

PREFACE

My interest in traditions in the New Testament began during my graduate studies, culminating in a doctoral dissertation on Paul's use of the Old Testament.¹ It led from there to studies of expository traditions, i.e. midrashim,² and in the present work to other types of preformed pieces that are incorporated into the New Testament Gospels and epistles.

The volume gives considerable attention both to the identification of traditions and to their importance for discerning the relationship of the four allied apostolic missions that, as is argued in the chapters below, produced our New Testament books. With respect to the presence of preformed traditions in the Gospels the investigation is in accord with the classical form criticism, but on the question of the origin and formation of the Gospel traditions, it is much more in agreement with, say, B. Gerhardsson³ or B. Reicke⁴ or P. Borgen.⁵ With respect to the New Testament letters it builds on the pioneering work of E. Lohmeyer⁶ and M. Dibelius.⁷

The many and diverse traditions in virtually all New Testament epistles, a good number of which are non-authorial, argue for a different understanding of *the nature of authorship*. In a word they argue for authorship as a corporate rather than as an individual enterprise, a conclusion that admittedly departs from the view traditional in past and present scholarship.

The analysis of traditions also has implications for the dating of New Testament documents. The arguments from external historical evidence of J. A. T. Robinson's *Redating the New Testament*⁸ were for me both impressive and provocative,⁹ but they left largely

¹ E. E. Ellis, *Paul's Use of the Old Testament*, Edinburgh 1957; Grand Rapids 1991.

² E. E. Ellis, *Prophecy and Hermeneutic in Early Christianity*, Tübingen 1978; Grand Rapids 1993; idem, *The Old Testament in Early Christianity*, Tübingen 1991.

³ B. Gerhardsson, *Memory and Manuscript*, Grand Rapids 1998 (1961).

⁴ B. Reicke, *The Roots of the Synoptic Gospels*, Philadelphia 1986.

⁵ P. Borgen, *Bread from Heaven*, Leiden 1965; idem, *Logos Was the True Light*, Trondheim 1983.

⁶ E. Lohmeyer, *Kyrios Jesus*, Heidelberg 1961 (1928).

⁷ In his commentaries on various New Testament epistles.

⁸ J. A. T. Robinson, *Redating the New Testament*, London 1976.

⁹ E. E. Ellis, 'Dating the New Testament,' *NTS* 26 (1980), 487-502 = FT: *Communio* 7 (Paris 1982), 75-89 = GT: *TZ* 42 (1986), 409-430.

unaddressed the issues of literary criticism on which the currently dominant late dating of New Testament documents is mainly based. The present study provides in this respect both a supplement to Robinson's investigation and a critique of the current critical orthodoxy. It weighs the patristic traditions more heavily, and I trust more critically, than is often done. Such traditions, both oral and written and using relatively few tradents, can accurately transmit a knowledge of historical events over a rather long period, as the dedication of this volume illustrates.

The work also seeks to show the degree to which the New Testament documents, both Gospels and letters, are products of a cooperative endeavor and not just the creation of the individual authors of the particular books. Inevitably, it contains some repetitions, but I have sought to keep them to a minimum consistent with an elucidation of the topic.

The appendices are revisions of essays published earlier,¹⁰ and a word of acknowledgement and appreciation to the various editors and publishers is here happily given.

My great-grandfather, John C. Hargett, was, according to genealogical records, a descendent of Johann Heinrich Hargett who in 1749 came with a brother, via Amsterdam on the ship 'Jacob,' from the Palatinate (Rheinpfalz) to Philadelphia. He fought in the War between the States for Southern independence and was wounded slightly in the Battle of Gettysburg, July 1863, and severely in the Battle of Chickamauga, September 1863. His family's slaves, when told in 1865 they were free, all chose to remain with the family as hired servants and workers. He spent his life in Georgia as a farmer and as a lay-preacher in the Methodist church, known then as 'the shouting Methodists.' Knowing him largely through oral family traditions, mainly from my grandmother, Mallie Lowe Hargett Ellis, I am happy to dedicate this book to his memory and to his ministry, which still has its effects in my own.

¹⁰ Appendix I: *Jesus and the Oral Gospel Tradition*, ed. H. Wansbrough, Sheffield UK: Sheffield Academic Press, 1991, 310-333. Appendix II: *The Four Gospels 1992*. FS F. Neirynck, 3 vols., edd. F. van Segbroeck *et al.*, Leuven: University Press, 1992, II, 801-815. Appendix III: ISBE², ed. G. W. Bromiley, III (1986), 180-186, Grand Rapids MI: Eerdmans Publishing Co. Appendix IV: *Early Jewish and Christian Exegesis*. FS W. H. Brownlee, edd. C. A. Evans *et al.*, Atlanta GA: Scholars Press, 1987, 237-253. Appendix V: *New Testament Textual Criticism*. FS B. M. Metzger, edd. E. J. Epp *et al.*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981, 212-220. Appendix VI: H. Harris, *The Tübingen School*, Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, ²1991, vii-xvi (Foreword).

For assistance during the research I am most grateful to the Alexander von Humboldt Stiftung, the Fulbright Program, Southwestern's Roberts Library, the university libraries at Cambridge and Tübingen and the British Library at London for their many kindnesses; to the Rev. Jonathan Fletcher of Wimbledon for his extremely generous and longstanding hospitality and for the use of his library and study.

I am deeply appreciative to Professor Alan Culpepper for accepting the volume for publication in the series, *Biblical Interpretation*, and to Ms. Willy de Gijzel for guiding the manuscript through the press. I also wish to thank my assistants, David Rogers, Steven Harmon, and J. M. Givens for proof-reading and other labors; and my secretaries, Mrs. Kathy Mishler and Mrs. Laverne Smith, who have given faithful service and spent long hours preparing the manuscript on a computer program that was not always cooperative.

In this Easter season it is my prayer that the volume will glorify God and further illumine his Word to his church.

E. Earle Ellis
Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary
Fort Worth, Texas
Easter 1998