will be discussed below.

i). Writing and publishing.

After Peter's death, Mark founded a bishopric at Alexandria. When Clement succeeded to this diocese he inherited its traditions and archives.

The meaning of Clement of Alexandria's statement: "**the first written of the gospels were those having the genealogies**", could not have been clearer. But some people hesitate to accept it because they have been told that other sources outweigh Clement's evidence.

This objection shows a misunderstanding of the argument being put forward in this booklet. While this booklet asserts that Luke **wrote** before Mark, it acknowledges that Mark **published** before Luke.

We know from Clement that a large audience begged Mark to publish his notes of Peter's talk(s). He did so and, because it was a short treatise and being urgently requested, its publication prior to Luke's gospel is easy to understand.

This would have led to its filing in Church libraries ahead of Luke's gospel and so helping to form the familiar sequence of Matthew-Mark-Luke. In the future, when sermons were delivered, or treatise written, it was natural to utilise this order. It is not therefore surprising to find this order in some manuscripts.

But a number of people would have had knowledge of an old tradition regarding the sequence in which the gospels had been **written**. This would have led to debates and have provoked Clement to specifically intervene so as to clarify the issue.

We should also not forget that when using the gospels in disputes, explaining teachings and comparing gospels, the Matthew-Luke-Mark sequence was used frequently. See Irenaeus (IIc), Tertullian (IIh), Jerome (II l), Ambrosiaster (IIm) and Augustine of Hippo (II n).

ii). All Scripture is free from error.

Providentissimus Deus, Section 20 of 1893 states that as the Gospels were inspired by the Holy Spirit, they are free from all error. But, as Mark's chapters 1 and 3 contain misquotations of information from the Old Testament, exegetes have been faced with a problem.

In the past scholars have envisioned Mark sitting at a desk in a quiet room, making use of documents and his memory, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. In this scenario it has been difficult to uphold the truth of *Providentissimus Deus*.

But when we accept the scenario proposed by Orchard, we are able to propose a way of solving the problem.

It was not Mark who made the lapses of memory, but Peter. No one claims that Peter's talks were free of error. All that Mark did was to accurately record what Peter had said in his talk(s). Mark did not make an error.

It is interesting that Papias writes that: "Mark did not err at all when he wrote certain things just as he [Peter] had recalled [them]. For he had but one intention, not to leave out anything he had heard, nor falsify anything in them."

Papias is defending Mark's gospel against criticisms that Mark had not recorded Peter correctly and that Mark should have corrected the errors. Papias is providing a reason why Mark did not leave out the words of Malachi, nor change the word Abiathar to Ahimelech.

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This version: 7th September 2009