

THE BOOK OF TESTIMONIES

Oberlin Lecture by J. Rendel Harris, 1910

Testimonies, in the early Christian sense of the word, are, on one side, very nearly equivalent to quotations; but from another point of view, the term involves the idea of the person testifying as well as the thing witnessed; they are not only extracts from a book, they are the utterances of the person who is the author of the book. Thus the formula "it is written in the law" is impersonal and denotes strictly a quotation, but "Moses in the law saith" is a testimony, and Moses himself is the witness.

Our thesis is, that in very early times collections of such classified Testimonies were in use amongst the Christians, and that they were used polemically, either in attacking a Jewish position or in defending a Christian one; the witnesses are brought into court by the protagonists in a dispute: they are arranged in groups, and ordered in sequences; when they have said their say, it is assumed that something will have been settled. Hence arises the importance of the work of marshaling the Testimony on any particular question in debate.

From the Christian point of view they are a series of *Argumenta ad hominem*, the man being the Jew on the other side who is committed in advance by his belief in the Scriptures to the acceptance of the word of the witnesses, provided they are rightly heard and not misinterpreted. Thus the long title of such collections is that of "Testimonies against the Jews." There are, properly speaking, no Testimonies against the Gentiles, for the Gentiles and the Primitive Gentile Christians do not recognize the same court of appeal as the Jews and the Judaeo-Christians; their court of appeal is something quite different, it is the soul itself, the 'naturally Christian soul' of which Tertullian speaks, which knows truth by truth's own testimony.

How then, do we establish the existence of such collections as those which are here suggested? Three ways, at least, may be followed which lead to the result: the first consists in observing that different authors (say in the New Testament) quote the Old Testament in similar or closely-coincident sequences, and apparently without any mutual dependence upon one another for the form of the quotation. The suggestion is that they have used the same handbook.

The second method is by observing that from the second century onward there is a succession of actually preserved books of Biblical Testimonies, arranged under headings to prove definite points; and these collections have so much common matter that we are obliged to assume a primitive nucleus around which, and out of which, they have been evolved.

The third method turns on the occurrence in Patristic writers of Biblical quotations in such peculiar settings that one is obliged to admit that they were not taken directly from the Scriptures, but that there is some intervening link between the writers in question and the ultimate Biblical source of their citations.

I do not remember who was the first to erect the hypothesis of a Book of Testimonies. Looking at the matter from the standpoint of acquired knowledge, it would seem most natural that existing books of prophecies and testimonies should have suggested a common early original. As a matter of fact, I believe the first hint came from the study of the quotations in the New Testament, and was made by Dr. Hatch of Oxford; and his suggestions were at a later date endorsed by Dr. Drummond of Oxford. It will be interesting to see how they started the matter.

In Dr. Hatch's Essays on *Biblical Greek* we have the following statement:

It may naturally be supposed that a race which laid stress on moral progress, whose religious services had variable elements of both prayer and praise, and which was carrying on an *active propaganda*, would have, among other books, manuals of morals, of devotion and of *controversy*. It may also be supposed, if we take into consideration the contemporary habit of making collections of *excerpta*, and the special authority which the Jews attached to their sacred books, that some of these manuals, would consist of extracts from the Old Testament. The existence of composite quotations in the New Testament, and in some of the early Fathers, suggest the hypothesis that we have in these relics of such manuals.

Here it will be seen that the observed fact from which Dr Hatch proceeded was the existence of composite quotations; while the words which we have italicized show that he suspected these quotations to have been used for controversial and missionary purposes.

What is peculiar in Hatch's hypothesis is that he imagined the collections of extracts made for the propaganda of Judaism. It is difficult, on this hypothesis, to see how they could have been immediately converted into Christian books of Testimonies against the Jews. The ancestry of "against" is hardly to be found in arguments "for"; "pro" does not easily beget "con." Where Hatch went wrong was in not recognizing the use which the Christians made of their collections: but as regards his observations of the existence of composite quotations, recurring here and there in early Christian writings, the key to the discovery was in his hand. Dr Drummond in his book on the *Character and Authorship of the Fourth Gospel* followed somewhat on the lines of Hatch: he made the link between Jewish and Christian propaganda in the common matter of Messianic preaching and Scriptural proofs of Messianic doctrines. In this way he thought to explain some peculiarities in the citations from the Old Testament

in the Gospel of John. He expresses himself as follows:

It may have become a matter of common knowledge amongst those who cared for the Scriptures, that certain passages required emendation. The Christians would naturally turn their attention to Messianic quotations: and it is conceivable that there may have grown up, whether in writing or not, an anthology of passages useful in controversy, which differed more or less from the current Greek translation. This is, of course, only conjectural; but I think it affords a possible explanation of the phenomenon of the Johannine quotations.

Here the anthology for controversial purposes is the same thing as Hatch's manual of controversy. Drummond's difficulty with the Johannine quotations, and his solution of the same, does not necessarily involve us in resorting to Jewish manuals, if we allow sufficient antiquity to the undoubtedly existing Christian manuals. And it seems that this is the direction in which Dr Drummond was looking and in which the investigation was taking him.

My own researches on this line began many years since, and if I remember rightly the starting-point was a curious coincidence which I observed in the writings of Justin Martyr and in those of Irenaeus.

Let us transcribe a sentence from the fourth book of Irenaeus' *Against Heresies*; [Lib.iv. 55. 2: ed. Masset 273]. Irenaeus is explaining how certain utterances of the Hebrew prophets were fulfilled in the life and work of Jesus Christ; and he makes the following statement, -

Now those who say that at this coming the lame man shall leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb shall be smooth, and the eyes of the blind shall be opened and the ears of the deaf shall hear, and the relaxed hands and feeble knees shall be strengthened; and the dead men that are in the tombs shall arise, and he himself shall take our infirmities and bear our sicknesses, they, I say, announced the cures which were being accomplished by him (the Christ).

I want you to notice the structure of this passage; it is a series of prophecies, strung together from Isaiah 35, Isaiah 26, and Isaiah 53. The passages from the thirty-fifth of Isaiah are

introduced by the added words "At his coming"; these words are due to what precedes in the chapter, "Your God shall come with a recompense ... He shall come and save you." And they are a summary of what precedes, answering in anticipation of the question which might have been asked, if the quotation had been made in the exact language of the prophet, "*Then* shall they eyes of the blind be opened," "*then* shall the lame man leap as an hart." For if anyone asked "When," on the hearing of "then," the right reply would be from the Scripture, "When God comes." Keep your attention fixed for a while on the introductory formula which has here been added to the prophecies quoted. And now let us go back from Irenaeus' time, some thirty or forty years, and examine the writings of Justin Martyr. Justin presents an Apology on behalf of the Christians to the Roman Emperor and to the Roman senate; and in the course of his defense makes great use of the Argument from prophecy. Here is a specimen [Justin *I Ap.* 48].

And that our Christ was foretold as one who should deal all disease and raise the dead, listen to the things what were said: they are as follows. "*At his coming* the same man shall leap as an hart and the tongue of the stammerers shall be smooth; blind men shall recover sight and lepers shall be cleansed, and dead men shall arise and walk about."

Here we find again a series of prophecies, loosely joined together; and the first of them is the passage from Isaiah, ch. 35, with the very same introductory words. We have to explain to ourselves the coincidence in the manner of quotation. One way would be to say that Irenaeus had been imitating Justin, with whose writings he was acquainted. But this will not satisfy us, for the quotations show too much independence to allow that one writer borrowed a passage from the other. Moreover, here is no reason why Irenaeus, when wishing to quote the Old Testament, should have run off in search of Justin Martyr's writings, simply because he remembered that Justin had somewhere employed this same passage. The motive for an obscure reference of this kind appears to be altogether wanting.

The alternative suggestion, then, is that both Irenaeus and Justin have been using some other authority, not the Scriptures, but a handbook of prophecies taken from the Scriptures and furnished with such necessary glosses, expansions and introductions as the subject might require.

Now it does not demand a very lively exercise of the imagination to affirm that such a book as we here suggest must have been arranged with the prophecies grouped under

headings. The particular group to which our attention has been drawn is introduced by Justin in such a way that we can detect the heading of the section: it must have been very nearly like this;

That Christ should heal diseases and raise the dead. [Irenaeus, as we said, has arranged the matter somewhat differently, but his extract also are described in the same words: he has the raising of the dead with a different proof-text.]

That will be sufficient to start the hypothesis; we do not need to give the passages in Greek; the argument is just the same, if we use English translations. Now, if this is a just hypothesis, it will be confirmed by similar phenomena elsewhere, either in Justin and Irenaeus, or in some other writers of the early Church. Here is a very striking, an almost romantic confirmation which came under my notice. When the two Oxford Scholars, Grenfell and Hund, brought out their third volume of papyri which they had disinterred from the sand of Oxrhynchus, they gave a series of broken fragment from an unknown Christian writer, which were of peculiar interest because they judged them from the handwriting to be perhaps as old as the second century. These fragments came under the notice of Dr Armitage Robinson, the dean of Westminster, who recognized that they were bits of a passage in the third book of Irenaeus, and succeeded in piecing the fragments together into an almost complete whole. I will try to restore a part of the same fragments in English, instead of the original Greek of Irenaeus.

*of whom also the S
tar Balaam thus pro
phesied: There shall rise a
star out of Jacob.*

It is impossible to represent the Greek letters by corresponding English letters, but this will give the idea of what resulted when the pieces of papyrus were arranged together, by the aid of the already known Latin text of Irenaeus. Something like this, only of course done in Greek letters, was the restoration of the Dean of Westminster. To this, however, I took exception, on the ground that two of the best copies of Irenaeus did not read *Balaam* but *Ysaias*; and I said we must edit this reading in Irenaeus, and not leave it to a footnote, as the editors of Irenaeus had done. It looked unlikely, you will say, to credit Irenaeus (for the newly recovered scraps of papyrus were almost contemporary with him), with a mistake that a school boy ought not to have been guilty of, in referring a famous prophecy of Balaam in the book of Numbers to Isaiah.

My position was justified by the following consideration. On turning to Justin's *Apology* the following passage can be read:

And Isaiah also, another prophet, prophesying to the same effect by other expressions, said: "There shall rise up a star out of Jacob and a flower shall ascend out of the root of Jesse."

Now this is extremely interesting: first of all, we have again the reference of the prophecy in Numbers to Isaiah; that confirms my hypothesis that it is not a mere error of the scribes of Irenaeus. Second, we see why Isaiah came in, for there is a famous prophecy of Isaiah about the root of Jesse immediately following: so it is a case of composite quotation in which the authorship has been wrongly defined. But if this is the explanation of the error, we have an extraordinary confirmation of our previous hypothesis. Here we have Irenaeus and Justin both making a similar mistake: but no one can maintain that Irenaeus was quoting Justin in the passage that we have pieced together: he is evidently composing on his own account. So we are obliged to admit that both he and Justin have been using the same book of prophetic quotations, and that the error into which they have both fallen was already made in the book referred to. Nor is it difficult to see how the error could have arisen. We may, if we please, imagine the quotations written down in order, and the author's name attached to each quotation on the margin. In that case, it only needs that one reference should have been missed, or a single word moved a little up the margin, in order to mislead any one who copied with sufficient attention.

And I think we can now restore a fragment of the lost book that we have begun to bring to light: it must have been something like this:

Moses: "A star shall rise out of Jacob,"

Isaiah: "A flower shall spring out of the root of Jesse."

Here you will check me, and ask why I put Moses on the margin, instead of Balaam, or instead of a reference to Numbers.

Well, I will justify that in two or three ways. Observe, however, the point that we have reached. We detect Justin in the employment of a collection of Messianic references. If we turn to the writings of Lactantius, at the beginning of the fourth century, we shall find the same Messianic reference in the following terms:

But Moses also, in Numbers, thus speaks, "There shall arise a star out of Jacob, and a man shall spring forth from Israel" (Num. 24.17). [Lactantius: *De Div. Insf.*]

Here Lactantius has definitely referred the Star-prophecy to Moses. Was that an error of his own, or did he find it already made? Let us see: while Lactantius was writing his *Divine Institutes*, Athanasius in Alexandria was composing his famous treatise on the *Incarnation of the Word*. In the course of this work, he occupies several chapters (chs. 33-40) in refuting Jewish unbelief by means of passages taken from the prophets. Quite at the beginning of the argument, he brings forward the famous Star-passage from Numbers to which we have been referring: the passage is introduced as follows:

And Moses, who was really great and was accredited amongst the Jews as a true man, esteemed what was said of the Incarnation of the Savior as of great weight, and having recognized its truth, he set it down, saying, " There shall arise a star out of Jacob, and a man out of Israel, and he shall beak the princes of Moab."

Here again, we see the same ascription of authorship as in Lactantius, and as there is no possibility of one writer in Rome having influenced his contemporary in Alexandria, we are led to conclude that they have both been using the same prophetic handbook. They do not make the mistake, which Justin and Irenaeus do, of referring the prophecy to Isaiah, but that is explained by their following a text into which the error had not crept. Taking the evidence together, we see reason to believe that the original *Book of Testimonies* had this passages grouped in this way:

Moses. "There shall arise a star out of Jacob."

Isaiah: "There shall spring up a flower from the root of Jesse."

But now, having gone so far, we cannot stop at this point for we have put the little book not only on the shelf of Justin and Irenaeus, but also into the libraries of Athanasius and Lactantius. And we must examine further into the common matter which these writers have borrowed from the original prophetic collection. Here is another very interesting line of investigation which immediately opens up before us. We notice that Justin, when making his reference to the Star out of Jacob, was working from a sequence of prophecies for he says, -

Isaiah also, another prophet,

so we turn back to see what prophet has preceded. When we examine the context we find that he has been quoting the famous Messianic passage, in Genesis, about the coming of Shiloh: "There shall not fail a ruler from Judah, nor a governor from his loins etc." But how does he introduce the matter? Let us look at Justin's language - "And Moses also, who was the first of the prophets, says expressly as follows: 'A ruler shall not fail from Judah etc.'"

Here the prophecy of the dying Jacob is expressly put into the mouth of Moses, just as the prophecy of Balaam was in a previous case. Is this one of Justin's own blunders? or does it occur elsewhere, in such a way as to suggest that some one had made the mistake before him?

In the first place we can see that if it was a blunder of Justin, it was a deliberate one; for if we read the passage a little further we find him saying,

It is your part, then, to examine accurately and to learn until whom the Jews had a ruler and King of their own: it was until the Manifestation of Jesus Christ, our teacher and the interpreter of the recognized prophecies, as was said aforetime of the holy and divine prophetic spirit *through Moses*.

So it is clear that Justin was speaking deliberately when he put the famous Messianic prophecy in the mouth of Moses. Now let us, in the next place, see whether we can find other people making the same mistake. Suppose we turn once more to Irenaeus, and we shall find that he has a whole chapter in which he shows that Moses foretold the advent of Christ. In the course of the argument he says that "Moses had already foretold the advent of Christ, saying, 'A ruler shall not fail from Judah, etc.,'" and ends up, in language very like that of Justin, by saying, "Let those look into the matter who are said to investigate everything and let them tell us etc." Clearly Irenaeus has made the same mistake as Justin, and had the matter in somewhat similar setting.

Returning again to Justin, we find him discussing the matter at a later point of his *Apology*, as follows:

Moses, then the prophet, as we said before, was senior to all the chroniclers, and by him, as we previously intimated, the following prophecy was uttered, "A ruler shall not fail from Judah etc."

If now we were to turn to a later work of Justin, his *Dialogue with Trypho the Jew*, we

should find him again quoting the famous oracle from the Blessing of Jacob, but now he has corrected his mistake, but not so as altogether to obliterate the original error, as the following passages will show.

By Jacob the patriarch it was foretold that there should be two advents of Christ.

after which he quotes freely from the Blessing of Jacob.

That which was recorded by Moses, but prophesied by the patriarch Jacob etc.

Concerning whose blood also Moses spake figuratively that he should wash his robe in the blood of the grape etc.

And as to what Moses said that he should wash his robe in the blood of the grape, is not just what I said to you over and over again about his having secretly prophecies to you etc.

So here again we have abundant evidence that Justin really believed, at all events for a length of time, that Moses was the prophet to whom the famous oracle was to be referred. You can see him trying to correct his blunder.

That this tradition that Moses was the author of the great Messianic prophecy about the ruler who would not fail from Judah until he should come whose right it was, may be seen in another unexpected corner. For here also we have the evidence of Athanasius in his treatise *On the Incarnation*, as follows:

And Moses prophesies, saying that the Kingdom of the Jews should stand till his (Christ's) day, saying, "A ruler shall not fail from Judah, etc."

So here again we have the concurrence of Justin, Irenaeus and Athanasius in a curious error of quotation; and, as before, it is reasonable to refer the mistake to the use of a common document.

At this point we may control the accuracy of our inductions by a test. Let us see whether Athanasius, who is supposed to be using the *Book of Testimonies*, has any knowledge of the passage from Isaiah 35, with which we began our investigation, and of the added introductory word "At this coming," In ch. 38 Athanasius quotes against the Jews the words of Isaiah, beginning with "Be strong, ye relaxed hands and paralyzed knees," and continues to

the word "the tongue of the stammerers shall be smooth." Here there is no sign of the introductory words: but as we read on, we have the following comment:

When then can the Jews say even on this point, and how can they care even to face this statement? For the prophecy intimates the *arrival of God*, and makes known the signs and the time of *His coming*: for they say that *when the divine coming takes place* the blind will see etc.

Here we can see the added words lurking, even though they are absent from the direct quotation. And our judgment is confirmed that Athanasius is using the *Book of Testimonies*.

This, then was the way in which I was led to the belief in the existence of an early book of Testimonies against the Jews. The argument is cumulative, and there is much more to be said on the same line. It is, however, already sufficient to establish the hypothesis. We can now go on to enquire into the age of production for the little book in its first form. So far, nothing has appeared in the argument requiring us to go to the extreme length with Dr. Hatch, and refer the book to an original Jewish hand; on the contrary almost everything that has been brought forward is anti-Jewish, and the treatment of the subject by Justin and Athanasius, is expressly directed against the Jews. It is not Trypho who is quoting texts to prove the character and time and place of appearing of the Messiah: it is Justin, who is hurling them, as fast as he can control his artillery, at the head of Trypho and his companions. We may, for the present at all events, limit ourselves to the Christian use of Testimonies, and ask how soon they took the form of a definitive and orderly collection.

The first rough answer is that a book, which was used independently as an authority by Justin and Irenaeus must have had a respectable ancestry. It is on the borders of contemporaneity with the New Testament, to say the least. May we say more than that? The way to answer that question will be to examine whether any traces of the same kind of quotations and the same kind of mistakes as we noticed in other writers can be remarked in any of the books of the New Testament. Composite quotations were the thing that arrested Dr Hatch's attention: and our analysis has shown that with such composite quotations the scribes have a tendency to go wrong (as in Isaiah for *Balaam* or *Moses*, where only the latter part was really Isaiah). The moment we make the suggestion of composite quotations whose ascription has become confused, we are reminded of the textual difficulty in the opening verses of Mark. Ought we to read,

As it is written in the prophets:
"Behold! I sent my messenger before thy face,
Who shall prepare thy way:
The voice of one crying in the wilderness,
Prepare the way of the Lord,
Make his paths straight";

or should it be,

As it is written in the prophet Isaiah, "Behold! etc."

The textual critics insist rightly that "Isaiah" is the true reading, whether it makes Mark look inaccurate or not. Suppose, then, for a moment that Mark had taken this proof of Christ's coming out of a prophetic Testimony book; such a book ought to have had on the margin the two names

Malachi: "Behold I send etc."

Isaiah: "The voice of one crying etc."

We have shown, in an exactly parallel case, how easy it is for one title to be neglected, and for the other to govern the whole of a composite quotation.

The suggestion is a startling one, and will need confirmation; for Mark is our earliest Gospel, and to put the *Book of Testimonies* behind all the Gospels is a bold step. Perhaps some one will object at once and say that Mark is not the evangelist who bases his argument on the fulfillment of prophecy, which is rather the characteristic of the Gospel according to Matthew. No doubt there is some force in the objection: but I should like to draw attention to a chapter in which Mark affirms the argument from prophecy. If we turn to the close of Mark's seventh chapter, in which the miracle of the Ephphatha healing is recorded, the incident is summed up with the words, "He hath done all things well: he makes both the deaf to hear and the dumb to speak." Here the word "well" means "appropriately," "as he should have done," "in accordance with prophecy." [Cf. Mark 7.6 ("Well did Isaiah prophecy") and the similar language in Acts 28.25.]

Thus the people recognize, in Mark, the fulfillment of prophecy: and Mark, himself, under such circumstances, could not miss it. What was the prophecy that they recognized as fulfilled? The answer is, the 35th chapter of Isaiah; and that Mark has this very chapter in

mind is betrayed by the fact he calls the subject of the miracle κωφός and μογιλάλος, "deaf" and "speaking with difficulty." The rare word μογιλάλος, is, in itself, sufficient to show that Isaiah 35 is in the mind of the evangelist, even if that passage had not been intimated by the closing words of the section about the making of deaf people to hear and speechless folk to talk. But this passage of Isaiah is, as we have seen, a leading proof-text in the *Book of Testimonies*. We may almost say that Mark wrote his seventh chapter to be read along with the *Book of Testimonies*. And certainly his interest in the verification of prophecy by Christ is betrayed in the chapter to which we have referred. There is no difficulty in making Mark into a student of prophecy. [Cf. Mark 7.6 ("Well did Isaiah prophecy") and the similar language in Acts 28:25].

But if this is correct, we shall expect verification of our hypothesis, from other parts of the New Testament. Suppose we ask the question whether there are any other places in the Gospels in which the suggestion of a misplaced title for a prophecy would be at home. We at once think of that much disputed passage in Matthew (Matt. 27.9), concerning the purchase of the potter's field: here we read -

Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying "And I took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of the valued one whom they priced of the children of Israel, and I gave them for the potter's field, as the Lord commanded me."

You know the trouble over this passage: the quotation is from Zechariah 11:13: but the textual critics (those at least who deal in honest wares), will not allow you to alter "Jeremy the prophet." On the other hand the coincidence with Zechariah is far from being exact. My suggestion is that Matthew has used a Testimony book in which a quotation from Zechariah was preceded or followed by one from Jeremiah, and that he has not accurately defined the limits of his quotations. For instance if we turn to Gregory of Nyssa's collection of *Testimonies against the Jews*, we shall find under the proof-texts for the Passion of Jesus, [Zacagni p. 309] the following sequence:

Jeremiah: "But I as an innocent lamb was led to the slaughter; I did not know,"
and again: "Come and let us put wood on his bread and let us erase his name from the living, and let his name be remembered no more."

Zecharias: "And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of the valued one, whom they priced of the children of Israel, and they gave them for the field of the potter, as the Lord commanded me."

Here the passage from Zechariah is quoted just as in Matthew, but I do not think it has been emended from the canonized Gospel. It looks as if it were the original from which Matthew worked: and in any case the sequence of Nyssen's quotations suggests directly the blunder in the reference to Jeremiah.

Some such explanation, arising out of a collection of proof-texts of the kind indicated, would clear up the difficulty which has long been perplexing the students of the Gospel.

I admit, however, that this is not such a good instance as the previous one, and it is wanting in completeness of proof: for I have not cleared up the variation of the text of Zechariah as quoted, when compared with the original prophecy.

Next let us examine a case of composite quotations, such as those to which Dr Hatch drew attention.

We have a striking combination in 1 Pet. 2.6-8,

Behold! I lay in Zion an elect corner-stone.

A precious stone:

And he that believeth on Him shall not be confounded ...

The stone which the builders rejected is become the head of the corner, and a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense.

Here we have quotations from Isa. 28.16; Ps. 118.22 and Isa. 8.14, the connecting link for the composite passage being the idea that Christ is a stone.

Now suppose we turn to Romans 9.32-33, we have the statement made concerning the Jews that

They stumbled at the stumbling-stone, as it is written: "Behold! I lay in Zion a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence, and he that believeth on Him shall not be confounded.

Here the same two passages from Isaiah appear again, interwoven into a single reference. If now we could show that the early books of Testimonies actually had a section in which

Christ was treated as the Stone spoken of by the prophets, it will become quite clear why Peter and Paul both make the same extracts from Isaiah.

Fortunately this can be at once established. For when we turn to Cyprian's collection of *Testimonies against the Jews*, we find a whole section headed by the words,

That the same [Christ] is called a stone.

and the next section is

That the same stone should become a mountain and fill the earth;

and other passages to the same effect may be cited from Justin and elsewhere. Cyprian begins with two of the quotations which we have been discussing, after which he goes stone-hunting all over the Old Testament. This is the way in which he commences:

Cyp. *Test.* ii.16. That Christ is also called a stone in Isaiah: "Thus saith the Lord, behold I place on the foundations of Sion a precious stone, elect, chief, a corner stone, honorable and he who trusteth in Him shall not be confounded." Also in the 117th [118] Psalm: "The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner. This is done by the Lord, and it is wonderful in our eyes. This is the day etc."

Accordingly I claim that both Peter and Paul have had access to a collection of prophetic Testimonies: putting this with what has gone before, and with what might easily be expanded from other parts of the New Testament, we frame the hypothesis that the early Christian Church used collections of prophetic Testimonies, especially in their controversies with the Jews, and that these can be traced back as far as the very beginning of the canonical Christian literature.

It is interesting to note that in Prof. Gwatkin's recently published *Church History**, [Vol I. P. 199] the antiquity of the collected Testimonies is practically conceded, and they are inferred to be at least earlier than the Gospel of Matthew. The passage to which I refer runs as follows:

If they [the early Christian writers] were all borrowing from the same very early

manual of proof-text [Rendel Harris and Burkitt have this theory] which must be at least earlier than the first Gospel, we may safely say that few books have so influenced Christian thought.

And now what prospect have we of recovering the lost book? In its original form there is, perhaps, but a slight probability of our ever laying hands upon it, although a handbook which was probably in use wherever the Church and the Synagogue were debating with one another must have been widely diffused and may turn up somewhere someday. But if we cannot recover the original form, we can often restore it from its descendants; and it is really surprising on how many lines its tradition has been preserved to us. For example, of actual books of Testimonies there are quite a number. We have the first two books of Cyprian's *Testimonies*, which certainly are modelled on an earlier form; we have the book of *Testimonies* ascribed to Gregory of Nyssa, and published by the Vatican Librarian Zacagni in his *Collectanea*; we have also a most instructive treatise by the great Syria Father Bar Salibi, which I detected in an unpublished work of his against Moslems, Jews and Heretics. The part relating to the Jews, is a collection of testimonies, translated for the most part, from a very early base. No doubt additions can be made to these. Then, beyond the actual collections, there are whole regions of Patristic literature which the work in question has affected. We have seen one or two instances in what precedes; especially we may note the works of Justin and Irenaeus. From these various sources, it ought to be possible to re-edit the lost books with some approximation to accuracy. The difficulty will arise, however, that a polemical work like this was constantly being altered and amended. In the original draft there were proof-texts that turned out to be apocryphal and arguments that would not stand criticism. The first generations of Christians were by no means infallible, whatever their successors may have become; sometimes they corrected their mistakes; and sometimes they held on to them: sometimes they attached the most important theological conclusions to mistranslations and misquotations. A single instance may be given, which is the most striking that I know. The doctrine of Christ's nature, and especially his pre-existence was proved to the Jews by a passage from the 110th Psalm; in the Hebrew which is itself perhaps corrupt, the prince who is addressed in the Psalm is said to have "the beauty of holiness from the womb of the morning"; and to have "the dew of his youth"; this unintelligible matter is given by the Septuagint in the form,

From the womb before the day-star I begat thee;

and this was seized on by some Christian controversialists as a conclusive proof of Christ's pre-existence.

One would suppose such an argument would have been brushed away at once, at least by an appeal to the Hebrew. On the contrary all the Fathers, from Justin onward use it: and it was one of the weapons with which Athanasius demolished Arius at the Council of Nicaea.

Primitive Christianity, on the Dogmatic side, must not always be taken seriously. They would have done better to content themselves with the prologue to St John's Gospel and to have left alone these prophetic Testimonies.

Before leaving this question, I should like to draw attention to another which has been raised by the discussion of the hypothesis of the *Testimony Book*.

A reference to Prof. Gwatkin's new *Church History* will show, in a footnote on p., the statement that Rendel Harris and Prof. Burkitt believe there was a primitive collection of Biblical Testimonies, and that Prof. Burkitt is disposed to identify this collection with the famous lost book on which Papias commented. It will be remembered how much controversy has raged round the lost work of Papias on the *Dominical Oracles*, a lost commentary on a lost book: and the question as to the nature of these lost oracles is still far from a solution. It has been commonly held that the five books of Papias were a commentary upon the lost Saying of Jesus; but objection to this has been made, that Sayings (λόγοι) are not the same thing as Oracles (λόγια), and that the word Oracles belongs rather to the Old Testament than to the collected words of Christ. It is not, therefore, surprising that Prof. Burkitt should have suggested that our *Book of Testimonies* from the Old Testament is the real work upon which Papias made his comments.

Here is a new argument which brings some support to Burkitt's hypothesis.

It will be remembered that in his treatise *On the Incarnation*, Athanasius devotes a number of chapters to the refutation of the Jews, and that in those chapters we detected the use of the *Testimony Book*. Well, in the beginning of ch. 38 Athanasius expresses himself as follows;

If they do not think the preceding arguments sufficient, let them be persuaded by further oracles (λόγια) from those which they have in their possession.

Then he goes on to quote passages from Isaiah, which belonged to the *Testimony Book*. So here we see Athanasius actually describing his Biblical extracts by the name of Oracles (λόγια).

This is suggestive, but not finally decisive. For when we turn to Justin's *Apology* (ch. 49) where Justin is going to quote the very same passage that Athanasius had used against the Jews (Isa. 65.1-3), he calls the passage "Sayings" (λόγοι) and not "Oracles"; ("these sayings were spoken as if in the person of Christ"). So the same collection might be described either way. And this rather inclines us to believe that the terms "Oracles" and "Sayings" were more nearly synonymous than we might have at first supposed. If this were so, we could not affirm that Papias' book was a comment on Old Testament passages. It might have been, but the matter would require further investigation.* [* We shall find the same ambiguity in Justin, *dial.* 15, where he has a chapter which was probably taken from the Testimony Book, and concludes his quotation by saying, "Circumcise then the uncircumcision of your hearts, as the Sayings (λόγοι) of God throughout all these Sayings (λόγοι) demand." Here the Testimonies seem to be called Sayings of God, which is not very far removed from the *Dominical Oracles* of Papias: and if we read a little further, observing that Justin has been quoting *Saying of Jesus* as well as *Testimonies from the Prophets*, we find him (ch. 18) remarking as follows: "Since you, Trypho, have admitted that you have read the teachings of that Savior of ours, I don't think I shall be doing anything out of place in reminding you of some brief Oracles of his in addition to those taken from the prophets." Here the term (λόγια) is used both of the Testimonies from the Prophets and of the Saying of Jesus. In the very next chapter (ch. 19 *ad fin.*) we have a passage from Ezekiel quoted as (ὁ λόγος αὐτοῦ). From these passages it seems right to infer that we are not justified in restricting the term Oracles to the Old Testament or Saying to the New Testament or literature bordering on the New.]

It is possible that, in trying to clear up difficulties, especially where the matter of writings discussed overlap the records of the New Testament, that we may raise more problems than we solve. I can quite understand that people do not like to be told that there may be primitive errors in the Gospels, and some people will not like to be told that there were earlier books from which the Gospels may have derived them. Also it is possible that the method of exploring for minute peculiarities in the texts of the early Fathers, like Justin and Irenaeus, may seem to be unduly subtle. We may, however, be sure that in work of this kind it pays to take pains: and it is absolutely necessary to be conscientious. Painstaking comparison of Gospel texts, along with determined honesty has convinced all sound scholars that we must read Isaiah in the opening of Mark and not the prophets: and that we must read Jeremy the prophet in Matthew's account of the betrayal. If then, by close and careful comparison of the common quotations in early patristic writers, we can make the hypothesis reasonable of their borrowing from a common source, and confirm its accuracy in a multitude of ways, we have in our hands the instrument for the correcting of the errors which may

seem to have been imported into the text of the Gospels; we know how they arose, we are a step further in the problem of their composition, and we are in closer touch than we were before with the mind and the method of the early Christian Church. All of this is genuine progress; and each step taken prepares the way for a further step and for a wider vision. [In reference to the explanation by means of the shifting of carelessly transcribed or marginally arranged title, I see that Zacagni, the librarian of the Vatican, who edited for us the *Testimonies of Gregory of Nyssa*, had ingeniously detected the error in question in one passage and almost gave the explanation. As it is important to collect these instances, which are far more numerous than one would suppose, I will translate (transcribe) the page in question, along with Zacagni's note. It runs as follows:

Concerning the miracles which the Lord was to show forth after his incarnation.

Jeremiah: Behold! I have set thee for a covenant of the race, for a light of the Gentiles, that thou mayest establish the earth and possess the inheritance of the desert, saying to those who are in bonds, Go forth; and to those who are in darkness, be enlightened." And that these things cannot be said by a mere man concerning himself is clear, since it was the same one who said:

[*Baruch*] "This is our God and there shall not be reckoned another beside him."

Isaiah: "Be strong, ye relaxed hands and feeble knees etc."

Here the first extract is not from Jeremiah, but from Isaiah (49.6 8). Zacagni explains the matter thus: Nyssen took it for a passage of Jeremiah, because he subjoins a testimony from Baruch (Bar. 3.36), who is often quoted under the name of Jeremiah. He meant it, therefore, to be referred to Jeremiah. It only remains, then, to add that the error must be earlier than Nyssen: and that it arose from the wandering of the eye of a scribe from the correct Isaiah to the Jeremiah (Baruch) which followed.

Before leaving this brief statement of an admittedly imperfect investigation, it may be worth while to ask the question what the net result of the enquiry is upon the general subject of the correct statement and proper defense of Christian doctrine. It is quite evident that the results of the examination into the mode of composition and transmission of prophetic Testimonies is inconsistent with the ordinary belief in a verbally inspired Gospel canon. For a large part of the argument turns upon an observed coincidence in blunders of

transmission, and we were not able to limit these errors to persons belonging to the sub-apostolic or sub-evangelic Age. So that an enquiry of this kind is barred in advance for those who insist on an infallible text of the Scriptures as a preliminary to the enquiry. Not only is the argument one which is, of necessity, fallacious from their point of view, but in order to maintain the position in which they are entrenched, they have to surrender to impossible textual criticism (as by reading "the prophets" for "Isaiah" in the opening of Mark), or to equally impossible exegesis (as in explaining away "Jeremy the prophet" from the text of Matthew).

On the other hand, so soon as we admit the possibility of errors in transmission, we are in the great position of advantage of seeing how a number of such errors have arisen and of reflecting upon the very small importance that attaches to them historically.

But then there is another advantage that is gained by this method of enquiry. We are often challenged as to the validity of the Christian Gospels, considered as historical documents, in view of the generally accepted conclusion that they were not composed until nearly a quarter of a century after the events which they record. That empty space between the date of the Ascension and the beginning of the Christian literature, is one of the difficulties that have to be met. Even when we allow the Pauline and other letters to be adduced in evidence of the beliefs of the early Church, we are still far from being adequately supplied with material for historical interpretation: nor does it seem to me that we can fairly meet the difficulty by taking as positively as some do, about the Oral tradition and the existence of the order of Catechists, who are assumed to have the tradition by heart from the first Apostolic utterance onward, and never to have made serious errors of memory in the transmission of the tradition. Now it is in just such directions as we have been occupied that the void which perplexes us begins to be filled up. *There are lost books of the early Church*, and some of them have been employed in the composition of our existing Gospels. Of this family one leading member was the *Book of Testimonies*; a second, to which we shall refer presently in another lecture, was the lost *Book of the Saying of Jesus*. And I have little doubt that, if our critical eyes were keener, and especially if we could recover some more fragments of early Christian literature, we should be able to affirm the existence of quite a little library of early Christian books. In this way much would become clear that is now somewhat obscure in the Evangelic history. We should not only have the original Mark, of which the critics talk (if there was an Ur-Marcus), and the companion document which they call Q which has been employed by both Matthew and Luke, but we should have two or three other leading Christian documents, belonging to the very space that was perplexing us by its vacancy. And it is easy to image that the vacancy (which is only due to the carelessness of the Church

over its records) might wholly disappear. For we do not forget what Luke tells us about many who had tried to compose a Gospel History and who were certainly not Oral traditionalists of Catechists!

Our enquiry, then, is a real alleviation of the difficulty of the situation, and the first step, perhaps, towards its complete removal.

On the other hand it may be urged that in emphasizing the use of the Old Testament in early Christian times, we are making things worse for the exegete and the believer: for if the primitive Christians appealed so freely to prophecies of all kinds, they must often have made wrong appeals which were discredited almost as soon as made, or which are certainly not to be credited amongst ourselves.

This part of the problem, however, is not new: we shall have to settle for ourselves, quiet apart from the *Book of Testimonies*, whether Matthew was right in his interpretation of the calling of the Son out of Egypt. If he was the victim of an incorrect exegesis, this may have been, on our hypothesis, some one else's mistake and not his own. We shall still have to decide this and other matters with the best light we can get. And the real advantage of our method lies in this very direction, that it is an increase of light and an extension of knowledge. And I do not think the central figure of Christianity or its central doctrines are likely to be obscured by a careful restoration of the broken and almost lost fabric of its earliest literature.