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THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO
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ST MATTHEW

THE REVISED VERSION

*EDITED WITH NOTES
FOR THE USE OF SCHOOLS*

BY

ARTHUR CARR, M.A.

VICAR OF ADDINGTON, SURREY
FORMERLY FELLOW OF ORIEL COLLEGE, OXFORD



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PREFACE BY THE GENERAL EDITOR FOR THE GOSPELS AND ACTS.

THE Revised Version has to some extent superseded the need of annotation on the Gospels and Acts, so far as the meaning of words and phrases is concerned. But the present Edition will, it is hoped, serve a good purpose in drawing the attention of young scholars to the importance of some of the changes made in that Version.

Another aim is to present in a clear and intelligible form the best and most approved results of recent theological work on these books.

The General Editor takes this opportunity of noting that, as in *The Cambridge Bible for Schools*, each writer is responsible for the interpretation of particular passages, or for the opinion expressed on any point of doctrine. His own part is that of careful supervision and occasional suggestion.

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INTRODUCTION.

I. *The Origin of the Synoptic Gospels.*

THE Synoptic Gospels are related to one another in a way which is unique in literature. A considerable portion of subject matter is common to the three. In this common portion however the differences are as marked and interesting as the points of resemblance. Sometimes a single remarkable word forms a link of connexion in the midst of variety, sometimes the same incident is narrated with such differences of language and observed points that a separate source is unquestionable. Although no undisputed theory has been formed to account for these phenomena, some of the facts which must determine the solution may be stated. For some approach to a solution of the problem has been made in recent discussion.

In Acts ii. 42 we read that the disciples "continued stedfastly in the apostles' teaching." A great part of this teaching must have corresponded in substance to what we find in the Synoptic Gospels. We have examples of the form in which the Gospel was delivered in the addresses of St Peter (Acts ii. 22-36, x. 34-43) and of St Paul (Acts xiii. 16-39, xvii. 3), with which may be compared, as indicating the same acknowledged form, the summary of the Gospel, Rom. i. 3, 4; 1 Cor. xv. 3, 4, and warning against false Gospels founded on different models, 2 Cor. xi. 4; Gal. i. 6, 7 and 1 Tim. vi. 20. But the first and by

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far the most important example of an oral Gospel is that contained in Luke xxiv. 25–27 and 46–48 (comp. Matthew xi. 4–6). Here Jesus Christ himself preaches the Gospel of the Resurrection, confirmed by an appeal to prophetic teaching, in words that have prescribed the form not only of the Synoptic Gospels, but also of the oral Gospels preserved in the Acts.

From these examples it may be inferred that apostolical teaching in Jerusalem would from the first assume a definite shape and become the model of catechetical instruction elsewhere. In this apostolical cycle of instruction the great facts of the Nativity, the Passion, the Death and Resurrection and Ascension of Jesus Christ would find a place, and also those words and works which were of special and typical importance. The first disciples of the Apostles dispersed throughout the civilised world would convey the form and substance of the apostolic teaching to all the Churches.

At a very early date written Gospels would be published for the instruction of catechumens (Luke i. 4 *περὶ ὧν κατηχήθης*) and for use in the services of the Church (Matt. xxiv. 15). Of these written Gospels the three Synoptics are the preeminent surviving examples.

It is probable that St Mark's Gospel is nearest in form and language to the original or catechumens' Gospel of Jerusalem. For it is reasonable to suppose that the first Gospel would be moulded on the discourses of St Peter: (1) who took the lead in the first delivery of the Gospel after Pentecost; (2) whose Gospel to the Gentiles (Acts x. 34–43) is on the lines of St Mark's Gospel; (3) under whose guidance, according to ancient tradition, St Mark composed his Gospel.

It is held by an increasing number of scholars that St Matthew and St Luke had this Gospel before them when they wrote. But it is certain that they used other sources of information both oral and written. And

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St Matthew was of course an eye and ear witness of much that he records.

The first supposed trace of a Gospel according to St Matthew is to be found in the words of Papias quoted by Eusebius (*H. E.* III. 39). As Papias seems to have conversed with those who had seen the Lord, or at least with those who had known Apostles, his testimony is very important. He says: "So then Matthew composed the discourses (or 'oracles' or sayings, *τὰ λόγια*) in Hebrew, and every one interpreted them as he could." One question that arises out of these words is, whether by the *logia* or 'discourses' we are to understand the present Gospel according to St Matthew, or whether the *logia* are the discourses only, afterwards translated and imbedded in the Greek Gospel as we now have it. The best modern scholarship inclines to the latter opinion. If this is the correct view, the composition of St Matthew's Gospel may be traced as follows. In the first instance he would put on record the discourses of the Lord in accordance with the apostolic cycle of teaching in Jerusalem. At first the discourses would be published, as they were delivered, in the Aramaic vernacular or 'Hebrew' as it is termed in the New Testament. This would be the form or edition of the *logia* alluded to by Papias. Before long a demand would arise for a Greek version of the discourses. This version would be made either by St Matthew himself or by a scribe under the Apostle's guidance. The next step would be to add to the discourses a complete narrative of the work and life of Jesus and of His death and resurrection. In compiling this narrative it is clear that St Matthew availed himself of a document which was known also to St Mark and St Luke. In other words it is now generally agreed either that the three Synoptic Gospels had a common source or else that one of the three formed the common source for the others. The latter alternative accords best with the facts

of the case, and it is thought probable that St Mark's Gospel furnished the common matter for the other two. The grounds on which this opinion rests could only be exhibited by a careful comparison between the parallel passages of the three Synoptic Gospels. Such a comparison would shew that whereas the whole of St Mark's narrative is appropriated either by St Matthew or St Luke, this could not be affirmed either of St Matthew or of St Luke in regard to the other two Gospels.

If this view be correct the sources of St Matthew's Gospel are traceable: (1) to the *logia* or discourses mentioned by Papias; (2) to the narrative furnished by St Mark; and (3) to the personal recollections of the Evangelist himself.

The existence of the Gospel according to St Matthew is attested by quotation or by references made to it from a very early date. Traces of this book are perhaps discernible in the Epistles of St Paul (1 Thess., 1 Cor., Romans) and of St James and in the Apocalypse. It is cited or referred to by Clement of Rome, c. 95 A.D.; in the Didaché, placed by some c. 100 A.D.; by Ignatius, c. 107-115 A.D.; by Polycarp, c. 110 A.D.; by Papias, c. 120 A.D., whose important testimony is noted above; by Basilides, c. 125 A.D., the first to apply the word *εὐαγγέλια* to the Gospels; by Justin Martyr, c. 140 A.D.; and Tatian, his pupil, who composed a harmony of the four Canonical Gospels, the Diatessaron, c. 170 A.D. Irenæus, 185 A.D., gives important evidence (*Hæc.* III. i. 1). "Matthew," he says, "published his Gospel writing among the Hebrews in their own language, while Peter and Paul were preaching the Gospel in Rome, and founding the Church." Origen c. 230 A.D. confirms the statement that St Matthew wrote his Gospel in the Hebrew or Aramaic tongue (*Eus. H. E.* VI. 25) and according to Eusebius (*H. E.* III. 24) he did so in order to leave to those whom he was quitting a recompense for his absence.

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This original Aramaic or Hebrew Gospel of St Matthew has perished, being as we have seen probably incorporated in the Greek edition which we possess. Jerome indeed c. 400 A.D. claims to have had in his hands a copy of the original Aramaic Gospel of St Matthew. But if this document is to be identified with 'the Gospel according to the Hebrews' of which fragments have come down to us, it was a work which widely differed from the Canonical St Matthew.

II. *Life of St Matthew.*

Levi the son of Alphæus¹ was a tax-gatherer at Capernaum. His special duty would be to collect tolls from the fisheries on the Lake and perhaps from the merchants travelling southward from Damascus. One day Jesus coming up from the Lake side passed near the custom-house where Levi was seated in Oriental fashion, and He saith unto him, Follow me, and he arose and followed Him (ch. ix. 9). That Jesus ever addressed Levi before, we are not told; but it is reasonable to suppose that he was expecting the summons, that he was already a disciple of Jesus, and prepared as soon as Christ gave the word to leave all for His sake. At any rate, Levi must have heard of the great Rabbi and of His preaching, and have already resolved to adopt the view of the kingdom of God which Jesus taught.

It is probable that Levi changed his name to Matthew on becoming a follower of Jesus. This would give significance to the meaning of the name 'Gift of God,' equivalent to the Greek name Theodore.

The same day Matthew made a feast—perhaps a

¹ Alphæus being also the name of the father of James the Apostle it has been conjectured that James and Matthew were brethren. This is of course possible, but can hardly be called probable.

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farewell feast to his old associates—to which he invited Jesus and His disciples.

After this Matthew is not once named in the Gospel history, except in the list of the Twelve; in the other Gospels he appears seventh on the list, in his own Gospel eighth—the last in the second division. In his own Gospel again—a further mark of humility—he designates himself as “Matthew the publican.” His nearest companion seems to have been Thomas (whose surname Didymus has led to the belief that he was Matthew’s twin-brother), and in the same group or division were Philip and Bartholomew. Such are the scanty details which the Gospels record of St Matthew.

Since Capernaum was in the tetrarchy of Herod Antipas, it may be inferred that Levi was a tax-gatherer in the service of that prince, and not in the service of the Roman government, as is sometimes tacitly assumed. This is not unimportant in estimating the call and conversion of St Matthew.

No special mention is made of this Evangelist in the Acts of the Apostles, or in the Epistles, but some light is thrown upon his after-life by fragmentary notices of early Christian writers.

We gather that he remained in Palestine longer than the rest of the Apostles, and that he made his fellow-countrymen familiar with the words and works of Jesus. The Church historian Eusebius relates that being about to depart for distant lands to preach to others also, St Matthew left as a memorial to his Palestinian converts the story of the New Covenant committed to writing in their own tongue, the Aramaic or Hebrew dialect which they used.

Of St Matthew’s after-life, of his missionary work or of his death, nothing certain is known. Ecclesiastical history is almost as silent as the Gospels in regard to this great Apostle’s words and acts.

III. *Authorship, purpose and characteristics of the Gospel.*

1. The authorship of the first Gospel has been ascribed by an unbroken tradition to the Apostle Matthew.

2. Though the date is uncertain it may be fixed with great probability within a few years of the Ascension. Irenæus, as we have seen, states that St Matthew wrote his Gospel when St Peter and St Paul were preaching the Gospel in Rome, and founding the Church.

3. St Matthew's Gospel was primarily intended for the use of the Jewish converts in Palestine. It is this fact that gives its special character to this Gospel, in which the quotations from Hebrew prophecy and the allusions to the history of Israel as fulfilled in Christ are more frequent than in the other Gospels. For the same reason St Matthew traces our Lord's genealogy from Abraham and David rather than from Adam. In the Sermon on the Mount, he records those special references to the Mosaic Law which are absent in St Luke, and in the same special way he narrates our Lord's strictures on Pharisaic hypocrisy. To this cause also may be assigned the prominence given by St Matthew to the Jewish thought of a Kingdom of Heaven.

4. St Matthew does not appear to have arranged the events which he records in chronological order, but in such a way as to illustrate different aspects of our Lord's life and teaching. A careful examination of the sequence of events and discourses as given in St Matthew's Gospel will exhibit an orderly arrangement of this kind.

It is a Gospel of the kingdom of heaven. The following analysis is intended to indicate the progress and signs of the kingdom as described by St Matthew. Part I. The Birth and Childhood of the King, i.-ii. 23.

(*a*) Jesus is the promised King of the house of David ; (*b*) who fulfils the words of prophecy ; (*c*) whose kingdom is recognised by the Gentiles ; (*d*) who is the representative of His nation, and fulfils their history. II. The Beginning of the Kingdom, iii.-iv. 11. The herald of the Kingdom ; the Baptism ; the Temptation ; rejection of false ideals. III. The laws of the Kingdom ; its ministers ; its signs and the works of the King, iv. 12-xvi. 12. This part includes the Sermon on the Mount, the choice and mission of the Twelve, Parables explaining the nature of the Kingdom and Miracles forecasting its operation. IV. The Predictions of the Passion, by express words, and by Parables, and by significant incidents, xvi. 13-xx. 34. This section opens out a fresh revelation of the Kingdom, the condition of suffering, and the promise of glory in the Transfiguration. V. The Triumph of the King, xxi-xxv. The royal entry into Jerusalem ; the rejection of the Jewish people ; the Advent of the King in power at the siege of Jerusalem and at the end of the world. VI. The Passion, xxvi-xxvii. The Betrayal ; the Last Supper ; the Trials ; the Crucifixion and Burial. VII. The Resurrection of Jesus Christ : the Victory of the King, xxviii.

Parables and Miracles peculiar to St Matthew.

Parables. (1) The tares, xiii. 24-30. (2) The hid treasure, xiii. 44. (3) The pearl of great price, xiii. 45, 46. (4) The draw net, xiii. 47-50. (5) The unmerciful servant, xviii. 23-35. (6) The labourers in the vineyard, xx. 1-16. (7) The two sons, xxi. 28-32. (8) The marriage of the king's son, xxii. 1-14. (9) The ten virgins, xxv. 1-13. (10) The talents, xxv. 14-30.

Miracles. (1) The cure of two blind men, ix. 27-31. (2) The stater in the fish's mouth, xvii. 24-27.

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IV. *Jewish Sects—Scribes, Pharisees, Sadducees,
 Essenes, Zealots.*

The joint work of Ezra and Nehemiah had been to complete the Torah, or Law, and to enforce obedience to it. Historically, that work followed the lines of Josiah's reform, like that its whole force was directed against idolatry, and like that it tended to centralization of worship at Jerusalem.

The result was the foundation of Judaism. The Law was set forth as a complete system by which men should live. By the Law was understood in a special sense the Pentateuch, every word of which was regarded as inspired, and an immediate revelation to Moses. The Prophets (including the historical books) held a secondary place in the Canon.

From the first the Law needed explanation and development. This need called into existence a body of interpreters who were termed Sopherim or **Scribes**. Ezra had collected and edited all that survived of the sacred writings of the Jewish people. The Scribes explained and applied the rules of the Torah to special cases as they arose. Hence came that development or 'hedging round' of the Law which resulted in the body of minute Rabbinical rules of conduct. Eventually, though not at first, the decisions of the Scribes had the force of law. They *bound* men with burdens. In this way the Scribes were recognised as the legislators and the judges of Israel.

The first Scribes were priests. That the priest's lips should keep knowledge was a rule of the order. Soon, however, the study of the Law spread outside the circle of the priesthood, and a separate, even an antagonistic,

body of Sopherim began to teach. And when in the Hellenistic period many of the priests addicted themselves to heathen culture, the Scribes, who were not included in the priestly order more than any others, attracted the respect and reverence of the people. The Scribes were designated by various names, Sopherim, or literary men, lawyers, learned in the Torah or Law, teachers of the Law. Their learning had a wide range; mathematics, natural science, astronomy, geography, the history and the languages of the surrounding nations, were all required for a full exposition of the Law in its wider sense, and came within the limits of a Scribe's study. The estimation of the Scribes, and of the learning they professed, was high among the Jews. 'Study is more meritorious than sacrifice'; 'A scholar is greater than a prophet'; 'You should revere the teacher even more than your father,' were among the sayings which illustrate this enthusiasm for the teaching of the Law. Titles of honour, such as lord, and master, and Rabbi, came into vogue in the generation preceding the Christian era.

The Scribes were not confined to any one party in the Jewish Church. There were Scribes of the Sadducees as well as of the Pharisees, though the latter were probably the more numerous.

The Synagogue was, in its original intention, more a house of instruction than a house of prayer. It was the chief means by which the teaching and influence of the Scribes were extended, and by which the enactments of the Law were interpreted and enforced. The Synagogue was, in fact, a church, a school, and a court of justice.

Among the enthusiasts for the Law there was an inner circle, whose exact obedience and purity of life distinguished them above all others as specially representative of the national impulse towards zeal for the Law and separateness. To these the name of **Chasidim**, 'the pious,' was given. The Chasidim seem to have given

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rise, more or less directly, to two schools, sects, or orders—the Pharisees or ‘separatists,’ and the Essenes.

Although these sects, together with the rival faction of the Sadducees, do not appear under those appellations until the reign of John Hyrcanus (135–106 B.C.), it is not to be supposed that their origin dates from that late period. The different tendencies which afterwards took shape under familiar names originated at the time of the Return, or even earlier.

The fraternity of the **Pharisees** (*Perushim*, ‘separated ones’) were the popular or nationalist party. They represented and led the enthusiasm for the observance of the Levitical law, especially in regard to avoidance of ceremonial pollution, now characteristic of the whole Jewish people. Their belief included the doctrine of immortality and the resurrection of the body, and the existence of angels and spirits; in the question of the freedom of the will, they inclined to fatalism; as religious teachers, they upheld the authority of oral tradition as of equal validity with the written law.

The name of **Sadducees** has been traced either to Zadok the high priest in Solomon’s time, or to Zadok a disciple of Antigonus of Socho, whose teaching, derived from Simon the Just, was wrested into a denial of future rewards and punishments. But a more probable view connects the name with the Hebrew word for ‘righteous’ (*tsaddiqim*) notwithstanding a slight linguistic difficulty. They were rather a caste than a sect. Admission to the Pharisaic party was not only open but eagerly welcomed; whereas the priestly and aristocratic Sadducees were rigidly exclusive, and insignificant in point of numbers.

In their treatment of religious questions the Sadducean scribes held to the letter of the Mosaic revelation, and denied the authority of the oral tradition as interpreted by the Pharisees: they taught complete freedom of the will in moral action: they were opposed to the Pharisees

as to the belief in angels and spirits ; they refused also to accept the doctrine of immortality as a deduction from the Pentateuch. The two parties also differed, and differed bitterly, on many small questions of ritual, and of legal enactment. Politically, the Sadducees were as a party open to foreign influences, and it was through them that Hellenic culture spread in Israel. Such a policy could have little weight of resistance against the overwhelming tide of patriotic enthusiasm stirred and ruled by Pharisaic guidance. Eventually the party of the Synagogue and of the new learning prevailed over the party of the Temple and of ancient custom.

Less conspicuous in public life, and dwelling principally in secluded settlements on the shores of the Dead Sea, the **Essenes** nevertheless exercised a considerable influence, and represented, though in an extreme fashion, one tendency of the post-exilic reform. Although the name, like that of the Pharisees and Sadducees, appears late in history, the type of asceticism practised by the Essenes may be regarded as part of the same movement from which Pharisaism originated. The Essenes are not mentioned in the New Testament, nor is it probable that there is any trace of their influence on Christian life and teaching at that early period, many of the practices which the Essenes followed, celibacy, isolation, silence, ceremonial ablutions, abstinence from animal food, being common to most forms of asceticism. Some tenets which the Essenes professed were derived from Persian influence, such as a dualistic theory of good and evil, the symbolism of light, the adoration of the sun, and the worship of angels. But it was in regard to the sacrificial system that the Essenes separated most widely from the ordinary religious life of the Jews. The Essenes abstained from sacrifices, and from the Temple worship, and refusing to acknowledge the Aaronic priesthood or the Levitical order, they had priests and ministers of their own.

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The **Zealots** can hardly be reckoned as a separate party, at any rate at this epoch. They represented one extreme side of the Pharisaic movement as the Essenes represented another. At first the points of difference may have been small. It required the stimulus of the Maccabean struggle to ripen their 'zeal' into the fanaticism of later times.

V. *Members of the Family of Herod connected with New Testament History.*

