

# TYNDALE NEW TESTAMENT COMMENTARIES

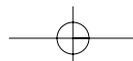
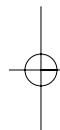
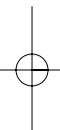
VOLUME 1

TNTC

## MATTHEW



DEDICATION  
In grateful memory of  
my mother  
2.1.1909 – 19.6.1984



# TYNDALE NEW TESTAMENT COMMENTARIES

VOLUME 1

GENERAL EDITOR: LEON MORRIS

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## MATTHEW

AN INTRODUCTION AND COMMENTARY

R. T. FRANCE



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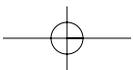
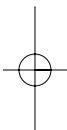
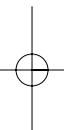
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## GENERAL PREFACE

The original Tyndale Commentaries aimed at providing help for the general reader of the Bible. They concentrated on the meaning of the text without going into scholarly technicalities. They sought to avoid ‘the extremes of being unduly technical or unhelpfully brief’. Most who have used the books agree that there has been a fair measure of success in reaching that aim.

Times, however, change. A series that has served so well for so long is perhaps not quite as relevant as it was when it was first launched. New knowledge has come to light. The discussion of critical questions has moved on. Bible-reading habits have changed. When the original series was commenced it could be presumed that most readers used the Authorized Version and comments were made accordingly, but this situation no longer obtains.

The decision to revise and update the whole series was not reached lightly, but in the end it was thought that this is what is required in the present situation. There are new needs, and they will be better served by new books or by a thorough updating of the old books. The aims of the original series remain. The new commentaries are neither minuscule nor unduly long. They are exegetical rather than homiletic. They do not discuss all the critical questions, but none is written without an awareness of the problems that engage the attention of New Testament scholars. Where it is felt that formal consideration should be given to such questions, they are discussed in the Introduction and sometimes in Additional notes.

But the main thrust of these commentaries is not critical. These

books are written to help the non-technical reader understand his Bible better. They do not presume a knowledge of Greek, and all Greek words discussed are transliterated; but the authors have the Greek text before them and their comments are made on the basis of the originals. The authors are free to choose their own modern translation, but are asked to bear in mind the variety of translations in current use.

The new series of Tyndale Commentaries goes forth, as the former series did, in the hope that God will graciously use these books to help the general reader to understand as fully and clearly as possible the meaning of the New Testament.

Leon Morris

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to offer my thanks:

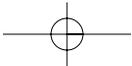
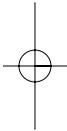
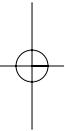
To my students and other friends, who for many years have badgered me to know when the commentary would be finished. I hope they will not be disappointed.

To the authorities of Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, Nigeria, of Tyndale House, Cambridge, and of the London Bible College, in whose employment, successively, I have found the opportunity and the encouragement to complete what at times has seemed an endless task.

To Ann Bradshaw, Brenda Fireman and Mary Griffin, who turned my much-corrected manuscript into type.

Above all to Matthew, whom I have come to appreciate over the last ten years as both a skilful literary artist and also a disciple of rich theological insight. If those who use this commentary can share a little of the satisfying biblical perspective which he has given me, I shall be content.

Dick France



## ABBREVIATIONS

Standard abbreviations follow the scheme set out in the *New Bible Dictionary* (<sup>2</sup>1982), pp. x–xiii. The following abbreviations are used for books and periodicals which are referred to more than once.

<i>AB</i>	<i>The Anchor Bible</i> , vol. 26: <i>Matthew</i> , Introduction, Translation and Notes by W. F. Albright and C. S. Mann (New York: Doubleday, 1971).
BAGD	W. Bauer, <i>A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature</i> , translated and adapted by W. F. Arndt and F. W. Gingrich; second edition revised and augmented by F. W. Gingrich and F. W. Danker (University of Chicago Press, 1979).
Banks	R. J. Banks, <i>Jesus and the Law in the Synoptic Tradition</i> ( <i>SNTS Monograph</i> 28. Cambridge University Press, 1975).
Beare	F. W. Beare, <i>The Gospel according to Matthew: a Commentary</i> (Oxford: Blackwell, 1981).
<i>BJRL</i>	<i>Bulletin of the John Rylands Library</i> .
Black	M. Black, <i>An Aramaic Approach to the Gospels and Acts</i> (Oxford University Press, <sup>3</sup> 1967).
Blinzler	J. Blinzler, <i>The Trial of Jesus</i> (E.T. Cork: Mercier Press, 1959).
Bonnard	P. Bonnard, <i>L'Évangile selon Saint Matthieu</i> (Neuchâtel: Delachaux & Niestlé, <sup>2</sup> 1970).

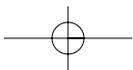
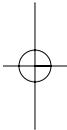
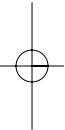
- Brown R. E. Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah: a Commentary on the Infancy Narratives in Matthew and Luke* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1977).
- Bruce F. F. Bruce, *New Testament History* (London: Pickering & Inglis, 1982).
- BTB* *Biblical Theology Bulletin*.
- CBQ* *Catholic Biblical Quarterly*.
- Daube D. Daube, *The New Testament and Rabbinic Judaism* (London: Athlone Press, 1956).
- Davies W. D. Davies, *The Setting of the Sermon on the Mount* (Cambridge University Press, 1963).
- Derrett J. D. M. Derrett, *Law in the New Testament* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1970).
- Didier M. Didier (ed.), *L'Évangile selon Matthieu: rédaction et théologie (BETL 29)*. Gembloux: Duculot, 1972).
- Dunn J. D. G. Dunn, *Jesus and the Spirit* (London: SCM Press, 1975).
- EQ* *Evangelical Quarterly*.
- ExpT* *Expository Times*.
- Finegan J. Finegan, *Handbook of Biblical Chronology* (Princeton University Press, 1964).
- Garland D. E. Garland, *The Intention of Matthew 23 (SNT 52)*. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1979).
- GP* R. T. France and D. Wenham (eds.), *Gospel Perspectives: Studies of History and Tradition in the Four Gospels* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, vol. I, 1980; vol. II, 1981; vol. III, 1983; vol. IV, 1984).
- Green H. B. Green, *The Gospel according to Matthew (The New Clarendon Bible)*. Oxford University Press, 1975).
- Guelich R. A. Guelich, *The Sermon on the Mount: a Foundation for Understanding* (Waco, Texas: Word Books, 1982).
- Gundry R. H. Gundry, *Matthew: A Commentary on his Literary and Theological Art* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982).
- Gundry, *UOT* R. H. Gundry, *The Use of the Old Testament in St.*

- Matthew's Gospel* (SNT 18. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1967).
- Guthrie D. Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction* (Leicester: IVP, <sup>3</sup>1970).
- Hare D. R. A. Hare, *The Theme of Jewish Persecution of Christians in the Gospel according to St. Matthew* (SNTS Monograph 6. Cambridge University Press, 1967).
- Hill D. Hill, *The Gospel of Matthew* (New Century Bible. London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1972).
- HTR *Harvard Theological Review*.
- ICC *The International Critical Commentary: The Gospel according to S. Matthew* by W. C. Allen (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, <sup>3</sup>1912).
- ISBE G. W. Bromiley (ed.), *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, revised edition (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979- ).
- JBL *Journal of Biblical Literature*.
- Jeremias, EWJ J. Jeremias, *The Eucharistic Words of Jesus* (E.T. London: SCM Press, 1966).
- Jeremias, NTT J. Jeremias, *New Testament Theology, Part One: The Proclamation of Jesus* (E.T. London: SCM Press, 1971).
- Jeremias, PJ J. Jeremias, *The Parables of Jesus* (E.T. London: SCM Press, <sup>2</sup>1963).
- JETS *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*.
- JOT R. T. France, *Jesus and the Old Testament* (London: Tyndale Press, 1971; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1982).
- JSNT *Journal for the Study of the New Testament*.
- JTS *Journal of Theological Studies*.
- Kingsbury J. D. Kingsbury, *Matthew: Structure, Christology, Kingdom* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975).
- Ladd G. E. Ladd, *The Presence of the Future: the Eschatology of Biblical Realism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974).
- Lindars B. Lindars, *New Testament Apologetic: the Doctrinal Significance of the Old Testament Quotations* (London: SCM Press, 1961).

- McNeile A. H. McNeile, *The Gospel according to St. Matthew* (London: Macmillan, 1915).
- Meyer B. F. Meyer, *The Aims of Jesus* (London: SCM Press, 1979).
- MM J. H. Moulton and G. Milligan, *The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament, illustrated from the Papyri and other Non-Literary Sources* (1930, reprinted Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974).
- NBD* J. D. Douglas and N. Hillyer (eds.), *New Bible Dictionary* (Leicester: IVP, <sup>2</sup>1982).
- NIDNTT* C. Brown (ed.), *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology* (Exeter: Paternoster Press, 1975–78).
- NovT* *Novum Testamentum*.
- NTS* *New Testament Studies*.
- Robinson J. A. T. Robinson, *Redating the New Testament* (London: SCM Press, 1976).
- SB H. L. Strack and P. Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch* (München: C. H. Beck, 1926–61).
- Schweizer E. Schweizer, *The Good News according to Matthew* (E.T. London: SPCK, 1976).
- Senior D. P. Senior, *The Passion Narrative according to Matthew: a Redactional Study* (BETL 39. Leuven University Press, 1975).
- Sherwin-White A. N. Sherwin-White, *Roman Society and Roman Law in the New Testament* (Oxford University Press, 1963).
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- Stonehouse N. B. Stonehouse, *The Witness of Matthew and Mark to Christ* (London: Tyndale Press, 1944).
- Tasker R. V. G. Tasker, *The Gospel according to St. Matthew* (*Tyndale New Testament Commentary*). London: Tyndale Press, 1961).

- TDNT* G. Kittel and G. Friedrich (eds.), *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (E.T. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964–74).
- Thompson W. G. Thompson, *Matthew's Advice to a Divided Community: Mt. 17:22–18:35* (*Analecta Biblica* 44. Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1970).
- TIIM* G. Bornkamm, G. Barth and H.-J. Held, *Tradition and Interpretation in Matthew* (E.T. London: SCM Press, 1963).
- Trilling W. Trilling, *Das wahre Israel: Studien zur Theologie des Matthäus-Evangeliums* (München: Kösel, <sup>3</sup>1964).
- TynB* *Tyndale Bulletin*.
- Vermes G. Vermes, *Jesus the Jew* (London: Collins, 1973).
- Wilkinson J. Wilkinson, *Jerusalem as Jesus knew it: Archaeology as Evidence* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1978).

The valuable commentary on Matthew by D. A. Carson in volume 8 of the *Expositor's Bible Commentary* (ed. F. E. Gaebelin, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984) appeared too late to be noticed in this commentary.



## INTRODUCTION

### **1. Matthew among the Gospels**

Modern readers of the Christian Gospels usually have their favourite. Some are drawn to John for its explicit presentation in simple language of profound truths about Jesus; some prefer the vivid, action-packed narrative of Mark; others relate most easily to the human interests and sympathies of Luke. But how many feel most at home in Matthew? It begins with a forbidding list of unknown names, and it deals at length with matters of law and tradition, of the fulfilment of the Jewish Scriptures and of Jesus' confrontations with the Jewish leaders of his day. It seems somehow remote both from modern culture and from modern literary tastes. It is, in one modern commentator's words, 'a grim book'.<sup>1</sup> Many, perhaps, are surprised to find it placed at the beginning of the New Testament, thus causing the unsuspecting new reader to plunge

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1. Beare, p. viii.

straight into a series of apparently irrelevant 'begettings'!

Why then did the early Christians place Matthew first? For it is a remarkable fact that, among the variations in the order in which the Gospels appear in early lists and texts, the one constant factor is that Matthew always comes first.

Probably the main reason was the belief that it was the first Gospel to be written, a belief which only a minority of scholars would support today. We shall have more to say on this shortly. But it may also be worth remembering that the early Christians were conscious, in a way few Christians are today, that their faith had its roots in Judaism. The issue of the relation between the Christian church and the Jews remained a vital one both for the Christians' self-understanding and for their presentation of Christ to the non-Christian world. And it is Matthew's Gospel which more fully than the others provides a Christian perspective on this issue. In its constant reference to the Old Testament, its strong Jewish flavouring, its explicit discussions of the conflict between Jesus and the Jewish authorities, it forms a fitting 'bridge' between Old and New Testaments, a constant reminder to Christians of the 'rock from which they are hewn'.

Whatever the reason, Matthew's Gospel was in fact more quoted in Christian writings of the second Christian century than any other. Its careful structure made it particularly suitable for use in the growing churches, both for the instruction of converts and for the training of church leaders, and its wide-ranging collection of Jesus' teaching on the ethical demands of Christian discipleship (most obviously, but not only, in the Sermon on the Mount) ensured it a 'best-seller' rating among the earliest Christian writings.

But despite the preference given to Matthew, from quite early in the second century Christians agreed almost unanimously<sup>2</sup> that 'the gospel' had been given to the church in four authoritative versions, not just in one. Even Mark's Gospel, however little it may have been used compared to the fuller Gospel of Matthew, was accepted alongside it. Many other 'gospels' were written in the second century

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2. The heretic Marcion, who accepted only an 'expurgated' version of Luke, is the exception which proves the rule!

and beyond, but none of them achieved acceptance alongside Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.

Each of the four has a distinctive contribution to make to our knowledge and understanding of Jesus. It will be the main aim of this introduction, and a major concern of the commentary which follows, to draw out Matthew's special place in the total witness to Jesus, both in his selection of material and in the way he has presented it. Prolonged study of Matthew constantly reinforces the impression that he was a skilful and imaginative writer, who both had clear convictions to convey to his readers and also was adept at communicating them through the medium of a written document. In studying Matthew's Gospel, therefore, while our aim will always be, as Matthew would wish it to be, to learn about Jesus through the record of his life and teaching, we should not forget that it is *Matthew's* version of the record which we are reading, and that it will therefore not be the same as that of Mark, Luke or John. In accepting that God intended his church to have four Gospels, not just one, Christians have also recognized that each has something different to say about Jesus. It is only after we have listened to each in its individuality that we can hope to gain the full richness which comes from the 'stereoscopic' vision of Jesus as seen through four different pairs of eyes!

## 2. Some characteristics of Matthew's Gospel

### *A. A Jewish Christian Gospel*

We shall consider in a later section the main theological interests of Matthew. All of them are those one would expect of a Jewish Christian: Jesus as the fulfilment of Old Testament hopes, the application of Old Testament texts to various aspects of his ministry, his attitude to the Old Testament law, and to the traditions of Jewish scribal teaching, his controversies with the official representatives of the Jewish religion and nation, the nature of the Christian church vis-à-vis Judaism. These are the issues which must have been uppermost in the minds of those Jews who had recognized Jesus as the Messiah, and who now needed both to work out their own self-understanding in relation to their Jewish roots and to learn to present and defend the gospel among non-Christian Jews.

It therefore seems likely that the Gospel was written by a Jewish Christian, and that Jewish Christians formed at least a large proportion of its intended readership. Various more detailed features of the Gospel confirm this impression.

There is a distinctly 'Semitic' touch to some of Matthew's Greek, such as a Jewish reader would appreciate.<sup>3</sup> Untranslated Aramaic terms such as *raka* (5:22, see RSV mg.) or *korbanas* (translated 'treasury' in 27:6), and unexplained references to Jewish customs, such as hand-washing traditions (15:2; contrast Mark's explanation for his presumably Gentile readers, Mark 7:3–4) or the wearing of phylacteries (23:5), suggest that Matthew expected his readers to be familiar with Jewish culture. His explanation of the meaning of the name 'Jesus' (1:21) assumes his readers know its Hebrew meaning. He begins his genealogy from Abraham, the father of the Jewish race (1:1–2), and records frequent references to Jesus as 'Son of David'. He regularly uses the more Jewish phrase 'kingdom of heaven' where Mark and Luke use 'kingdom of God'. It is only Matthew who tells us that Jesus' mission (and, initially, that of his disciples) was limited to 'the lost sheep of the house of Israel' (10:5–6; 15:24), and it is remarkable that the explicit prohibition of going among Samaritans in 10:5 is the only mention of Samaritans in this Gospel, in contrast with the favourable attitude to them in Luke. One or two passages suggest an acceptance in principle of the authority of Jewish scribal teaching (23:3, 23), though in the context of the Gospel as a whole this cannot be taken as a blanket endorsement of scribal tradition (see comments *ad loc*). Many of the specific issues discussed would be of primary interest to Jewish readers, such as fasting (6:16–18), the sabbath (12:1–14; 24:20), temple offerings (5:23–24), the temple tax (17:24–27).

Such details reinforce the impression that the Gospel is directed in the first instance towards Jewish concerns. For this reason it is often suggested that Matthew, along with Hebrews, is the 'most Jewish' book in the New Testament. But that is only one side of the picture.

### ***B. A Gospel for all nations***

The same Gospel which records an initial limitation of the Christian

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3. See C. F. D. Moule, *The Birth of the New Testament* (1981), pp. 276–280.

mission to 'the lost sheep of the house of Israel' finishes with Jesus triumphantly sending the eleven out to make disciples of all nations, and many hints of this ultimate aim of his mission have occurred in the course of the Gospel (see comments on 28:19, and references given there). Thus the ministry of Jesus, for all its clearly Jewish roots, and its comprehensive fulfilment of the hopes and destiny of Israel, has broken out of the confines of Judaism and in so doing has brought to an end the exclusive privilege of the Jews as the people of God.

We shall discuss this theme of the church and Israel more fully below. The point of mentioning it here is that in presenting this aspect of Jesus' ministry Matthew's Gospel sometimes seems not so much 'Jewish' as 'anti-Jewish', using language comparable with the sustained polemic against 'the Jews' in John's Gospel. For Matthew is not content to state the positive aspect, that God now calls non-Jews to share the privileges of Israel; he also makes clear the negative aspect, the failure and consequent rejection of Israel, particularly as embodied in its official leadership, and its replacement by Jesus, who in himself sums up all that Israel was intended to be, and by the community of those, whether Jew or Gentile, who through their response to his ministry have now become the true people of God.

This paradox, that the 'most Jewish' Gospel can contain such apparently hostile language in relation to the Jewish nation as we find in 8:10–12; 21:43; 23:29–39; 27:24–25, etc., has led some scholars to suggest that two mutually incompatible elements have been rather clumsily combined into a single book. Thus it is suggested that originally Jewish-Christian material has been revised and expanded by a strongly anti-Jewish editor, himself probably a Gentile.<sup>4</sup>

But it is hardly realistic to expect all Jewish Christian authors to be 'pro-Jewish' and all Gentile Christians to be 'anti-Jewish'. What we see in Matthew is rather the uncomfortable tension in the mind

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4. So e.g. with different nuances, P. Nepper-Christensen, *Das Matthäusevangelium: ein jüdenchristliches Evangelium?* (1958); G. Strecker, *Der Weg der Gerechtigkeit* (1962); S. Van Tilborg, *The Jewish Leaders in Matthew* (1972).

of one who, brought up to value and love all that Israel has stood for, has come to the painful conclusion that the majority of his people have failed to respond to God's call to them, and that it is in a 'remnant', the minority group who have followed Israel's true Messiah, that God's purpose is now centred. Such a conclusion carries with it the recognition that what counts for membership in the true people of God is no longer a person's national identity, but his response of repentance and faith towards God, a response which is open to Gentiles as well as Jews. The 'anti-Jewish' tone of such a writer would spring, then, from the recognition that, as another Jewish Christian put it, 'not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel' (Rom. 9:6). When the followers of Israel's Messiah find themselves suspected, persecuted and ostracized by the official leadership of Israel, it is no wonder that an element of 'anti-Jewishness' can be detected, and that it may come to sharper expression than might be expected of a Gentile Christian for whom it was not such a painfully existential issue.

### ***C. A Gospel for the church***

Matthew's Gospel is sometimes described as 'the ecclesiastical Gospel'. This arises in part from the fact that this Gospel is the only one to include the term *ekklēsia* (16:18; 18:17). The use of this term is taken to indicate that the author was writing in and for a formal Christian organization (and therefore probably towards the end of the first century, when 'the church' was becoming a more institutionalized body).

By itself this argument is very weak. In 18:17 the reference is not to a single world-wide body, but to the local 'congregation'. In 16:18 'my church' does refer to the Christian community as a whole, but as early as the fifties Paul, who normally spoke of 'the churches' in the sense of local congregations, could also speak of 'the church' (e.g. 1 Cor. 15:9; Gal. 1:13); and when the Old Testament background of the term is taken into account there is no need to read into it all the later ideas of a formal 'ecclesiastical' structure (see comments on 16:18).

It is true, however, that there is much in Matthew's Gospel which would prove very suitable for, and may well have been designed for, the use of church leaders, both in instructing their members in the

faith and in determining their own pastoral role. It deals with such practical issues as the sabbath (12:1–14) and divorce (5:31–32; 19:3–9; note in both cases the explicit recognition, not found in the other Gospels, that ‘unchastity’ terminates a marriage; see on 5:32). More generally it includes extended discussion of the right ethical use of the Old Testament law (5:17–48), and the misuse of scribal tradition (15:1–20), while the onslaught on the scribes and Pharisees in chapter 23 adds up to a wide-ranging presentation, by way of contrast, of what true religious leadership involves. Chapter 10 deals with the church’s response to persecution, and chapter 18 concentrates almost entirely on relationships within the Christian community, with special attention given to the proper procedure for dealing with an offender (18:15–20). Warnings against false prophets and pseudo-Messiahs occur in 7:15–20 and 24:4–5, 11, 23–26, and there are several reminders that there is need for discrimination between true and false disciples within the professing community (7:6, 13–27; 13:24–30, 36–43, 47–50; 22:10–14). All this suggests that the Gospel of Matthew would have proved particularly valuable to church leaders, and the large quantity of carefully structured teaching on the nature and demands of discipleship would be very suitable for catechetical use. Such an observation does not, of course, entail a developed ecclesiastical structure, merely a Christian community aware of its distinctive existence and role.

On this basis Matthew’s Gospel has been viewed as a sort of ‘Manual of Discipline’, like the Community Rule of Qumran (1QS).<sup>5</sup> But this is to overstate the difference between Matthew and the other Gospels. While agreeing that Matthew designed his Gospel to be of practical value in the teaching and leadership of a church, one must still recognize that it is essentially a ‘life of Jesus’, and that most of its contents, however valuable for teaching, are not framed directly as catechetical material, still less set out in the form of an instruction manual.

#### ***D. A carefully constructed Gospel***

We shall consider the structure of the Gospel at the end of this

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5. So esp. K. Stendahl, *The School of St Matthew* (1954).

introduction, and I shall then propose a detailed analysis. At this point we need only note that, whatever disagreements there may be about which is the dominant structural pattern, all who have studied Matthew's Gospel in detail have been impressed by the care and literary artistry involved in its composition.<sup>6</sup> We shall see that both in the overall structure of the Gospel, with its dramatic development and its clearly marked sections and repeated formulae, and also in the grouping of material in such a way that one episode throws light on another, Matthew has set about his task with skill. Symmetrical groups of teaching sections make for easy memorization, and sometimes a striking dramatic effect is achieved by the balancing of contrasting sections. We shall note such features in the commentary from time to time. To approach Matthew's Gospel as a haphazard collection of unconnected stories and sayings is to miss much of what Matthew wants to communicate.

Careful communicator as he is, Matthew frequently omits incidental details which he regards as inessential to his purpose. Thus stories which in Mark are told in a lively, expansive style, with plenty of picturesque detail, regularly appear in Matthew in a much more concise form, boiled down to the bare essentials which are needed to convey the message Matthew wishes to draw out of the story. (E.g. the stories which make up the 43 verses of Mark 5 take up only 16 verses in Matthew 8:28–34; 9:18–26.) The effect is that Matthew is less immediately attractive as a story-teller, but that the cumulative impression of his more taut narratives is very powerful in its portrayal of the overwhelming authority of Jesus.

### ***E. A scripturally based Gospel***

All the Gospels contain frequent quotations of and allusions to the Old Testament, but in Matthew this feature is more pronounced. We shall consider below some of the more prominent features of Matthew's appeal to the Old Testament, particularly his famous 'formula-quotations', and we shall consider them in the context of

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6. The subtitle of Gundry's commentary, 'A Commentary on his Literary and Theological Art', properly places emphasis on this aspect of the Gospel.

his overriding theological concern to present Jesus as the fulfilment of all the hopes and patterns of Old Testament Israel. No-one can doubt the importance of this theme for Matthew, nor can any attentive reader fail to notice his delight in drawing attention, either openly or by more subtle allusion, to what may sometimes seem to us rather obscure links between Jesus and the Old Testament.

The study of the distinctive nature of the use of the Old Testament by Matthew has led to some interesting discussions in recent years. K. Stendahl's work, already referred to, was written in the early days of the application of the Qumran discoveries to New Testament studies, and drew close parallels between Matthew's technique and that of the Qumran 'commentaries' on the Old Testament, particularly that on Habakkuk. He pictured the Gospel as the product of an 'exegetical school' like the community of Qumran, a school which had worked out its own distinctive hermeneutical principles and methods. With the rise of redaction-criticism there has since been more tendency to speak of Matthew's Gospel as the product of an individual author rather than of a school, and it has been generally acknowledged that the literary parallel between the Qumran commentaries on scriptural texts and Matthew's scriptural comments and colouring in the course of narrative of the life of Jesus is far from convincing.<sup>7</sup> But the attention drawn by Stendahl to the peculiarities of Matthew's method, in particular to the freedom of his handling of the Old Testament text in his 'formula-quotations', has been important for later studies.

R. H. Gundry replied to Stendahl in his *The Use of the Old Testament in St. Matthew's Gospel* (1967), emphasizing in particular Stendahl's neglect of the numerous Old Testament allusions, which must be taken together with the more formal quotations in an analysis of Matthew's method.<sup>8</sup> Gundry noted that the mixed text-form (i.e. use of independent and free renderings of the Hebrew instead of or along with the Septuagint) noted by Stendahl was not confined to the 'formula-quotations', but was found throughout the Gospel except

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7. See the brief critique in Hill, pp. 35–38.

8. See esp. pp. 155–159 of Gundry, *UOT* for direct interaction with Stendahl's thesis.

where Matthew was taking over formal quotations from Mark (these being predominantly Septuagintal). He argued that Matthew's free use of the Old Testament text was the result of a deliberate and responsible study of the Scriptures in the trilingual milieu of first-century Palestine, sometimes utilizing various textual traditions already in existence, sometimes translating independently from the Hebrew. The principles of interpretation employed were not arbitrary or atomizing but part of a new hermeneutical tradition deriving from the conviction of the fulfilment of the Messianic hope in Jesus.

An important new element was introduced into the discussion with the publication of M. D. Goulder's *Midrash and Lection in Matthew* (1974). Part of Goulder's argument is a development from the suggestion of G. D. Kilpatrick<sup>9</sup> that Matthew's Gospel was composed for use in regular liturgical reading, its structure being designed to fit the demands of a church lectionary. Goulder sees Matthew as an expansion of Mark for lectionary use, in conjunction with the existing Old Testament festal lectionary in use in the synagogue. This aspect of Goulder's work has not met with widespread acceptance.<sup>10</sup> It carries with it, however, another view of Matthew's method which has given rise to increasing discussion. Matthew's only written source, Goulder believes, was Mark. All his additional material derives not from other existing sources, but from Matthew's own fertile imagination, particularly inspired by his knowledge of the Old Testament. Starting from the Old Testament readings prescribed in the lectionary, he has woven together elaborate patterns of related material, by a process which Goulder calls *midrash*. This process has resulted in the creation of stories about Jesus and teaching attributed to him which derive not from any historically based tradition, but from a scripturally inspired imagination. Such 'midrashic' procedures were well known and accepted in the Jewish world to which Matthew belonged, and

9. G. D. Kilpatrick, *The Origins of the Gospel according to St. Matthew* (1946).

10. See the critical review of this and other 'lectionary' hypotheses by L. Morris, 'The Gospels and the Jewish Lectionaries', in *GP* III (1983), pp. 129–156.

questions of historicity, it is implied, would not have worried, or even occurred to, his original readers.

This is not the place to attempt an adequate discussion of the debate which has arisen out of the proposal to interpret Matthew's work as *midrash*.<sup>11</sup> Four brief comments may be made, however.

1. The word 'midrash' itself is used in widely different senses by those who apply it to New Testament studies, sometimes in ways which specialists in Jewish literature would not recognize. In Jewish writings it became a technical term for a literary composition which takes the form of an extended 'commentary' on a continuous text from the Old Testament, and in that sense it is clearly not a relevant category for the understanding of the Gospels (unless, with Goulder, one speaks of Matthew as a midrash on *Mark*, not on an Old Testament text). Beyond that technical use it becomes a slippery term, capable of carrying connotations which are not properly derived either from Jewish usage or from the phenomena of the Gospels.<sup>12</sup>

2. By whatever term it is described, it is questionable whether the practice of elaborating historical accounts with fictional details under the influence of Old Testament texts was so widespread among first-century Jews, let alone being the dominant approach to Scripture and history. While Old Testament stories did receive a growing volume of traditional embellishment, there is much less evidence for a similar treatment of recent history. No clear parallel can be adduced from first-century Judaism for such elaboration taking place in the traditions of a religious leader within a generation or two of his death. If Matthew wrote as Goulder suggests, he would have been doing something untypical of his cultural milieu, and it is questionable whether his readers would have recognized and accepted his method.<sup>13</sup>

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11. The whole of *Gospel Perspectives* III (1983) is devoted to this debate. See also, with special reference to Matthew 1–2, my paper in *GP* II (1981), pp. 239–266.
12. See, on the question of definition, e.g. B. D. Chilton, *GP* III, pp. 9–32; Brown, pp. 557–563.
13. See my general paper in *GP* III, pp. 99–127, and the more detailed

3. Even if the practice were common in non-Christian Judaism, one cannot therefore assume that Matthew would have felt it appropriate to follow it. It is the text of Matthew, rather than presumed current practice outside Christian circles, which should be our guide to Matthew's aims and methods. In particular we must take into account Matthew's emphasis on 'fulfilment', which we shall study below, which raises the question how far a concept of fulfilment makes sense in the absence of a historical occurrence in which that fulfilment is seen as taking place. In other words, in what way is a scriptural theme or passage 'fulfilled' in a story which is simply made up out of that passage?

4. It should be clearly recognized that a delight in tracing scriptural connections and an intention to relate historical fact are not mutually exclusive. To conclude that Matthew's text is full of subtle allusive references to the Old Testament is not *ipso facto* to conclude that the stories it tells are the product of imagination. The commentary that follows will provide plenty of evidence of Matthew's ingenuity in tracing the Old Testament background and significance of the events he records, but it is inherently more likely in such cases that the event suggested the scriptural comment than that it was meditation on the Old Testament text that inspired the story.<sup>14</sup>

The characterization of Matthew's method as 'midrash', and the proposal that therefore much of his material is unhistorical, has been taken up by Gundry in his commentary (1982). 'Matthew did not write entirely reportorial history. Comparison with midrashic and haggadic literature of his era suggests that he did not intend to do so' (p. 629). Gundry does not allow such free creativity as Goulder, in that he believes Matthew drew much of his material (even including the contents of chapters 1 – 2) from an expanded Q source (on which see below), and he sees Matthew's unhistorical contribution more often in the embellishment of existing traditions than in wholesale creation of stories. He does, however, argue more

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studies of specific Jewish texts in the same volume by R. J. Bauckham (Pseudo-Philo) and F. F. Bruce (Qumran literature).

14. This argument is worked out more fully in relation to Matthew 1 and 2 in my paper in *GP* II, pp. 239–266.

explicitly than Goulder that Matthew's original readers would have had no difficulty in recognizing his method, and would not have thought of interpreting historically Matthew's 'midrashic' contributions. 'History mixed with nonhistory is still an accepted mode of communication; ... unhistorical embellishment can carry its own kind of truth alongside historical truth' (p. 631). The fact that Gundry argues this case explicitly as an evangelical scholar who holds to a belief in the inerrancy of the Bible<sup>15</sup> has inevitably led to a lively debate, which at the time of writing shows no sign of subsiding!<sup>16</sup>

The issue of historicity should not be allowed, however, to distract attention from the subtle and fascinating nature of Matthew's use of the Old Testament. In his blend of traditionally Jewish ('rabbinic') interests and methods with a wholly new and Christian emphasis on the fulfilment of the Old Testament revelation in the historical life and teaching of Jesus of Nazareth, he exemplifies well the parable (sometimes taken as Matthew's 'self-portrait') of the 'householder who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old' (13:52).

### 3. The origin of the Gospel

We have looked first at some of the characteristics of the Gospel, because it is these features which must determine our estimate of its probable origin. Given that these are among its main features, where, when and by whom is it likely that such a work would have been written?

#### *A. Place of writing*

The characteristics we have noted make it virtually certain that Matthew's Gospel was written in and for a church which was to a

15. See his 'Theological Postscript', pp. 623–640 of his commentary.

16. Two early detailed reviews, rejecting Gundry's position, were by D. A. Carson, *Trinity Journal* 3 (1982), pp. 71–91 and P. B. Payne, *GP* III, pp. 177–215. Gundry replied to these in a 'Response', as yet unpublished but widely circulated. Further debate with D. J. Moo and N. L. Geisler followed in *JETS* 26 (1983), pp. 31–115.