

# **THE FORMATION OF THE GOSPELS**

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The Formation of the Gospels by F. P. Badham

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**F. P. BADHAM**

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THE FORMATION  
OF  
THE GOSPELS

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## P R E F A C E .



THE ensuing pages contain an attempt to solve the Synoptic problem by methods similar to those employed in the orthodox solution of the Hexateuchal—by allowing weight to the doublets, repetitions, and inconsistencies, from which none of the Synoptic Gospels is free.

No pretence is made to completeness of treatment. A new construction-theory is sketched, which must stand or fall by the test, "Will it work?" In the Hexateuchal problem the difficulty arises from the deficiency of data. But in the Synoptic, the case is otherwise. The locks to be opened are too many and complicated for any but the right key to fit.

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THE  
FORMATION OF THE GOSPELS.

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I.

By far the earliest information as to the origin of the Synoptic record is that given by Papias. This is what Papias gives us as a tradition he received "from our Lord's disciple, John the Elder"—a form of expression which apparently carries us back into the first century. "Matthew composed the Logia (literally, 'oracles') in the Hebrew (*i.e.* Aramaic) dialect, and every one interpreted them as he was able. Mark, having become the interpreter of Peter, wrote down exactly whatever things he remembered, but not in the order in which Christ spoke or

did them. For he was neither a hearer nor a follower of the Lord's, but of Peter's, who used to frame his teaching to meet the immediate wants of his hearers, and not as though he were attempting to make a connected narrative of our Lord's discourses. So Mark committed no error in thus writing down particulars, just as he remembered them; for he took heed of one thing—to omit none of the things that he had heard, and to state nothing falsely."

To apologists governed by the old conservative preconceptions as to the authorship and composition of the Synoptic Gospels, these statements of John the Elder present no little difficulty; for our canonical S. Matthew and S. Mark scarcely answer to the documents he describes.

With regard to S. Matthew, the difficulty is not quite insurmountable. The expression "Logia" does not necessarily exclude the idea

of an historical narrative. Lightfoot has shown that in patristic literature "Logia" is often applied to the historical Books of the Old Testament. And though critics are agreed that our canonical S. Matthew, as a whole, is not a translation from an Aramaic original, yet allowance may be made for the fact that, as to this point, there were facilities for an erroneous conclusion. We know that in very early times the Nazarene sect possessed an Aramaic Gospel, and that belief in its priority to our Greek S. Matthew was widely prevalent.

But the difficulty which arises from John the Elder's statement about S. Mark, can only be surmounted by getting rid of the statement altogether. By all appearances the second is the most orderly of the Synoptic Gospels; and it certainly contains most unlikely subject-matter for an Apostle's discourses. It has been held that the imputation of disorder is cast from the standpoint of the Johannine chro-