

A Comparative Handbook to the Gospels of Matthew and Luke

The New Testament Gospels in Their Judaic Contexts

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*Comparisons with Pseudepigrapha, the Qumran
Scrolls, and Rabbinic Literature*

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Preface

In succession to a previous volume that targets the Gospel according to Mark, the present work deals with the Gospels according to Matthew and Luke. We compare these texts to distinct categories of writings: Pseudepigrapha (together with Philo and Josephus), discoveries related to Qumran, and Rabbinic Literature (inclusive of the Targumim). The textual and translational principles followed in regard to the Gospels are as in volume 1:¹ use of the Codex Vaticanus as a base text, reflection of distinctive Greek idioms within the English rendering, and segmentation of passages on the basis of suitability for comparison. Throughout, the aim is comparison, not analysis or commentary, except as we need to elucidate certain issues in order to facilitate comparison.

Comparison, of course, cannot alone establish the dating of documents, and should not be confused with asserting the influence of one source upon another. In this regard, we have deliberately contrasted our approach to that of the *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch* by Hermann L. Strack and Paul Billerbeck,² and the correlative problem of “Parallelomania,” in the memorable diagnosis of Samuel Sandmel.³ Instead, we have traced analogies between the Gospels and Judaic literature.

Analogies in this context might be of several types: simple, topical, interpretative, or close. In a simple analogy, a motif or turn of phrase might be shared; in a topical analogy, a single institution or concept is addressed across literatures. Interpretative analogy involves a cognate understanding of a common biblical passage, while an analogy may be considered close when wording, topic, and interpretative approach all agree. Yet however close or tenuous, analogies are only analogies, rather than demonstrations of contact.

1 See *A Comparative Handbook to the Gospel of Mark. Comparisons with Pseudepigrapha, the Qumran Scrolls, and Rabbinic Literature: The New Testament Gospels in Their Judaic Contexts* 1 (Bruce Chilton, General Editor, with Darrell Bock, Associate Editor; Daniel M. Gurtner, Editor for the Pseudepigrapha, Josephus, and Philo; Jacob Neusner, Editor for Rabbinic Literature; Lawrence H. Schiffman, Editor for the Literature of Qumran, Daniel Oden; Leiden: Brill, 2010) vii–xii. Where matters are dealt with at some length in the preface and introductions to the previous volume, they are presented only in a more abbreviated way here. Likewise, our recourse to appendices has been eliminated in the interests of containing the size of the present volume.

2 Brought out between 1922 and 1961 by Beck in München.

3 Samuel Sandmel, “Parallelomania,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 81 (1962) 1–13. The particular problem posed in Targumic studies in this regard is treated in Paul Flesher and Bruce Chilton, *The Targums. A Critical Introduction: Studies in Aramaic Interpretation of Scripture* 12 (and Leiden: Brill, 2011 [as well as Waco: Baylor University Press, 2011] 162–164.

A wider question confronted in the comparative reading of the New Testament and Judaic literature is the manner in which Gospel sources unfolded. That development is sometimes illuminated by observing the type of analogy that appears to be at issue. The types of analogy reviewed above have been on our minds as we have worked through our material, but we have on the whole refrained from assigning a particular category of analogy for the Judaic texts cited, and refer only sporadically to issues of sources within the Gospels. The introductory treatments, however, will provide paradigms for the dating and the development of the literatures concerned, so the reader may avoid anachronistic inferences. In addition, although the comments in regard to each passage are deliberately minimal, in many cases the type of analogy posited by an Editor or Editors has caused us to commend possible interpretations to our readers. In all these cases, however, the intention remains to treat the reader as a commentator, and our work as a comparative analysis that serves the task of commentary.

Our function is to provide the commentator—perhaps for purposes of writing a consecutive treatment of a Gospel, or of engaging with episodic themes or passages, or of preparing a particular section of the Gospel for study, teaching, or preaching—with resources from the Judaic environment that appear useful for understanding the text. The translation, presentation, comparison with Judaica, and comments are designed with that end in view. On the basis of this work, a more synthetic and selective treatment of all three Synoptic Gospels is in progress.

Readers of the first volume might well have anticipated that the work on Matthew and Luke would appear more quickly than it has. During the composition of the present volume, Jacob Neusner came to the end of his life. Alan Avery-Peck not only collaborated with Jack when he could be consulted, but also took over when that became impossible. I am especially grateful for this arrangement. Similarly, when the difficulties of sorting out the materials of Qumran and related finds became very time consuming, we were greatly helped by the agreement of Craig Evans to join our team. Throughout, Loes Schouten and the staff at Brill have been supportive and resourceful, as well as forbearing, an example we hope will encourage readers to excuse our delay. As the present volume entered production, Alan Avery-Peck kindly agreed to join me in the work of the Series Editorship of the project as a whole.

Bruce Chilton
Annandale-on-Hudson
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