INTRODUCTION

The subject of this book is the contemporary revival of the Griesbach hypothesis, i.e. the hypothesis that, of the three synoptic gospels, Matthew was written first, Luke was written second in dependence on Matthew, and finally Mark was written using both Matthew and Luke. This old hypothesis about the relative order of the gospels has been revived recently by a number of scholars, notably by W. R. Farmer. Farmer's main contribution to the debate has been the publication of his book *The Synoptic Problem* in 1964, and since then he has indicated his continuing belief in the Griesbach hypothesis in a number of other articles. Other studies have brought forward additional arguments which might support the Griesbach hypothesis from a number of different angles: these include the works of G. W. Buchanan, O. L. Cope, D. L. Dungan, T. R. W. Longstaff, B. Orchard and H. H. Stoldt. (See the bibliography for details.) Farmer's work has aroused a new interest in the Synoptic Problem, and doubts have been raised about how firmly the traditional solution, i.e. the two-document hypothesis, is based. By the 'two-document hypothesis' is meant the theory that Mark was written first and was a common source for Matthew and Luke, and that the latter two gospels also made independent use of common source material, usually abbreviated as 'Q'. This hypothesis was developed during the middle of the nineteenth century, and since then has received widespread acceptance. Moreover, it has been the basic assumption behind much recent redaction criticism, and hence doubts about its validity must call into question the value of a great deal of such work. Attempts to question the traditional solution to the Synoptic Problem are thus extremely important and have very far-reaching implications.

This study attempts to analyse some of the current debate about the Griesbach hypothesis and the implied criticism of the two-document hypothesis. In his original book, Farmer devoted a considerable amount of space to an examination of the history of the study of the Synoptic Problem, and so some aspects of that history are examined briefly in Part I. In the rest of this study, the gospel texts are examined to see if the Griesbach

hypothesis can be adequately supported there. In Part II, various general considerations are treated, including the arguments of supporters of the Griesbach hypothesis. In Part III, some individual pericopes are analysed in detail to see which source hypothesis can best explain the detailed wording of the texts.

PART I SOME ASPECTS OF THE HISTORY OF THE STUDY OF THE SYNOPTIC PROBLEM

All the proponents of the Griesbach hypothesis (GH) in its contemporary revival are well aware that they are advocating nothing new. The hypothesis itself was first put forward in 1764 by Henry Owen,[1] but its present name derives from its adoption by J. J. Griesbach at the end of the eighteenth century.[2] However, during the second half of the nineteenth century, it was generally discounted in favour of the theory of Markan priority, and since then it was only rarely advocated until 1964. The major part of W. R. Farmer's book, *The Synoptic Problem*, is devoted to analysing some of the history of the study of the Synoptic Problem over the last two hundred years, looking in particular at the way in which the GH was gradually rejected, and the two-document hypothesis (2DH) adopted, by nearly all scholars. The implication drawn is that an analysis of the history of research may offer some justification for reviving the GH and reconsidering its merits in the modern discussion.[3]

One of the results of Farmer's historical survey is the claim that extra-scientific factors were at work in the establishment of the 2DH, and in this respect the recent work of H. H. Stoldt has come to similar conclusions.[4] The most significant developments occurred initially in Germany in the early part of the nineteenth century, where there was a growing consensus, following the work of Sieffert, that Matthew's gospel was written after the eye-witness period.[5] Thus, if Matthew was the first gospel to be written (as the GH maintained) then none of the synoptic gospels was an eye-witness account. Hence, if the historicity of the fourth gospel was questioned, there was no reliable point of contact with the historical foundations of Christianity.[6] Next, the GH was adopted by Strauss, Baur and other members of the so-called 'Tübingen school', and was used by them to develop their theories which resulted in radical scepticism about the historical reliability of the gospels. The demise of the Tübingen school was then an important factor in the general loss of support for the GH. Farmer writes: 'The real enemy was the Tübingen school and only incidentally the Griesbach hypothesis, which Baur had accepted. But there can be no

doubt that the Griesbach hypothesis lost "popular" support with the collapse of the Tübingen school.'[7]

The GH was generally replaced by the 2DH, and Farmer claims that the latter satisfied a theological need: for it established a basis for the historicity of at least the Markan narrative in the face of both the generally accepted view that Matthew was written after the eye-witness period and also the overall scepticism of the Tübingen school. Farmer refers to Weisse's work of 1838 (where what was essentially the 2DH was first proposed) as 'a constructive attempt to enable Christianity to lay claim to eye-witness accounts through Mark and the *Logia*'.[8] Similarly, for Holtzmann and his readers, the priority of Matthew was never considered as a serious option, simply because it was written after the eye-witness period and 'therefore was not suitable to be used as a primary source in the quest of the historical Jesus'.[9]

The implication is that the GH has never received a fair hearing, indeed that it was summarily rejected because it could provide no eye-witness account of the gospel events, and because of its association with the radical scepticism of the Tübingen school. Further, its main rival, the 2DH, also gained in popularity at its expense because the ideas of the two proposed basic sources, Mark and Q, appeared to provide 'historical' support for the prevailing dogmatic ideas of the time.[10] Farmer never gives any details in his writings about any arguments which were brought against the GH during this earlier period.[11] Insofar as he claims that his historical survey is 'to help the reader understand that this view [i.e. the GH] was abandoned in favor of another that was less satisfactory, for reasons which scholars would not now justify'[12], this implies that either no criticisms of the GH existed (apart from the question of historical reliability and the eye-witness nature of the material), or, if they did, they were not worth recording in any historical survey which aimed to show, at least in part, why the GH was abandoned.

In fact a study of the history of the debate in this period does not support Farmer's claims.[13] First, there was clearly no integral, necessary connection between the GH and the theories of the Tübingen school. Although the GH was adopted by Strauss, Schwegler and Baur,[14] other members of the school could work with different source hypotheses, without altering the basic presuppositions that all three gospels were relatively late documents, theologically motivated and not necessarily eye-witness accounts of the events they describe. Thus, Hilgenfeld consistently held to the Augustinian hypothesis;[15] Ritschl was converted to Markan priority in 1851;[16] Köstlin postulated the existence of an early Petrine version of Mark used by Matthew, even if our Mark was still the last to

be written;[17] finally Volkmar adopted Markan priority in his work of 1857.[18]

Then secondly, there is no evidence that either the adoption of the GH by Strauss or Baur, or the desire to rescue the eye-witness nature of at least some of the tradition, had any influence at all in the general rejection of the GH and the adoption of Markan priority. The GH had never been universally accepted even before the work of Sieffert and Strauss. C. G. Storr had already argued against the GH, and indeed had argued for the priority of Mark, as early as 1786.[19] No concern about historicity in general, or the theories of the Tübingen school in particular, is discernible in Lachmann's article of 1835 which sought to show the originality of the Markan order.[20] Nor is there evidence for such a concern in the works of Wilke and Weisse in 1838, advocating Markan priority.[21] It is quite clear that Wilke had formed his views at least twelve years earlier, i.e. well before the appearance of Strauss' work.[22] Further, he was totally unconcerned about the question of historical reliability or the eye-witness nature of the tradition: he believed that Mark was the earliest gospel, but it was *not* the work of an eye-witness and indeed its presentation was determined more by general principles than by historical accuracy.[23] Weisse, too, believed that Mark's gospel was not an eye-witness account, and he thought that the vivid details of Mark's presentation were historically worthless.[24] Further, his explicit concern to refute Strauss had nothing to do with the GH: it was solely to do with Strauss' adoption of the 'tradition hypothesis', i.e. the theory that there had been a long period of oral tradition which had reached fixed written form only in the mid-second century.[25]

The situation is no different in the case of the two later leading proponents of the 2DH, Holtzmann and B. Weiss. Holtzmann followed Weisse in asserting the non-eye-witness character of Mark,[26] and Weiss also conceded the secondary nature of Mark, for the latter was, according to his theory, preceded by a primitive 'Ur-Matthew'.[27] The treatment by Holtzmann and Weiss of the adoption of the GH by the Tübingen school is also significant. It is clear that both scholars were aware that the GH had a history of its own, and that it had been adopted by others quite independently of the Tübingen school. Hence both scholars took care to present detailed arguments against the GH as proposed by Griesbach, De Wette, Bleek and others, and to separate them from those they used against the use of the hypothesis by Baur and others in the Tübingen school.[28]

Thus real arguments were brought against the GH during this period, and these were believed to be sufficiently cogent to warrant the rejection of the hypothesis, quite independently of the latter's adoption by the

Tübingen school and of the question of the eye-witness nature of the tradition. Many of these arguments were essentially that Mark's alleged procedure, according to the GH, seemed to have no inner consistency and no obvious motivation. Mark was alleged to have conflated his sources on some occasions with very great care (e.g. Mk. i. 32), and yet at other times he failed to do so.[29] Similarly, Griesbach had thought that Mark's order and choice of material could be explained by Mark's switching between his two sources, and had claimed that good reasons could be given for the precise changes involved.[30] However, Weiss showed that these reasons were unsatisfactory and did not adequately explain Mark's alleged procedure in detail.[31] None of these arguments is mentioned by Farmer and, insofar as part of the aim of his historical survey is to show how and why the GH was abandoned (as well as why the 2DH was accepted), this constitutes a gap in his presentation. Simply to return to the GH, partly on the grounds that the hypothesis was unfairly rejected in the past, is therefore not possible.

The rest of Farmer's historical survey concerns the increasing acceptance of the 2DH, especially in England. In particular, he seeks to show that all defences of the hypothesis were ultimately dependent on the argument from order, but that gradually the terms of reference of the argument were disastrously changed.[32] This appealed to the lack of agreement in order between Matthew and Luke against Mark, and deduced from this the originality of the Markan order. At first the argument was used assuming the existence of a common *Grundschrift* lying behind all three gospels, and on these terms the argument has some validity. However, the difference between Mark and the assumed *Grundschrift* gradually disappeared and the two were identified, and at this point the argument becomes logically fallacious.[33] The dominant role implicitly played by the argument from order in the establishment of the 2DH means that the theory is built on a logically impossible foundation.

A detailed discussion of the history of the debate will not be given here, since it is perhaps more relevant to a study of the 2DH than of the GH.[34] Nevertheless, two brief points need to be mentioned. First, there are at least two quite distinct arguments from order and these should not be confused. There is the argument which appeals to the lack of agreement between Matthew and Luke against Mark. But there is also an argument which appeals to the disagreements in order, and claims that good reasons can be found for the changing of Mark's order by Matthew and Luke, but not vice versa. It is this argument which was used by Lachmann and many others after him.[35] This argument is, of course, not dependent for its validity on the existence of a common *Grundschrift*, and hence does not

become fallacious when Mark is identified with the assumed *Grundschrift*.[36] Secondly, the argument which does appeal to the lack of agreement between Matthew and Luke against Mark is a fallacy only in its logic. The conclusion of the argument (i.e. Markan priority) is not inconsistent with the premiss: the fallacy lies only in the assumption that this is the only conclusion possible.[37] Thus this argument from order would still have some validity if other hypotheses, equally consistent with the facts, were rejected on other grounds. The argument might not be logically probative, but it could still have value if supported by other considerations. And indeed this is the way in which the argument has been used by advocates of Markan priority: for example, Abbott and Woods both recognised that the GH was a logically possible explanation of the facts and they offered quite independent reasons for rejecting it.[38]

The relevance of some of these considerations will be seen later when the arguments themselves are examined. Nevertheless, it is also worth noting that study of the history of research can have only limited value in seeking to solve the Synoptic Problem today. Arguments used in the past cannot necessarily be simply repeated without alteration. Presuppositions change, and what might have been an acceptable argument in the past is no longer so today. For example, one of Griesbach's strongest arguments against Markan priority was based on the unquestioned assumption that the author of the first gospel was the apostle Matthew: hence it was inconceivable that he should be dependent on the work of someone who was not an eye-witness.[39] Such an argument worked within acceptable presuppositions in the eighteenth century, but would probably find few defenders today. Further, a demonstration that some particular defence of, say, the 2DH is weak can neither disprove the validity of the hypothesis itself,[40] nor in itself establish the validity of any other source hypothesis. Study of the history of research may help one to recognise where the strengths and weaknesses of different hypotheses have been felt to lie, but one must in the end examine the text itself to see which is the best explanation of the source question. Such is the aim of the rest of this book.

PART II GENERAL PHENOMENA

1 CRITERIA

Before examining the text itself, some methodological questions must be considered. In particular, there is the problem of what criteria one can legitimately use to decide about literary priority. Very often the evidence is ambiguous and open to more than one interpretation. For example, in the case of Mark's 'duplicate expressions', where Mark has A+B and where Matthew had A and Luke has B, one can explain this in diametrically opposite ways: either Mark has conflated Matthew and Luke, or both Matthew and Luke have independently abbreviated Mark's apparent redundancy. Each theory explains the facts in one particular example. One requires, therefore, some more wide-ranging criteria for deciding between different possible explanations in any one case.

In this respect, the study of the Synoptic Problem is very similar to the study of the historical Jesus in its attempt to decide what is authentic in the gospel tradition. Both fields of study are concerned with seeking to distinguish between early material and later adaptations. The areas of study differ: historical Jesus research is concerned with the period from Jesus up to that of the earliest gospel, whereas study of the Synoptic Problem is concerned with the period from the earliest synoptic gospel to the latest. Nevertheless, the fundamental similarity in aim means that many of the methodological insights gained in one area can usefully be applied in the other. In the study of the historical Jesus, a great deal of work has been done in analysing and refining the various criteria which can usefully be employed.[1] In fact, analogous criteria can be, and often have been, applied to the study of the Synoptic Problem. The parallelism between the two areas of study means that criticisms of the criteria in one area can, in some cases, be transferred to the other area.

Farmer himself gave four criteria, or 'canons of criticism', for use in the study of the Synoptic Problem, to add to the six from the work of Burton.[2] Farmer proposed that (1) traditions which do not reflect a Jewish or Palestinian provenance are secondary to those which do; (2) a more specific tradition is secondary to a less specific one; (3) forms of a tradition with

explanatory redactional glosses are secondary to those without; (4) a feature which is clearly redactional in one gospel is secondary to a parallel tradition which lacks this; and further, as a corollary, where a tradition in one gospel retains a feature which is clearly redactional in a parallel text, then the former is secondary. This section of Farmer's work has been acclaimed by Fuller as one of the most important parts of the book: he writes that Farmer 'established invaluable direction indicators which must now be used in all synoptic work, regardless of what solution we favour'.[3] Nevertheless, not all these criteria are above criticism. In the second edition of *The Synoptic Problem*, Farmer himself withdrew the second criterion, concerning 'more specific' traditions, in the light of the work of E. P. Sanders.[4] His third criterion, referring to explanatory redactional glosses, is also questionable and it may not always give a clear-cut line of chronological development. It may be that some explanations, felt to be necessary for the audience of an earlier gospel, were considered superfluous for the audience of a later writer. Explanatory redactional glosses may thus say more about the different intended audiences of the gospel writers than about their relative dates.

Similar criticisms can be made of Farmer's first criterion, referring to the 'Jewishness' of a tradition. For example, the note in Mk. vii. 3f. is almost certainly a redactional gloss, explaining Jewish customs for a non-Jewish audience, and this is lacking in Matthew. However, it would be wrong to conclude from this alone that Mark's version is secondary to Matthew's.[5] It probably implies only that Matthew's audience was better acquainted with Judaism than Mark's. An appeal to Matthew's 'Jewishness' in this respect does not substantiate the claim that it was precisely Matthew's version to which Mark added his explanatory gloss. To assume that the whole gospel tradition underwent a simple, unilinear development from a Jewish to a non-Jewish provenance imposes too rigid a scheme on the historical, geographical and cultural influences which are now known to have been at work. The widespread interpenetration of Jewish and Hellenistic ideas, both inside and outside Palestine in the first century A.D., precludes any neat theory of a move by the church from a Palestinian, 'Jewish' milieu to a non-Palestinian, 'Hellenistic' one.[6] Besides, the Christian church continued to exist on Palestinian soil in close contact with Judaism for some time. One may not assume, therefore, that all later writers were non-Jewish, or, conversely, that all non-Jewish Christian writers must be later than Jewish ones. There is thus no *a priori* reason why any particular tradition could not have been 're-Judaised', or why explanatory glosses, originally added for Gentile readers, could not have been excised by an evangelist writing for a community well acquainted with Judaism.[7] This

criterion of the 'Jewishness' of a tradition is very similar to the criterion of 'Aramaisms' in the quest for the historical Jesus. However, exactly parallel criticisms have been made there: an Aramaism in the tradition need show only an origin in an Aramaic-speaking community, rather than in Jesus' own words.[8] So then, in the study of the Synoptic Problem also, 'Jewishness' and 'glosses' can only be used with care to decide on the question of literary priority.

Farmer's fourth criterion, about redactional elements in one gospel appearing in a parallel tradition, is perhaps the most useful. In itself it is not new, as it was used prominently in the debates of the Tübingen school. For example, it was the basic presupposition in Zeller's linguistic arguments for the GH,[9] and Ritschl was appealing essentially to this criterion in arguing for the priority of Mark.[10] Fuller suggests that this legacy from the Tübingen school may be a 'criterion of permanent value' if only because, unlike so many other arguments used, this one is not reversible.[11] In many respects it is analogous to the criterion of 'dissimilarity' in historical Jesus research: where there is a parallel between a gospel saying and an idea in either Judaism or the early church, one suspects that the latter might be the source of the former. So too, in the Synoptic Problem, if a dominant Markan motif appears in a Lukan parallel, one deduces that Luke's text is dependent on Mark. This is certainly a very valuable criterion in view of its irreversibility. It is also, however, not without its difficulties, as the analogy to the dissimilarity criterion shows. In the study of the historical Jesus, the criterion allows what is dissimilar to Judaism and the early church to be counted as authentic material. But it has often been pointed out that we do not know enough about either Judaism or the early church to be able to say with confidence what could, or could not, come from these sources.[12] Thus, exactly analogously, it is not always clear that we can establish what are the tendencies (theological, linguistic or whatever) of each evangelist. So often, opinions about these depend on a prior solution to the Synoptic Problem, and many of the standard works on the stylistic and theological characteristics of Matthew and Luke presuppose the 2DH. For example, Cadbury's classic work on Lukan style is explicitly based on the 2DH,[13] and different source hypotheses may lead to very different results about what is redactional.[14] So too, Mark's theology according to the GH will presumably be rather different from that based on the assumption of Markan priority: for it will have to account for the deliberate omission of a large amount of material directly available to the evangelist in his sources. The assumption of the GH might thus imply something new about Mark's redactional aims. Nevertheless, Farmer's fourth criterion can be employed provided it is used with care.