

JESUS AND GOSPEL

'Gospel' initially referred to oral proclamation concerning Jesus Christ, but was later used to refer to four written accounts of the life of Jesus. How did this happen? Here, distinguished scholar Graham Stanton uses new evidence and fresh perspectives to tackle this controversial question. He insists that in the early post-Easter period, the Gospel of Jesus Christ was heard against the backdrop of a rival set of 'gospels' concerning the Roman emperors. In later chapters Stanton examines the earliest criticisms of Jesus and of claims concerning his resurrection. Finally, he discusses the early Christian addiction to the codex (book) format as opposed to the ubiquitous roll, and undermines the view that early copies of the gospels were viewed as down-market handbooks of an inward-looking sect. With half the material previously unpublished and the rest carefully gathered from sources difficult to access, this is a timely study with broad appeal.

Graham Stanton is Lady Margaret's Professor of Divinity, University of Cambridge, and a Fellow of Fitzwilliam College. His publications include *Gospel Truth? New Light on Jesus and the Gospels* (1995), *A Gospel for a New People: Studies in Matthew* (1992), *The Gospels and Jesus* (1989; revised and expanded 2002) and *Jesus of Nazareth in New Testament Preaching* (1974).

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Dedicated to Professor C. F. D. Moule

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Preface

The completion of a book is a time for stock-taking. Why have I written on this topic, and not another? How have I managed to complete it, given the ever-growing demands teaching and administrative duties make on the time of an academic?

The topics explored in this book are at the very centre of the concerns of anyone interested in earliest Christianity and, indeed, in Christian theology. I have tried to approach them from fresh angles and, where possible, in the light of new evidence. So I have spread my net more widely than is often the case. The questions discussed have captured my interest for a variety of reasons. In some cases I think that I have found new paths through well-traversed territory. In others, I have become dissatisfied with the standard answers.

Chapter 2, 'Jesus and Gospel', is a considerably extended version of the Inaugural Lecture I gave as Lady Margaret's Professor of Divinity in the University of Cambridge on 27 April 2000. In my introductory remarks I referred to the debt I owe to my two predecessors in the Cambridge Chair, Professors C. F. D. Moule and Morna Hooker, who were both present.

An earlier version of Chapter 5, 'The Law of Christ and the Gospel', was one of eighteen seminar papers given as part of the celebrations of 500th anniversary of the establishment of the Lady Margaret's Professorship in 1502. The seminar papers attempted to encourage dialogue between Biblical scholars and theologians; they have now been published as *Reading Texts, Seeking Wisdom: Scripture and Theology*, ed. David F. Ford and Graham Stanton (London: SCM, 2003). Two lectures on the history of the Professorship were given as the centrepiece of the celebrations; they are included in Patrick Collinson, Richard Rex, and Graham Stanton, *Lady Margaret Beaufort and her Professors of Divinity at Cambridge* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

Several of the other chapters are revised and extended versions of invited lectures or seminar papers. The original settings have been diverse:

universities and colleges in New Zealand, Australia, Singapore, Canada, the USA, Finland, France, and the Netherlands, as well as in the United Kingdom. I am grateful for the initial invitations and the warm hospitality received. Discussion following the lectures and seminars has often been encouraging. Sometimes new lines of inquiry have been suggested, and now and again I have been forced to abandon false trails.

How have I managed to complete this book? I could not have done so without the keen interest of my colleagues in Cambridge and earlier at King's College London. They have given me far more support and advice than they are aware of. They have known when not to ask about progress, and have often found ways of helping me to find time to press ahead. Only a small number of my many doctoral students have been working with me in the general field discussed in this book. But their enthusiasm for our discipline, their lively questions, and their own promising scholarly work have been a constant delight. My wife's support has been unflagging; I hope that I have not taken it for granted.

This book is dedicated to Professor C. F. D. Moule, the supervisor of my doctoral research nearly forty years ago. His example of scholarly rigour and his unswerving Christian commitment have meant more to me than I can express. At ninety-five, he writes astute reviews for learned journals, and by correspondence continues a ministry of encouragement to his many friends, former colleagues and students.

Abbreviations

<i>ANRW</i>	<i>Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt</i> , ed. H. Temporini and W. Haase (Berlin, 1972–).
BDAG	<i>A Greek–English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature</i> , 3rd edn. revised and ed. F. W. Danker (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2000).
<i>BJRL</i>	<i>Bulletin of the John Rylands Library University of Manchester</i>
<i>CBQ</i>	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
<i>CTQ</i>	<i>Concordia Theological Quarterly</i>
E. tr.	English translation
EKK	Evangelisch-katholischer Kommentar zum NT
<i>ETL</i>	<i>Ephemerides theologicae lovanienses</i>
<i>ExT</i>	<i>Expository Times</i>
<i>FS</i>	<i>Festschrift</i>
ICC	International Critical Commentary
<i>JBL</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
<i>JSNT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</i>
<i>JTS</i>	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
LCL	Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press)
<i>NovT</i>	<i>Novum Testamentum</i>
<i>NTS</i>	<i>New Testament Studies</i>
REB	Revised English Bible (1989)
<i>RSR</i>	<i>Religious Studies Review</i>
<i>SC</i>	<i>Second Century</i>
<i>SJT</i>	<i>Scottish Journal of Theology</i>
<i>ST</i>	<i>Studia Theologica</i>
<i>TB</i>	<i>Tyndale Bulletin</i>

<i>TDNT</i>	<i>Theological Dictionary of the New Testament</i> (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, E. tr., 1964–76)
<i>TS</i>	<i>Theological Studies</i>
<i>Vig. Chr.</i>	<i>Vigiliae Christianae</i>
<i>WUNT</i>	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament
<i>ZPE</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik</i>