Introduction

Markus Bockmuehl and Donald A. Hagner

The gospels continue to captivate the world's attention. Christianity's burgeoning growth, especially in the southern hemisphere, means that they are being read by more people today than ever before. Even in the highly secularized West, millions flock to a blockbuster movie like Mel Gibson's *The Passion of the Christ*; and a renewed, broader interest in the gospels has been sparked by the recent flurry of popular Jesus books. The frequently exotic and far-fetched conclusions of these highly publicized books have driven Christians and interested non-Christians alike to go back to the gospels with questions concerning their origin, nature, and teachings. It goes without saying that these foundational documents continue to be critically important for the church and for the doctrine and practice of contemporary Christians.

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, scholarly research on the gospels is experiencing a renewal of textual, literary, and theological study. It is true that nothing ever stands still in biblical scholarship, but the study of the gospels in recent decades has made especially significant advances. New methods and approaches abound, with an emphasis on interdisciplinary work and new attention to such areas as sociology, literary or narrative criticism, and the history of influence of texts (*Wirkungsgeschichte*). The new emphases ought not to be thought of as superseding more traditional historical study of the gospels which necessarily retains its importance, but as supplementing and enriching it.

As our title indicates, the present volume of essays focuses on the written gospel. It intends to present an up-to-date treatment of major aspects of the production of the gospels, including the contexts in which they were composed, the process of writing, the character of the written gospels, and their publication and reception in the early church. Attention is furthermore given to the production of the individual canonical gospels, their position among and relation to non-canonical gospels, and the eventual writing of commentaries on the canonical texts.

Part I of the book, 'Before Writing', opens with an essay by William Horbury that explores the meaning of the word 'gospel' in the historical context of Herodian Judaea, showing it to be rooted in Scripture and applied in daily life and also in both Jewish and Graeco-Roman royal publicity and praise of God. The second chapter, by Klyne Snodgrass, looks specifically at the gospel of Jesus and its content. In chapter 3, James D. G. Dunn examines the oral tradition that underlies the written gospels and argues that the earliest stratum of the presumed sayings source 'Q' (so-called 'Q[1]'), must have been oral rather than written. In the last chapter of Part I, Martin Hengel focuses on the historical character of the material in the gospels and the role of the gospel-writers in transmitting narrated history, criticizing much of form criticism in the process.

Part II, 'Writing the Four Gospels', focuses on the composition of the canonical gospels. Richard A. Burridge, in chapter 5, examines the four evangelists and the audiences for whom they wrote. This is followed by chapters devoted to each of the four evangelists. Richard C. Beaton provides insights into factors at play in the writing of Matthew, looking particularly at the sources of this gospel. Craig A. Evans examines the distinctive features of Mark, noting not only general aspects of Mark's style, but in particular the well-known device of Marcan sandwiching of one narrative within another. He suggests that the whole of the gospel in its bipartite structure can be conceived of as a Marcan sandwich. The composition of Luke is examined by David P. Moessner, particularly in view of its being part one of a two-part work, and the close interrelation between the gospel and Acts. Judith Lieu then provides a chapter on the distinctive aspects of the Gospel of John. She considers among other things the claim that this gospel is a 'spiritual' gospel, its symbolism, narrative and community-history readings of the gospel, and the composition of the gospel. In chapter 10, Morna D. Hooker looks in detail at the beginnings and endings of the gospels as providing clues to the meaning of the total compositions.

Part III deals with what transpired 'After Writing'. Here, in chapter 11, James Carleton Paget examines evidence of knowledge of the gospels among the (mainly non-Christian) Jews. In chapter 12, Loveday Alexander similarly looks at pagan views of the gospels, exemplified in the second-century writer Celsus. And in chapter 13, Christopher Tuckett writes concerning the many extant non-canonical gospels – narrative gospels, sayings gospels, infancy gospels, resurrection discourses – the light they throw upon the canonical gospels and their relation to them. The penultimate chapter, by Ronald A. Piper, documents the early

church's acceptance of the four gospels as the canonical manifestation of the one gospel. In the final chapter of the book, Markus Bockmuehl explores the origins of gospel commentaries in the second century, looking at Jewish and Graeco-Roman antecedents, implications for the growing normative character of the gospels, and the balance of academic and pastoral interests in the early commentaries.

As editors we are particularly grateful to our fellow-authors for their contributions, and to Cambridge University Press for making this volume possible. Special thanks are also due to our Ph.D. students Wayne Coppins for translating chapter 4 and Stephen Young for invaluable assistance with the painful labour of formatting and indexing.

But why this book, and why this subject? Needless to say, we believe that there is clear merit and importance in making available a compendium of recent informed opinion – from the origins of the written gospel to its reception in canon and commentary. Above all, however, the contributors wish to honour Professor Graham N. Stanton, Lady Margaret's Professor of Divinity in the University of Cambridge, on the occasion of his sixty-fifth birthday (9 July 2005). Throughout the thirty-five years of his scholarly career at King's College London and at Cambridge, Graham has been a prolific scholar and a much-loved friend to colleagues and mentor to students. He has been an enabler and encourager of numerous doctoral students, all the while maintaining a close friendship with his own Cambridge *Doktorvater*, C. F. D. Moule. All of his major books thus far have focused either on Jesus or on the gospels or both. This interest was already evident with the publication of his doctoral thesis, *Jesus of Nazareth in New Testament Preaching* (1974). Graham is also the author of a popular textbook on the subject, *The Gospels and Jesus* (1989, 2nd edn, 2002). We may further mention his *Gospel Truth? New Light on Jesus and the Gospels* (1995), and his latest book on the subject, *Jesus and Gospel* (2004). Graham is renowned as a specialist in the Gospel of Matthew, on which he has written *A Gospel for a New People: Studies in Matthew* (1992) and numerous shorter studies. He has also edited or co-edited books on Matthew, on Resurrection, on Tolerance and Intolerance, and on Scripture and Theology, and published dozens of articles, too numerous to list here (see appendix). Noteworthy too is his tireless work as an editor, including the International Critical Commentary (since 1984) as well as the flagship journal *New Testament Studies* (1982–90) and the distinguished Monograph Series of Studiorum Novi Testamenti Societas (SNTS, 1982–91), the leading professional society in the field. He was elected a Fellow of King's College London in 1996 (the equivalent of an honorary

doctorate) and served as President of the SNTS in 1996–7. A New Zealander who remains an inveterate All Blacks supporter even after forty years abroad, he was awarded an honorary DD in 2000 by his Alma Mater, the University of Otago. In 2002–3 he oversaw the 500th anniversary celebrations of the Lady Margaret's Professorship in Divinity, the oldest chair in the University of Cambridge.

It is our hope that Graham will be pleased with the subject of this book, so close to his heart, and with the quality of these essays written in his honour. Graham's scholarship is widely known and admired. Those who have met him personally cannot fail to be impressed by his unpretentious and self-giving gift of encouragement. We thank God for him and his wife, Esther, and for what they have meant over these many years not only to those involved in this book, but also to many other friends and acquaintances.

MARKUS BOCKMUEHL

DONALD A. HAGNER

PART I

Before writing

CHAPTER 1

'Gospel' in Herodian Judaea

William Horbury

1

A link between the Jews of ancient Judaea and the Christian use of *euangelizein* or *euangelizesthai*, 'to announce', with the cognate noun *euangelion*, has regularly been postulated through comparison of the New Testament with the Old. These Greek words in their New Testament contexts have been perceived, through the LXX and the Vulgate, as sharing a good part of the semantic range of the Hebrew verb *l^e basser*, 'to announce', and its cognate noun *b^e sorah*, in the Old Testament. A signpost in the general direction of this view is formed by Heb 4.2 (cf. 4.6), 'we have been evangelized (*euēngelismenoi*) just as they' – the generation of the exodus – 'had been'.

The Epistle to the Hebrews here implicitly classifies as evangel the message of election, victory, and settlement to come which was conveyed through Moses, for example from the divine messenger (in Greek, *angelos*) at Exod 3.2–14, but was disregarded by the people and their princes other than Caleb, as shown above all in Num 13–14; cf. Ps 95.11. Of special note for scholarly assessment of the New Testament *euangelizesthai*, however, were a series of verses in the psalms and prophets which use the verb *l^e basser* and its participle *m^e basser*, rendered in the LXX by *euangelizesthai* and *euangelizomenos*, respectively, to speak expressly of the announcement and announcers of good tidings (Pss. 40.10; 68.12; Isa 40.9; 41.27; 52.7 (parallel with Nah 2.1 (1.15)); 61.1). The series is expanded in the LXX by Joel 2.32 (3.5), ending '*euangelizomenoi* whom the Lord shall call', where the Hebrew will have been read as *m^e bass^e rim*. Note, however, that the noun *b^e sorah* does not occur in this series; in the Hebrew biblical books it appears only in 2 Samuel and 2 Kings (six times in all).

These verses from the psalms and prophets are quoted or echoed in presentations of the teaching and work of Christ in the synoptic gospels, Acts, and Ephesians (Isa 61.1 in Matt 11.5, parallel with Luke 7.22, and in

Luke 4.18, with an echo in Acts 10.39; Isa 52.7 in Eph 2.17). They are also applied to the apostolic preaching in the Pauline corpus (Isa 52.7 quoted in Rom 10.15, and echoed in Eph 6.15), and probably in Acts (the end of Joel 2.32 (3.5) LXX not quoted but envisaged in Acts 2.21: see n. 28 below). These attestations of Old Testament passages which use the relevant vocabulary of course occur amid more widespread New Testament use of *euangelizesthai* and *euangelion*. The common share of the Old Testament in Greek and of the New Testament in this vocabulary is partially but strikingly recalled in the Vulgate Latin by the occurrence of *evangelizare* and *evangelista* in some of the passages on good tidings in the psalms and prophets (Ps 68 (67).12; Isa 40.9; 41.27; Nah 2.1 (1.15)).

This Old Testament-guided interpretation of Christian usage regularly also led to discussion of languages and vocabulary used by ancient Jews. The topic considered below is the place of the vocabulary associated with *l*^{e}*basser* and *euangelizesthai* in Herodian Judaea, that is the Roman province of Judaea (including Galilee, Samaria, Peraea, and Idumaea) in the period beginning when the Roman senate designated Herod the Great as king of the Jews in 40 BC, and ending at least in principle with the death of Herod's great-grandson Agrippa II, probably in AD 100.[1] Conditions which can be called Herodian will not have vanished overnight, and the full end of the Herodian period can be associated with the uprising of Bar-Kokhba in 132–5.

In this chapter some indications of the use of the relevant vocabulary in Judaea in this period will be reviewed in two main parts. To begin with, points which have emerged from biblically oriented study of *euangelion* against the background of the Old and New Testaments are gathered, and there is a fresh consideration of aspects of the Septuagint and its pseudepigrapha, with kindred passages in Josephus and the New Testament, and of the Targum with some rabbinic texts (section 2 below). Then the discussion moves from this mainly biblical orientation to another viewpoint often taken in earlier study, the interpretation of this vocabulary in the setting of both gentile and Jewish religion (section 3 below). Herodian Judaea is still the focus of inquiry, and the use of the relevant words in ordinary life is not ignored; but attention is now paid to some primary texts of a more directly cultic character, notably honorific formulae, prophecy, and hymnody, including material from the Qumran finds and later Jewish literature. It is suggested overall (section 4 below) that, for Judaean Jews, the prominence of this vocabulary in scripture and its development in interpretative tradition were enhanced by contemporary more general

[1] Kokkinos 1998:396–9.

usage of the relevant Aramaic and Greek words, and their high profile in the honorific language of courts and temples.

2

The main lines of an approach to the New Testament vocabulary of 'gospel' guided especially by the Old Testament in Hebrew and Greek emerge in Matthew Poole's synopsis of seventeenth-century comment on *euangelion*.[2] He began by noting attestation in Greek authors of the meanings 'reward for good news' and 'sacrifice on account of good news' as well as 'good news' itself – the three meanings later distinguished in the Greek lexicon of Liddell, Scott, and Jones.[3] Christian understanding of the word as 'good news' thus emerged as continuous with Greek usage, even though it would increasingly be noted that the sense 'good news' was best attested in the relatively late Greek used by the bilingual Cicero, Plutarch, and (from Herodian Judaea) Josephus, and that the relevant Greek, Hebrew, and Aramaic vocabulary could sometimes be used for the announcement of bad news as well as good.[4] Poole gave most of his space, however, to Hugo Grotius' view (itself a development of earlier concern with the Semitic-language setting of the gospels)[5] that Hebrew or Aramaic here lay beneath New Testament Greek and was used by Christ, whose gospel (in Hebrew, *bᵉsorah*) consisted of the good tidings of peace and of the kingdom of God declared in Isa 52.7: 'the Christians received this term from their great teacher, and he from the prophets'. A motto for Grotius' approach could perhaps be taken from *1 Clem.* 42.1, 'the apostles had the gospel imparted to them (*euēngelisthēsan*) for us from the Lord Jesus Christ'.

The LXX and Hebrew and Aramaic continued to hold their place in comment on *euangelion* beside Greek usage, and were characteristically but not unjustly emphasized at the end of the nineteenth century in H. Cremer's biblical-theological New Testament lexicon (see n. 4 above).

[2] Poole (Pole) 1684–6 (corrected reprint of work issued first in 1669–76) IV, cols. 3–4, quoting among other authors Grotius 1641:4–5.

[3] Liddell et al. 1940:705a.

[4] On the relatively late attestation of *euangelion* in the sense 'good news', see Cremer 1893:30–1 (but Friedrich 1935, col. 719, ET 722, urged that some earlier instances of 'sacrifice on account of good news' presuppose the sense 'good news'); on use of relevant vocabulary for bad news as well as good, see Billerbeck in Strack and Billerbeck 1922–61:III (1926), 5 (the favourable sense predominates).

[5] Such concern was encouraged in the sixteenth century (Horbury 1999) by the patristic tradition that Matthew wrote in Hebrew, together with the printing of Jewish Hebrew versions of Matthew (1537, 1555) and of the gospels in Syriac (1555). The Aramaic words quoted by Grotius were the Syriac *śᵉbar*, 'to announce' and *śᵉbarta*, 'tidings'.

Yet it also remained clear both that Christian use of *euangelion* took up a sense attested in Greek authors, characteristically connected with the 'announcement' of births, victories, and new reigns, and that *euangelion* had quickly become a quintessentially Christian term. Thus it was already beginning to be used as a term for a written gospel-book by the time of Bar-Kokhba; it was adopted from Greek, without translation, by Christian speakers of Latin and Syriac; and the Greek word is also echoed in rabbinic literature with regard to Christianity.[6]

Within the New Testament, correspondingly, as many as sixty of its seventy-five or seventy-six occurrences are in the Pauline corpus; in the gospels and Acts, the noun is restricted to Matthew (four occurrences), Mark (seven or eight), and Acts (two), although the verb *euangelizesthai* is frequent in Luke and Acts. This distribution could in itself encourage the view that the noun was essentially a Pauline term derived from Greek-speaking circles, and was unlikely to reflect the (Aramaic or Hebrew) vocabulary of Jesus and his disciples.[7] Its rapid acquisition of a special Christian sense (a specialization which did not affect the verb to the same extent in Christian usage) perhaps contributed to the popularity in patristic authors of the related word *euangelismos* for the more general good announcement, above all for the 'annunciation' made to Mary by Gabriel, who had earlier been sent to 'announce' to Zacharias the future birth of John (*euangelisasthai*, Luke 1.19).[8]

These Greek and Christian aspects of *euangelion* were highlighted after the publication in 1899 of an inscription (ca. 9 BC) from Priene in Caria, using the plural *evangelia* for the good tidings which began with the birthday of the divine Caesar. Adolf Deissmann brought this epigraphic text together with papyri to present *euangelion* as a term of Augustan and

[6] Stanton 1997:334 (citing instances of *euangelion* as referring to a written text in *Did.* 8.2; 11.3; 15.3–4; Ign. *Smyrn.* 5.1; 7.2; *2 Clem.* 8.5); Mohrmann 1965 (reprint of articles issued in 1949 and 1950), 104, 113 (*evangelium* already found in the Latin version of *1 Clement*), 130–1 (*evangelium* one of a group of words adopted in Christian Latin together with the institutions which they designate); Brock 1967:399 (noting the currency of the translation *s'barta* as well as the transliteration); Babylonian Talmud, *Šabb.* 116a, in Strack 1910:2, 19* (R. Meir (second century) said in condemnation *'awen-gillayon*, 'trouble of *gillayon*', R. Yoḥanan b. Nappaḥa (third century)) *'won-gillayon*, 'iniquity of *gillayon*'), interpreted by Maier 1982:74–8 as originally referring not to the gospel but to blank parchment (Hebrew *gillayon*) considered unsuitable, but more probably, given the rarity of the use of *awen* attributed to Meir, alternative polemical malformations of Greek *euangelion*.

[7] Stanton 2004:18–25 argues in general on these lines. The unlikelihood of a link with the vocabulary of Jesus was stressed by Wellhausen 1911 (1st edn 1905), 99 (affirming the Paulinism of Mark) and Bousset 1921 (1st edn 1913), 42 n. 1; but it was allowed as possible by Harnack 1910:234, ET 324 (rejecting the Paulinism of Mark) and – now together with the opinion that Marcan usage reflected that of Paul – by Lagrange 1929:clvii, 17–18.

[8] Lampe 1961:559.

later Roman ruler-cult, attested in Asia Minor and Egypt with regard to the good news of an auspicious reign; he stressed that it was just one of a group of New Testament words which recall the idiom of ruler-cult, including *parousia*, *epiphaneia*, and *sotēr*.[9] Papyri and inscriptions published later on confirm the association with sovereigns, but also, like literary authors, attest more general announcement, notably in connection with birth, marriage, and victory.[10] The general and royal usages were of course intertwined; victory as well as birth well suits the ruler-cult context, especially given the dependence of many Hellenistic and Roman rulers, from the Seleucids to Herod the Great, Augustus, and Vespasian, on decisive battles and generalship for their sovereignty.[11]

J. Kögel, in his revision of Cremer, simply noted the fresh attestation of the sense 'good news' provided by the Priene inscription and related papyri.[12] This new contemporary context for New Testament usage, however, also attested 'good news' in a sense strikingly comparable with Christian understandings of *euangelion* – as the gospel of a divine reign. Christian use of *euangelion* has often been derived ever since, as by the scholar honoured in this volume, not from Jewish Hebrew, Aramaic, or Greek usage related to the Old Testament, but from the language of Greek and Roman ruler-cult.[13] Mediating positions are exemplified by M.-J. Lagrange, who envisaged Jesus as having himself spoken of good news, but the evangelist Mark as setting the evangel of the messianic advent of Jesus Christ deliberately in contrast with the evangel of imperial advents.[14] In the discussion below I have taken it that influence from ruler-cult should indeed be recognized, but in convergence with rather than as an alternative to biblical and later Jewish influence.

At the time of the first consideration of the Priene inscription, however, the Hebrew and Aramaic setting of the gospels and their vocabulary of 'gospel' was being explored by G. Dalman and, from a more radically critical viewpoint, by J. Wellhausen; Wellhausen in turn was criticized in a

[9] Deissmann 1923 (4th rev. edn of work issued first in 1908), 312–24, ET (1910), 370–84; on the Augustus-cult at Priene see Mitchell 1993:1.102.

[10] Horsley 1983:10–15, no. 2.

[11] This is noted in connection with the autocratic rather than constitutional character of much Hellenistic kingship by Bi(c)kerman 1938:12–13.

[12] Cremer 1893, ed. Kögel (1911), 31.

[13] Sponsors of this view include Wellhausen 1911 (1st edn 1905), 98–9 (but he allowed that the term could have come from the ruler-cult to the church through Christian speakers of Aramaic); Bousset 1921 (1st edn 1913), 42 n. 1, 244; Lohmeyer 1919:54, n. 60; Strecker (1975 onwards), cited by Stuhlmacher 1991:151 n. 11; Koester 1990:3–4; Stanton 2004:20–35.

[14] Lagrange 1929:clvii, 2 (on Mark 1.1), 17–18 (on 1.15).