

**HORAE SYNOPTICAE;  
CONTRIBUTIONS TO  
THE STUDY OF THE  
SYNOPTIC PROBLEM**

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Horae synopticae; contributions to the study of the synoptic problem by Sir John C. Hawkins

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**SIR JOHN C. HAWKINS**

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HAWKINS

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# HORAE SYNOPTICAE

CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE STUDY OF  
THE SYNOPTIC PROBLEM

BY THE

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## PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION

THE origin, mode of composition, and mutual relations of the three Synoptic Gospels form so obscure and so complex a subject of inquiry that it has come to be generally known as the 'Synoptic Problem'. Among the many modern attempts to deal with it, this volume has a limited and merely preparatory purpose, which I have tried to indicate upon its title-page. It is called by the plural name 'Horae Synopticae', because, while it is the outcome of a good many hours spent in examination of the Synoptic Gospels and in tabulation of the results thus obtained, those results are presented separately and almost independently in the successive sections of the book, no attempt being made to combine them as foundations or supports of any system or theory. And the sub-title is 'Contributions to the study'—rather than to the solution—'of the Synoptic Problem', because I have only been trying to help in that preliminary process of collecting and sifting materials which must be carried much further than it has yet been before we can be ready for the solution of the Problem—or, as I would rather express it, of such parts of it as are not now insoluble. For while it seems to me, on the one hand, that there are some aspects of it as to which we are not likely to advance beyond statements of conflicting probabilities, unless there are some fresh discoveries of documents in Egypt or elsewhere, on the other hand I believe that not a few conclusions—and those of the most important kinds—are likely to be made so clear

and so practically certain by the patient and careful investigations of the language of the Gospels which are now being carried on, that before very long they will meet with general acceptance.<sup>1</sup>

My object, then, has been to collect and to exhibit facts with as small an admixture of theory as possible. In Part I there is, I think, scarcely anything that can be called theory. In Parts II and III, however, it was found that the occasional use of a 'working hypothesis' could not be dispensed with (as on p. 111<sup>2</sup>); and I have several times (as on pp. 81, 128, 152, 162, 185, 212, and in the Concluding Summary) briefly stated or implied some inferences, without which the reason for introducing the facts and figures could hardly have been made clear. But I have suppressed, or at least reserved for another opportunity, some more detailed hypotheses and conjectures which had occurred to me, or had been recalled to me, in the course of the preparation of these pages. For some of them I think I could have claimed a fair amount of probability, and they might have made the book more interesting; but they would certainly have obscured its designed character of being mainly a collection of materials.

It may be said, perhaps, that these materials are not of a very solid and trustworthy nature, or at least that they are of such a kind that their value is likely to be over-rated, especially by the compiler of them. For they are to a large extent statistical: and statistics are proverbially misleading, and proverbially liable to be made to 'prove anything' that is wished. No doubt there is this danger,

<sup>1</sup> Professor Sanday speaks hopefully of the prospects of solution, both in his important supplement to the article 'Gospels' in *Smith's Dict. of the Bible*, ed. 2, p. 1228, and in *Inspiration*, p. 282.

<sup>2</sup> [These references are now made to the pages of the second edition.]

however cautious and free from prejudice the compiler may try to be: and he should remember that he is particularly exposed to it when the field from which the statistics are collected is so small as it is in the present case. I can only say, first, that I have done my best to guard against this danger in various ways, and especially by bracketing words on which stress should not be laid, although their insertion in the lists was necessary (cf. pp. 2, 178). Secondly, I would say that however misleading statistics may be, conjectures unsupported by statistics are likely to be still more so, unless they are supported by evidence of other kinds, such as contemporary, or nearly contemporary, historical testimonies: and as to the Synoptic Gospels such evidence is very slight, being almost limited to St. Luke's Preface (i. 1-4)<sup>1</sup> and to the well-known passage of Papias about Mark as the interpreter of Peter, and Matthew as the composer of the Logia.<sup>2</sup> Thirdly, some confidence in the statistical method, as here used, may be inspired by the general accordance of its results with such intimations as we gather from the words of St. Luke and of Papias, and (I venture to add, though the matter is too wide and too vague for proof, or even for discussion, here) with the general probabilities of the case, as they are suggested to us through such other means as we have at our command.<sup>3</sup>

If I seem to have devoted a disproportionately large amount of space to some apparently minor matters, such as the use of the Historic Present<sup>4</sup> and of Conjunctions<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Of course these verses have been abundantly and minutely discussed by many commentators and others, as their unique importance and interest demand. A fresh and interesting examination of them will be found in Blass, *Philology of the Gospels*, pp. 7-20 [also, since then, in *Expos. Times*, xviii. 395].

<sup>2</sup> The passage is given below, p. xiii.

<sup>3</sup> See e.g. the remark on the use of the Gospels in sub-apostolic times, p. 218, paragraph D.

<sup>4</sup> pp. 143 ff.

<sup>5</sup> pp. 137, 150 ff.