

vol 7

anno 1993

fasc 2

OFFPRINT

ANNALES THEOLOGICI

Rivista della Facolta di Teologia
dell'Ateneo Romano della Santa Croce

THE MAKING AND PUBLICATION OF
MARK'S GOSPEL.
AN HISTORICAL INVESTIGATION

Dom Bernard ORCHARD O.S.B.

EDIZIONI ARES

THE MAKING AND PUBLICATION OF
MARK'S GOSPEL.
AN HISTORICAL INVESTIGATION

Dom Bernard ORCHARD O.S.B.

Summary:

- I. Greek and Greek Shorthand in Imperial Rome
- II. Can Mk be a spoken text recorded verbatim?
- III. The characteristics of living oratorical style
- IV. Oratorical characteristics of Mk
- V. The Witness of the Ancient Fathers
- VI. The Origin of Mk according to the Fathers
- VII. The Making of Mark's Gospel

Most scholars today recognise the involvement of the Apostle Peter in the composition of Mk (1) but so far through lack of evidence have not been in a position to commit themselves to the exact nature and degree of their collaboration. E. Randolph Richards, while researching the role of the secretary in the letters of Paul, has recently brought to light that Greek shorthand at the normal speed of public speaking and debating had been available as a standard facility in Rome from the age of Cicero onwards (2). On this assumption and because Mk is written in Koine it becomes necessary for us to consider a revision of our interpretation of the historical circumstances surrounding the publication of Mark's

1, In this Paper «Mk» refers to the Gospel, and «Mark» to the disciple of Peter. In this article we are concerned only with Mk 1,1-16,8 and not with the last twelve verses which do not affect our present argument.

2. E. R. RICHARDS, The Secretary in the Letters of Paul (Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament. 2. Reihe 4 2), Tuebingen 1991. 26-43.

Gospel as recorded in Eusebius' Ecclesiastical History(3), the primary source of our knowledge of that Gospel's provenance.

In recent years a number of scholars (4) have indeed argued for the use of shorthand for recording oral material by disciples of Jesus, and it is certain that Paul made extensive use of secretaries when dictating his letters (5), some of which, like Galatians, suggest dictation at breakneck speed which obviously required full mastery of professional Greek shorthand. Nevertheless, exegetes have been understandably cautious in recognizing the part that shorthand may have played in recording the words of Jesus in the Gospels in the absence of conclusive evidence.

But now Richards, while researching the role of secretaries in the writings of Paul, has collected some new data regarding the techniques used to record political speeches in classical Rome (6) which make it imperative to find out if such techniques can have played a part in the formation of other NT writings, in particular with regard to the Gospels and especially the first appearance of Mk, which according to the most ancient authorities first saw the light in Rome early in the second half of the first Christian century (7) .

I. Greek and Greek Shorthand in Imperial Rome.

Classical historians generally recognize that in the first century AD Latin and Greek were both freely spoken and written in Rome. Suetonius has recorded that the emperor Claudius studied «Greek with great application (...) declaring it to be the finest language of all », and that Greek and Latin are «both our languages» (8). Suetonius (Bk VI, 7, 20) has also noted that Nero too was eloquent in both Latin and Greek. Josephus explains that he had thought it necessary

3. The texts of Eusebius quoted in this article are taken from ed. B.G. BARDV, Eusebe de Cesaree. Histoire Ecclesiastique. Sources chretiennes, 4 vol., Paris 1952-60.

4. R.H. GUNDRV. The Use of The Old Testament in St Matthew's Gospel, Leiden 1975.182.

5. E.R. RICHARDS, The Secretary, 169-177.

6. E.R. RICHARDS, The Secretary, 26-58.

7. A few scholars assert that the original language of Mk was Hebrew and not Greek. e.g. R. L. LINDSEY. A Hebrew Translation of the Gospel of Mark, Jerusalem 1971 (cf. also C. TRESMONTANT. Le Christ hebreu. O.E.I. L. Paris 1985; J. CARMIGNAC. La Naissance des Evangiles Synoptiques, O.E.I.L., Paris 1984).

8 SuetONIUS, The Twelve Caesars. V.42. Penguin Classics, Harmondsworth 1989.

to translate his *Bellum Judaicum* from Aramaic into Greek to make it accessible to the peoples of the Roman Empire (9). The all-pervasive influence of Greek in Rome in the time of Vespasian and Titus may also be illustrated from a passage in Suetonius' account of Titus that he «could compose speeches and verses in Latin and Greek with equal ease...»; and he furthermore remarks that «it often amused him [Titus] to compete with his secretaries at shorthand writing, or so I have heard» (10). Moreover, it is well known that the first Christian Liturgy in Rome and elsewhere was conducted in the Greek Language (Koine), because it was the language of the people. This is enough to show that the Greek language enjoyed at least parity of esteem with Latin in Rome at that time.

There had always been great pressure in ancient Greece to report as accurately and as fully as possible the speeches of its greatest orators, for the aim of all classical education was to train young men to attain eloquence and skill in public debate; but hitherto it has not been established for certain when Greek shorthand writers were first able to record their orators *viva voce* and *verbatim*, although Latin shorthand has been known to have been effectively used since Cicero's time. However, Randolph Richards has collected and evaluated some further evidence and insights. First he sets out to show that the Roman system of Latin shorthand had been the brain-child of Marcus Tullius Cicero (106-43 BC), an ardent admirer of Greek literature and culture. When Cicero became Consul in 63 BC, he got his secretary, the freedman Marcus Tullius Tiro, to create a Latin shorthand system (11), that would benefit himself as well as his contemporaries.

The first known mention of a recording of a public speech in Latin is that of Cato's address to the Roman Senate in 63 BC. Plutarch (AD 46 - c.120) relates that its preservation was due to Cicero,

«who had previously given those clerks who excelled in Rapid writing instruction in the use of signs, which, in small or short figures, comprised the force of many letters; these clerks he had then

9 Ed. H. St. J. THACKERAY, *Josephus* Vol II. The Jewish War, Bk 1,1, Loeb Classical Library, Cambridge 1989.

10 SUETONIUS, *The Twelve Caesars*, XI, 3.

11 RICHARDS, *The Secretary*, 26-43.

distributed in various parts of the senate-house. For up to that time the Romans did not employ or even possess what are called shorthand writers, but then for the first time, we are told, the first steps towards the practice were taken» (12).

Whilst sceptics query whether this had indeed been a proper shorthand recording, there is no question that Cicero's speech in defence of Milo eleven years later (52 BC) was fully recorded *viva voce* and *verbatim*, using the new Latin system of shorthand, later named *notae Tironianae* after its inventor (13).

Richards, having thus demonstrated the emergence of a Latin shorthand system capable of reporting in full public speeches delivered *viva voce* in senate and law court during the time of Cicero, proceeds to show conclusively that Tiro, himself in all probability a Greek (14), developed it out of a system already in use for the Greek language, which antedated the Latin system and provided the pattern for it. He submits an important piece of evidence from one of Cicero's letters showing that the Romans used the Greek term *σημειογραφος* rather than a Latin term for "shorthand writer", and *δια σημειων* for "shorthand writing", a usage they would not have employed if they had been the first to invent a functional shorthand system without a Greek prototype (15). More importantly however, Plutarch's above cited statement, apart from again using Greek *termini technici* to describe shorthand writer/writing (16), indicates that professional Greek shorthand writers must have been in existence already, since Cicero made them learn Latin shorthand in addition to their own Greek shorthand skills! In any case, as the Greeks were the mentors and tutors of the Romans in all cultural and literary subjects, it is a corollary that they also provided them with the working model of shorthand writing when the growing sophistication of Roman orators demanded such a facility.

We are thus able to conclude from Richards' researches that by

12 Quotation from PUTARCH. Cat. Min. 23,3-5; also E.R. RICHARDS, The Secretary, 29, also n. 66.

11 E.R. RICHARDS. The Secretary, 31. Also BUTLER, British Shorthand, 3; THIEDE, Tachygraphie, 1401.

14 E.R. RICHARDS, The Secretary, 35.

15 E.R. RICHARDS. The Secretary, 34.

16 E.R. RICHARDS. The Secretary, 29 n. 66; 34.

the time the Latin system became fully functional around 52 BC, a proper Greek system, from which it was derived, had already long been in existence (17).. It is therefore certain that in Peter's lifetime both systems were flourishing side by side for use as required since both languages were in active use in the capital, as I have shown above (18). Admittedly, the services of such professional stenographers would normally have been utilised only by politicians or those wealthy enough to possess secretary-stenographers of their own or able to afford their occasional employment; but we may also be certain that Peter's Church had the resources to command such services whenever necessary.

II. Can Mk be a spoken text recorded verbatim?

Professor B.H. Streeter seems to have anticipated the opinion of many modern scholars (19). by instinctively sensing the possibility of Mk reflecting actual speech when he wrote with reference to the uniqueness of Marks style, that

«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» (20).

In fact, without realising it Streeter has high-lighted the special characteristics that appear in any discourse when delivered in public to a live audience. But it appears not to have occurred to him to consider that Mk might be the result of the unedited text of a live speech to a live audience recorded by Greek shorthand writers in attendance, rather than a private dictation to a secretary.

17 E.R. RICHARDS. *The Secretary*, 38. cf. F.W.G. FOAT, *On Old Greek Tachygraphy*, *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 21 (1901) 201-225.

18 E.R. RICHARDS, *The Secretary*. 41-42.

19 Cf. M. HENGEL, *Probleme des Markusevangeliums*, in *Das Evangelium und die Evangelien*, Tuebingen 1983, 256, also n. 78; see also *Studies in the Gospel of Mark*, ET 1985, p. 52, where H. speaks of «the second Gospel being developed out of a living oral traditions

20 B.H. STREETER, *The four Gospels, A Study of Origins*, London 1927, 163.

Nevertheless his conclusion reveals an insight into Mark's style which will prove to be a vitally important clue to the way in which it first saw the light. For he gives it as his considered opinion that Mk's text reads as if it were a «shorthand account» of some speaker's words as transcribed from «rapid dictation». It seems clear that Streeter himself was only envisaging the author of Mk dictating to a secretary in the privacy of his own study without any other audience. He failed however to take into account that a further distinction can be made and, after Richards, needs to be made, namely between private utterance in the author's own study and the public delivery of the same thoughts and ideas to a large audience. Nor was there any reason why he should have gone on to make this further distinction, since in his day the modern academic world had not yet learned that in NT times Greek shorthand recording of public speeches in Greek *viva voce* and *verbatim* was an established practice: The importance of this further distinction lies in the fact that there are certain characteristics of public oratory that can only be successfully caught and preserved — that is to say, in toto and in the same manner as that in which they were originally uttered — by the use of a system of shorthand that can cope adequately with the normal speech rate of a public speaker. Without realizing it, Streeter was in fact specifying the minute and subtle variations of words and phrases that are, so to speak, drawn out of any public speaker by the proximity of his audience and by his sympathy with its thought processes. Only the accomplished professional shorthand writer can fully mirror this actual living relationship between the speaker and his audience while the speaker is actually delivering his oration.

III. The characteristics of living oratorical style.

It is, of course, a commonplace that the technique for communicating speech varies with three factors, viz the medium, the nature of the audience and its location. There is one technique for television, another for radio, another for the author writing longhand or on his typewriter in his study, and another for lecturing in an auditorium, especially if he is sometimes following and sometimes departing from a prepared script. If he is a skilled and experienced communicator who knows his subject thoroughly, the

language he uses will take into account the thinking processes of his audience, and his speech will now become an amalgam of the interaction between him and them. When there is a genuine rapport and sympathy between the speaker and his audience, the bond between them will become manifest in the course of delivery, and minute and subtle variations of phrase and wording take place that betray the existence of the audience to which he is appealing. However, to reproduce the whole lecture word-for-word in the exact order of delivery would be impossible for any member of his audience (even for one of the speaker's own entourage) without a fully adequate high-speed recording system. This phenomenon is, of course, too well known to need further description; and it can be easily analysed nowadays with the aid of electronic recording machines, which today substitute for the shorthand writers of only a few years ago. We shall now proceed to show that Mk is a perfect example of this phenomenon.

The criteria for recognition of this situation will be a combination of the following:

1) those mentioned by Streeter above, namely the repetitions, redundancies and digressions characteristic of living speech... by an impromptu speaker»;

2) «asides» (obiter dicta), comments of a more intimate nature prompted by the presence of an attentive audience, i.e. passages where the speaker or narrator departs from his intended lines to acknowledge the presence of his listeners by spontaneous remarks of more personal concern; such insertions are to be recognized by the fact that they are not allowed to break the main flow of his argument;

5) a third category (not mentioned by Streeter) viz *lapsus linguae*, blemishes such as a slip of the tongue, matter that an author dictating in the privacy of his study would never have tolerated in his final text and would have put right before releasing it, but utterances which, in the case of a public speech, shorthand writers would have duly recorded just as they were spoken, before the speaker could possibly correct himself, simply because it was their duty to record in full and not to edit.

IV. Oratorical characteristics of Mk.

We shall give a number of examples of the oratorical characteristics of Mk, one of which at least will be taken from each of the five sections of the Gospel. (21).

Ad 1) A prime example of the repetitions, redundancies and digressions that Streeter noted will be found in Mk 3,13-17. This passage is a good example of Mk's lack of literary style. Note its prolific use of KQI to link every sentence and clause with its predecessor, a very common characteristic and tell-tale sign of untutored impromptu speakers. Moreover, out of the ten clauses in this passage one is a repetition, «And he made the Twelve» (22); while another, «<whom he himself wanted», is practically the equivalent of «to be with him». If one was looking for a perfect example of the unabridged and unedited speech of an impromptu speaker with its repetitions, redundancies and asides, one could hardly find a better one. Streeter may well have had this passage in mind when he describes the author of Mk as a speaker holding forth «impromptu».

A further example, this time of a digression, is found at Mk 7,3-4. To make the anecdote comprehensible to the Romans the Speaker feels obliged by means of a long digression to describe in some detail the Pharisaic observance of ritual washings, an important part of the religious purificatory practice of contemporary Judaism. These verses clearly interrupt the anecdote and are best understood as being addressed directly to a listening audience. If there had been no live audience the author would have adopted a more polished and literary way of enlightening his future readers.

Ad 2) Our next step is to take a closer look at some of Mk's asides: Mk 3,22-30. Our first example is in the pericope where Jesus is accused by the scribes of casting out devils by the power of

21 The five sections probably correspond to five Discourses, viz. Mk 1.2-5,19; 3,20-6.15; 6,14-9.51; 10,1-15.37; 1-4,1-16,8. See M. HENGEL, *Probleme*, 226-229; B. ORCHARD, H. RILEY, *The Order of the Synoptics*. Pt III, Macon Ga. 1987. 269-272; also A Synopsis of the Four Gospels (in Greek: Edinburgh 1985, in English: Macon Ga. 1982). The reader is asked to note that all the Gospel passages quoted are taken from the above mentioned Synopses; the quotations from the Fathers are taken from *The Order*.

22 With the UBS version I retain this clause as certain, although it has only a [C] rating.

Beelzebul, the prince of the demons. In this pericope, Jesus first demonstrates by means of a parable the absurdity of the accusation that He casts out devils by invoking Beelzebul, the prince of the devils, and then goes on to declare their assertion to be the ultimate blasphemy because it is a lie against the Spirit of Truth. In other words, he is saying that these scribes have deliberately put themselves beyond forgiveness; and since this was such a shocking condemnation of these men esteemed as the holy teachers of Israel, the Speaker feels bound to restate for the benefit of his hearers, the reason for Jesus' condemnation by adding in one concise recapitulation: *οτι ελεγον Πνευμα ακαθαρτον εχει.*

Mk 7,14-20. The purpose of Jesus in this story had been to teach the Jews that in order to open up salvation to all the world they were to abandon their long-cherished food taboos that for centuries had segregated them from the nations round about and safeguarded the purity of their faith in the One True God. Nevertheless, there were still many Christian Jews in Rome at that time who had difficulty in breaking life-time habits of not eating with Gentiles through fear of defilement from eating foods forbidden by the Law . In the circumstances, the Speaker is here particularly concerned to point out that material food can never cause spiritual defilement, which is incurred only when the will to disobey God's express command is present, since sin comes solely from the human will expressing its opposition through heart and mouth. To make sure that all listeners realised the full import of Jesus' words before he passed on, the Speaker interrupts the flow of the narrative and makes Jesus' abrogation of the food laws explicit with the aside: *καθαριζων παντα τα Βρωματα.*

Mk 10,30. The aside «with persecutions» (*μετα διωγμων*) is a perfect example of a remark thrown out during the course of an impassioned delivery. For it is clearly an interjection by the Speaker, who wishes to remind his hearers that although the rewards promised by Jesus in this life would undoubtedly materialize in due course, his own personal experience was that they were intermingled with «persecutions» — a reminder that life for those who made the renunciation would not be a «bed of roses».

Mk 12,41-44. In the story of the Widow's Mite, as the Speaker had received it, the bronze coins which the poor widow put into the 377

Temple Treasury were «two lepta», the smallest coins in circulation in Palestine at that time. Lepton means «tiny» and was the Palestinian nickname for it. They were not in circulation in Rome, and the Speaker, noting the puzzlement and mystification on the faces of his listeners when he spoke of the «two tinies», immediately explained that they were the equivalent of a quadrans, the smallest Roman coin in circulation- λεπτα δυο ο εστιν κοδραντεζ.

Mk 15,21. The insertion of this personal yet inconsequential detail «the father of Alexander and Rufus»: Σιμονα ... τον πατεπα Αλεξανδρον και Ρουφον, into such a solemn and sorrowful moment in the Passion of Jesus indicates that there must be some special connection between these two men and the Roman audience present, although scholars have pointed out that there is no proof that this Rufus is identical with the Rufus to whom Paul sends greetings in his Letter to the Romans (Rom 16,13). Whilst this is true, the Speaker seems to have been aware that this piece of information would be of particular interest to his audience and thus decided to interrupt the Passion narrative to mention it, and the stenographers recorded it as a matter of course.

Mk 16,4. The sentence ην γαρ μεγαζ σφοδρα is certainly the comment of an eye-witness, an exuberant comment, best rendered into English by some such phrase as «For it was mighty big!». For σφοδρα is in this context what the grammarians call an «intensifier». What then is it doing here? Note that in v.5 the Speaker has the women raising the question of how to roll away the stone which they had seen in position two days before, and he then notes without comment that on arrival they found the great stone had been rolled aside in some unexpected fashion. But because he had been an eye-witness he realised even as he spoke that his audience could have no idea of the force required to move it. And by adding in explanation «for it was mighty big!» he created a sense of the wonder experienced by the women. Nevertheless, a remark of this kind could not have been the work of a trained writer sitting at his desk, but must be the record of a speaker taking his audience into his confidence.

Ad 3) My attention was first drawn to the possibility of the use of shorthand not by the asides but by the unusual error in Mk 1,2 («in the — Isaiah») which is perhaps best described as a lapsus (378)

linguae. The Greek text of Mk 1,1-4 is as follows (the English translation and punctuation being my own): [Greek lettering by scanning editor]

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1 Ἄρχη τὸν εὐαγγέλιον
Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν [νίου Θεοῦ]. | 1 The beginning of the Good News
of Jesus Christ Son of God |
| 2 Καθὼς γεγραπταὶ ἐν
τῷ - Ἰσαΐα τῷ προφητῇ-
Ἰδὸν [ἐγὼ] ἀποστελλῶ τὸν
ἀγγέλου μου πρὸ προσώπου
σου, ὃς κατασκευάσει τὴν
ὁδὸν σου [ἐμπροσθεν σου]. | 2 Just as it has been written in
the - Isaiah the prophet:
Behold I send my messenger
before thy face, who will
prepare thy way before thee, |
| 3 φωνὴ βοῶντος ἐν τῇ
ἐρημῷ. Ἐτοιμάσατε τὴν ὁδὸν
Κυρίου ἐνθείας ποιεῖτε τὰς
τριβὸνζ αὐτοῦ. | 3 A voice of one crying in the
desert: prepare the way of the
Lord, make straight his paths. |
| 4 ἐγένετο Ἰωάννης ὁ
βαπτίζων ἐν τῇ ἐρημῷ
[καὶ] κηρυσσῶν βσπιδία
μετνοίας εἰς σφεδιν
Σμαρτιῶν. | 4 There came John the
Baptizer in the desert, and
preaching a baptism of
repentance for remission of sins. |

The Greek text of 1: 2a is secure; the UBS edition rejects the reading «in the prophets» as a scribal correction, and gives an «A» note of approval to the retention of the difficult τῷ before «Isaiah» (25). These first verses are remarkable in more than one respect.

First of all, the Speaker, after a firm start with the title of his discourse, seems to falter and to be somewhat uncertain of what he intends to say next; for verses 2 and 3 are incomplete sentences, each lacking a main verb.

Secondly, he seems to hesitate a little at the phrase «in the — Isaiah», as if he was looking to his sources.

And thirdly, there is the assertion that v. 2 is a quotation from the prophet Isaiah, a mistake which is glaringly obvious and yet one which was never rectified for reasons which can now only be conjectured.

The usual explanation for the abrupt introduction of

25 The suggestion of MJ. LAGRANGE (*Comm on Mark*, in loc) that Ἰσαΐα might be an "interpolations" is a conjecture having no textual support whatever, besides being unnecessary in view of the proposed alternative.

two messianic texts concerning the Forerunner is that the Speaker may have been using or adapting two passages from some already existing collection of O.T. quotations prophesying the mission of the Baptiser. The fact that the text described as that of Isaiah (40,3) is actually that of Malachi (3,1) is usually explained as a simple error or a scribal insertion.

However, neither explanation is entirely satisfactory. If Mk had been composed in the author's study this palpable error would have been instantly expunged before the second quotation was begun. There must therefore be some positive reason for it having been left in the text by the person responsible for publication. The presence of this lapsus becomes readily explicable if the words of the Speaker were in fact being accurately recorded in full during a discourse to a live audience. For it was not the function of those taking down the discourse to distinguish between lapses, hesitations, repetitions or asides, but simply to record absolutely every word uttered. The question that remains for us is to attempt to establish why the Speaker spoke as he did.

We must first recall that we are having to deal with the very first sentence of the Speaker's discourse, since the introductory words: 'Ἀρχὴ τῶν εὐαγγελίων Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ [υἱοῦ θεοῦ] are simply the title and theme of what follows.

When the Speaker, whose quality as an eye-witness of Jesus' Ministry is universally acknowledged, plunges into his first sentence, and rather nervously faces his distinguished audience, his first memory is of the Forerunner whose baptism he must have received along with all his contemporaries. Yes, he had seen the Baptiser graphically fulfilling the prophecy of Isaiah as the «One in the desert preparing the way of the Lord and making straight his paths»! Impetuously therefore he begins: «Just as it has been written in the — Isaiah the prophet...». But as he is uttering this phrase, it flashes upon him that a more appropriate way to begin his description of the Baptiser would be to quote the prophecy of the mandate given John by the Lord God of Israel through the prophecy of Malachi. He cannot now withdraw the phrase «Isaiah the prophet», and to avoid the muddle that would occur if he were to stop and say «Sorry, I meant Malachi», and then later again repeat «while Isaiah the Prophet has...», he simply ignores his error, 380

knowing that the cognoscenti in his audience would understand and make due allowance. This ignoring of his obvious lapsus linguae and his moving on undeterred without comment or apology can only signify the presence of a special audience that inhibited him from going back, an audience on whose indulgence he could safely rely. In other words, this phenomenon shows that the author was neither in process of writing a book nor of editing a manuscript, but that he was engaged on a task that at the time gave no opportunity for correction. It also indicates that he was intent on conveying his thoughts to his audience colloquially and without regard for literary form.

The even spread of the above examples throughout the Five Discourses enables us to conclude that they were all recorded in sequence and then published unedited and unabridged, ending at 16,8. We are now able to see why Mk is quite at variance with the contemporary stylistic canons of Greece and Rome and in striking contrast with the literary graces of Mt and Lk. Only the great importance of the Speaker and the fascinating and unique content of his discourses could have justified the publication of a document which so blatantly overrides the literary canons of that epoch. Mk not only reads like an unedited shorthand account of a story by an impromptu speaker, but exhibits all the signs of being one! It was the Fathers of the Church who were later — rightly — to elevate the record of these discourses to the level of the other Gospels. Our next step will be to see if the data provided by the ancient Fathers supports the notion of Mk being the transcript of Peter's lectures.

V. The Witness of the Ancient Fathers.

The academic experts in classical Greek and Roman studies have never shared the modern biblical critics' distrust of the testimony of the ancient ecclesiastical writers regarding the authorship and authenticity of the Gospels. They have always been willing to give them at least as much credence as they give to the secular historians of antiquity (24), and to recognise that the skills of ancient scholars in critical analysis and literary criticism were just as

24 A.N. SHERWIN-WHITE. *Roman Society and Roman Law in the New Testament*, Oxford 1963, 186-193.

sharp as those of modern critics although they worked with less sophisticated tools (25).

It is important to remember that the first Christians were chiefly concerned with the apostolic eyewitness quality of the sacred texts and their resulting inspiration, and very little with the technical details of how they came to be written. Only when Church tradition came to be seriously questioned and challenged by heretics and dissidents did Christian writers bestir themselves to defend it vigorously. Hence the records of the provenance of the Gospels are sparse until Marcion in the middle of the second century decided to discard all the Gospels except his expurgated version of Luke. This is why the most important information about Mk emerged in response to critical challenges only in the years AD 150-250. During this period the Church Apologists, Justin, Irenaeus, Clement and Origen, condemned the proliferation of apocryphal Gospels, affirmed the apostolicity of the four canonical Gospels, and gathered up the information about their origins which Eusebius was to preserve and systematize in the fourth century. For our present purpose it is only necessary to extract what they have handed down about the Gospel of Mark.

The Fathers always describe Mark as ο μαθητηζ και ερμενευτηζ Πετρον (discipulus et interpres Petri). Ἐρμενευτηζ, according to Liddell & Scott (26), signified in classical times «dragoman», «court interpreter» «agent», «recorder», «go-between», «mouthpiece», in every case the person who transmits the speech of one person to another without venturing any alteration or glosses of his own. There is therefore no room for understanding this term in the modern sense of an «editor» possessing freedom to touch up or modify the work of an author, especially as an authority like The Presbyter (EH III, 39, 15) insists on the classical understanding of this term.

However, modern biblical scholars overlook this usage by the Fathers when alleging the following reasons for denying the value of the Patristic evidence: 1) It is said that almost all of it stems from

25 E.G. TURNER, *Greek Papyri: An Introduction*, Oxford 1980, 99-100.

26 H.G. LIDDELL, R. SCORR, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, Clarendon, Oxford 1961 (9). Cf. A. RAHLFS, *Setuaginta*, 2 vol. Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, Stuttgart 1979, Gen 42,23: ΑΥΤΟΙ ΔΕ ΟΥΚ ΗΔΕΙΣΑΝ ΟΤΙ ΑΚΩΕΙ Ἰωσηφ ο γαρ ερμηνευτηζ ανα μεσον αυτων ην..

Papias, and that it is insufficient by itself; 2) Some of it is said to be contradictory or inconsistent; 3) it is said to be nearly all late, ie. more than a hundred years after the events.

Ad 1) It is true that Papias is a prime witness on account of his connection with St John the Apostle and with the «Presbyter»; but we know for instance that Clement Alex. (d. circa 215) took the trouble to sift evidence from all over the Roman Empire and beyond (27). Furthermore, the main witnesses are the greatest scholars of the period 150-250, who could not all have been deceived, and there was continuous spiritual and intellectual exchange at all levels between the Churches from earliest days, from Antioch and Alexandria to Rome and back again (28). It would be a slur on the integrity and learning of the Fathers to argue that their unanimity was the result of simply repeating one another in parrotlike fashion in each succeeding generation.

Ad 2) The one inconsistency that is claimed, viz the accusation that Irenaeus (Adv. Haer. 111,1,1) was attempting to date Mk, turns out to be nothing of the sort; in fact, it dovetails perfectly with the rest of the evidence. Close inspection of the passage shows that Irenaeus is not dating Mk but merely asserting that what Peter had proclaimed during his lifetime Mark continued to make available after his death in the Gospel of Mark (29). Irenaeus agrees with the rest of the Fathers that Mt was the first Gospel to appear and that it came out during the lifetime of Peter and Paul, although he is not specific about what period in their lifetime. Similarly, his interest in the Gospel according to Mark lies in it being exactly what Peter had preached during his lifetime; this Gospel is in fact for him the extension in time of Peter's personal witness. And because Irenaeus explicitly used the favourite description of Mark as «Petri discipulus et interpres» it is clear that he assumes Mark to have had an intimate association with Peter during his lifetime. But he says nothing about the date of the original publication of Mk.

Ad 3) Since there was no important challenge to the authenticity of the Gospels before Marcion (c.150), there was no need for express statements about authenticity until his attacks

27 Cf. EUSEBIUS *HE* V,11

28 Cf. *Letters of Ignatius. HE* 111..36.

29 Cf. B. ORCHARD, H. RILEY, *The Order*, 128-130.

made them necessary; for the latent Tradition was in possession and surfaced when required (30).

VI. The Origin of Mk according to the Fathers

The relevant passages of the original texts are set out in parallel columns in a newly revised translation in the Appendix (31). The reader will recall that Eusebius of Caesarea, who was the first to gather this information, compiled his History of the Church in the form of a year-by-year chronicle (32); and while this made it easy for him to sum up the details of the composition of Jn and Mt and Lk all in one chapter (III, 24), in the case of Mk there were complications that forced him to spread the information at IMS disposal over four different places because of the interval in time between the dates of the sources he quotes. The impartiality of Eusebius is proved by the fact that he makes no attempt to synthesize the evidence that he has so carefully collected but leaves the reader to draw his own conclusions. There is no case for accusing him of bias with respect to the origins of the Gospels (33).

First of all he chronicles Peter's part in the publication of Mk in Book II, 15; and because of various criticisms that he knew had been levelled at Mark's Gospel, he returns to the subject in Bk III, 39 with the pronouncement of «The Presbyter» that Mark was strictly the hermeneutes of Peter; in Bk V he summarises the witness of Irenaeus; and later still in Bk VI, 14 he adds a quotation from Clement Alex. whose testimony was needed to confirm that Mk did appear in this way.

The following is a summary of the points Eusebius is making:

1) He provides a coherent and credible account of the origin of Mk and claims that his facts are guaranteed by Clement Alex. and by Papias, both of whom he regards as his authorities.

30. B. GERHARDSSON, *The Origins of the Gospel Tradition*, ch.3, Engl. ed. London 1979, on the reliability of tradition.

31. All these texts have been freshly translated by the author and carefully checked by an Oxford Classical Greats scholar. Note however that the Greek text of Clement Alex. *Adumbr. in Ep. can.*, in 1 Pet 5,13 has been lost. There is a reference in MIGNE, PG IX . 729-30 suggesting that our Latin text was translated by Cassiodorus from a part of Clement's Outlines that is no longer extant.

32. B. ORCHARD, H. RILEY, *The Order*, 158.

33. B. ORCHARD, H. RILEY, *The Order*, 159-160.

2) He specifically records (II, 15) that the «Mark» associated with the publication of the Gospel had already been identified by Papias as the «Mark» referred to by Peter as «my son».

5) The Gospel originated as a series of discourses (διδασκαλία) delivered by Peter in Rome to a large audience among whom were a number of Equites from the Praetorium (Clem.Alex.onl Pet 5,13).

4) The audience refused to be content with their one single hearing of these discourses and requested Mark to persuade Peter to let them have a «record in writing» of the discourses already delivered by him orally (II, 15).

5) He implies that Peter must have demurred because it required «many entreaties» and a great deal of pressure from Mark to persuade Peter to agree, and adds that Peter's hearers did not desist until they had worn down all opposition and finally won him over to let them have his discourses in writing (II, 15).

6) Twice he stresses in this chapter that the Gospel «is said to be Mark's», presumably to remind the reader that it is really the work of Peter, whereas he makes no such qualification when referring to Mt (III, 39,16).

7) He refers forward the reader of his account in Bk II to a further statement of Clement in Bk VI to the effect that the two Gospels with genealogies were written before Mk.

8) From EH VI 14,7 it appears that Peter gave Mark his approval for handing over the text just as it had been delivered, but gave it in such a form («exerting no pressure either to promote it or to forbid it») as to imply that he personally had had no previous intention of having his discourses circulated in this fashion! (34).

9) In order to complete the catalogue of information at his disposal with regard to Mark, Eusebius also gives his readers information derived from Papias on the authority of The Presbyter (cf. 2 Jn) on two matters on which Mark's Gospel had come under fire from earlier Christians because of a) its non-literary style, and b) its possible lack of accuracy since Mark had never been an eye-witness.

34 The inference from *EH* VI.14,5-6 seems to be that since Peter had given his lectures in the knowledge of the existence of «the Gospels with the genealogies», he did not wish his personal memoirs to be regarded as the equivalent of a third Gospel.

The Presbyter (35) is quoted as explaining that Mk was not a systematic composition (syntaxis) but a succession of chreias (short anecdotes) on the one hand, while on the other he is emphatic that Mark had not misheard Peter but had in fact left nothing out and had recorded accurately everything he had heard.

Two further observations. Eusebius' account, together with his quotations from Clement Alex. and Papias, does not make sense unless we assume that Peter's audience had observed that his discourses had been taken down in shorthand as he was delivering them, and therefore that it only required Peter's permission to make the recording available to those who had asked for them. There is no other way in which Mark could have provided so readily the full text as Peter had delivered it.

The knowledge of the existence of such a record also accounts for the persistence of the audience in their determination to have the text as spoken by Peter, the chief apostolic witness, because they valued so highly his teaching about Jesus. To have a personal and tangible record of his witness to Jesus was an opportunity not to be missed. On the other hand, Peter's reluctance, and Mark's, to make the text available, would have been due to their embarrassment at being asked so pressingly to hand over the raw text, one that was not only lacking in correct literary style, but also one which he had delivered without any premeditation of publication.

There are two objections to be met with, namely: 1) That when sources say that Mark «remembered» and then «wrote» what he had heard Peter say, it must mean that Mark recorded what he remembered of what Peter had said some years before. This is of course, a possible interpretation; but given the availability of shorthand recording, the historical witnesses may equally well be understood as implying that not only was Mark present when the shorthand recordings of Peter's words were made, but that he was also responsible for the transcription and diffusion of the text that he had also heard with his own ears.

2) That shorthand, whether Greek or Latin, is not mentioned at all in the patristic testimonies. This argument from silence is of little

35. B. ORCHARD. H. RILEY. *The Order*. 182-184. on the identity of The Presbyter; cf. also R.T. FRANCE. *Matthew - Evangelist and Teacher*, repr. 1992. 52-56.

value, seeing that the use of shorthand for official business of all kinds was taken for granted, and thus required no mention.

VII. The Making of Mark's Gospel

We must now inquire how the text of Mk took shape as well as what Peter's motivation might have been for handling it in this way . The making of Mk at one time constituted a problem for the Two-Gospel Hypothesis, for its critics argued that, if the patristic witnesses were right, Peter must have given these Discourses whilst juggling with three texts, those of Mt, Mk and Lk. But the discovery that the discourses of Mk were not written down before their delivery, completely alters the situation. Peter was able to articulate his memories while holding Lk in his hands and with Mt within reach if and when required. This was surely easily feasible, and the written text of Mk did not come into existence until Peter received the transcriptions after they had been retrieved by Mark from the shorthand writers.

But before the discourses could be delivered, Peter would first have had to decide, no doubt with the aid of his «son» Mark, how to handle the text of Lk. When we compare Lk with Mt we find that Lk has divided his narrative of the Ministry of Jesus into the following sections:

- | | |
|------------------|--|
| i) 1,1-4 | Preface |
| ii) 1,5-2,52 | The birth narratives |
| iii) 3,1-6,19 | From the beginning of his Ministry to the Calling of the Twelve |
| iv) 6,20-9,6 | From the Calling of the Twelve to their being sent off on trial missions, two-by-two |
| v) 9,7-9,51 | Further training after their return until Jesus' departure from Galilee |
| vi) 9,51-18,14 | Luke's Central Section which is not paralleled as such in Mt (though much Saying material is parallel to Mt) |
| vii) 18,15-21,38 | Ministry on the way to Jerusalem and in Jerusalem itself |
| viii) 22,1-24,12 | The Passion Narrative |
| ix) 24,13-24,53 | The Post-Resurrection appearances of Jesus. |

this structure of Lk seems to have suggested to Peter to arrange to give five discourses as follows:

	Mk	Lk	Mt
1 From the start of the Ministry to the Calling of the Twelve	1,1-3,19	3,1-6,9	3,1-10,42
2 From the Calling of the Twelve to their being sent on trial missions, two-by-two	3,20-6,13	6,20-9,6	11,1-13,58
3 Further training after their return until Jesus' departure from Galileo	6,14-10,1	9,7-9,51	14,1-19,2
4 Ministry of the way to Jerusalem and in Jerusalem itself	10,2-13,37	18,15-21,38	19,525,46
5 The Passion Narrative	14,1-16,8	22,1-24,12	26,1-28,10

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 Lk's birth narratives, Central Section, Resurrection stories, and his omission of all that Lk himself has left out of the six composite Matthean Discourses. He also reinstates Lk's Great Omission (Mt 14,22-16,12), and furthermore reintroduces a few Matthean stories omitted by Lk, e.g. the pericope about divorce (Mt 19,3-9), and adds few stories of his own. This leads us to formulate the following hypothesis regarding Peter's handling of Lk as follows:

On this hypothesis Peter's principal aim was to authenticate the text of Lk; 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 Mt which had been circulating in the Church for at least twenty years as a handbook. He therefore concentrates on following Lk in order, pericope by pericope, as closely as his own personal memories will permit. He

holds open the scroll of Lk, but the scroll of Mt 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 Lk, he feels entirely free either to vary the wording of Lk in favour of Mt's text, or to introduce his own variant of Mt, in virtue of his being the eye-witness of the events he is describing. At the same time he has no problem in agreeing to follow Lk's alternative arrangement of the stories in Mt 3,1-15,58, nor does he need as a general rule to refer to the scroll of Mt while he follows Lk freely and even conflates it with Mt.

For remote preparation for these discourses it would have been enough for him first to read the section of Lk on which he was going to speak, and then to compare it with the corresponding parallels in Mt (36). That is probably all he needed to do, because his knowledge of Mt and his splendid memory gave him all the verbal facility and eye-witness vividness of style that we note in Mk, combined of course with the acute awareness all the time of the presence of his audience.

As to Peter's motivations, it must suffice here to offer the following considerations: Paul was a towering figure in the Church, and Luke had prepared this fresh presentation of the life and teaching of Jesus, which was both based on Mt and at the same time adapted to a Gentile audience. If Paul needed such a work for his own Churches, then Peter, confident of Paul's divine mission and of his integrity and wisdom, would certainly give him full support. But this could not have been achieved by Peter sitting down to write a third Gospel, but only by fashioning a public statement that would demonstrate the orthodoxy and historicity of Lukes recasting of Mt. Mark's realization of the historic importance of the occasion led him to make sure that every word uttered by Peter was faithfully recorded and transcribed by the shorthand writers; and this is the reason why the Church attributed the Gospel to him. As a consequence Mk is to be seen as the record of Peter's sanctioning the publication of Lk and the guarantee of its bona fides to the universal Church.

Furthermore, by means of these discourses Peter would have indicated to his cosmopolitan audience that the Church of the Non-

³⁶ Cf.n.21 above.

Circumcision taught exactly the same as Mt, long known as the Gospel of the Church of Jerusalem and the Gospel with which the faithful of the Circumcision felt comfortable, thus aiding the healing of a long-standing breach. Peter and Paul were both now old men and ne^{ar} the end of their apostolate, and Peter's Lectures would signal to the whole world both the unity of the Church and its teaching, and the undying and unbroken fellowship of Peter and Paul, the founders of the universal Church, a not unimportant consideration in view of the latent heresies already forming.

Jerome (37) leaves us in no doubt that Mark was only the mouthpiece of Peter, for he summed up the judgement of the Fathers in one sentence: «... Marcum, cuius evangelium Petro narrante et illo scribente compositum est» (Ep. 120.11). We must therefore allow that he has correctly summarized the tradition about Mark; and since shorthand writers were still flourishing in Jerome's time it would not have occurred to him to query the technical feasibility of recording public speeches word for word (38). This is evidence that Church tradition has not erred in describing Mark as *discipulus et interpres Petri*, i.e. as not only his disciple but his factotum and faithful agent for recording his spiritual father's living speech.

APPENDIX

Papias's Presbyter on Mark (EH III.39.15)

15. 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 the discourses according to the chreias, 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

37 JEROME, *Epistulae*, 120.11, Hilberg, CSEL 55.

38 For the widespread use of shorthand in Jerome's time cf. BUTLER, *British Shorthand*, 5-4.

certain things Just as he [Peter] 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. 16. But about Matthews this was said: For Matthew composed the logia in a Hebrew style; but each recorded them as he was able.

JUSTIN Dial. Tryph. 106.9-10

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 memoirs that this happened, as well as that he surnamed other two brothers, who were the sons of Zebedee, with the name of Boanerges, which means Sons of Thunder, this was a signification of ...

IRENÆUS

Adv. Haer. 3.1.1

(Eus EH V.8)

So Matthew brought out a written Gospel among the Jews in their own style, 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.

Anti-Marcionite Prologue to Mark. Longer Text

... Mark who was also called "Stubfinger" because he had short fingers in relation to the size 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 region of Italy. When Peter heard about it, he approved and authorized it to be read to the church with [his own] authority. But after the demise of Peter, taking this gospel that he had compiled, he journeyed to Egypt and being ordained the first bishop of Alexandria he founded a church there, preaching Christ. He was a man of such great learning and austerity of life that he induced all the followers of Christ to follow his example.

From CLEM. ALEXIS Outlines as quoted by EUSEBIUS
(EH VI.14.5-7)

5. And again in the same books [The Outlines], Clement states a tradition of the earliest presbyters about the order of the gospels; and it has this form. He used to say that the earlier-written of the gospels were those containing the genealogies,

6. but that according to Mark has had this formation: Peter having preached the Word publicly in Rome and proclaimed the Gospel by the Spirit, the many who had been present begged Mark, as one who had followed him for a long time and recollected what had been said, to record what he had spoken; and he did so, handing over the Gospel to those who had asked for it.

7. And when Peter got to know about it, he exerted no pressure either to forbid it or to promote it.

EUSEBIUS (EH IL15.M6.1)

1. So then, though the divine word was not as yet dwelling fully with them [the citizens of Rome], the power of Simon dwindled away and was suddenly destroyed together with the man himself. And in such wise did the light of true religion illumine the minds of Peter's hearers — as it was not enough [for them] to have heard [him] in one single hearing, namely, in the unwritten discourse of the divine proclamation — they now with many entreaties begged Peter's follower Mark, whose Gospel it is said to be, to prevail upon him [Peter] to bequeath also in writing a record of the discourse delivered to them orally; nor did they let up before they had won over the man, and to him [Mark] fell the responsibility of making the written Gospel, namely that said to be according to Mark.

2. They say that when the Apostle got to know the situation through the Spirit revealing it to him, he was pleased with the interest of the men and authorised the document for reading in the churches. Clement in the Sixth Book of The Outlines [Hypotyposeis] relates the anecdote, and the Bishop of Hierapolis. Papias by name, bears joint witness to this, namely, that Peter mentions Mark in his First Letter (which they say was also composed in Rome itself) and that he himself indicates it speaking figuratively of the City as Babylon in these words: "The Elect [Lady] in Babylon greets you, and so does

my son Mark". 16.1. They also say that this Mark was the first to journey to Egypt to preach the Gospel which he himself had written down, and the first to set up churches in Alexandria itself.

Ealing Abbey
London W5 2DY

Version: 3rd February 2011