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901ST ORDINARY GENERAL MEETING
HELD IN THE LECTURE HALL OF THE NATIONAL SOCIETY FOR
RELIGIOUS EDUCATION, 69, GREAT PETER STREET, WESTMINSTER,
S.W.1, ON MONDAY, 16TH APRIL, 1951.

REV. ALAN M. STIBBS, M.A., IN THE CHAIR.

The Minutes of the previous Meeting were read, confirmed and signed.

The CHAIRMAN then called on B. F. C. Atkinson, Esq., M.A., Ph.D., to read his Paper, entitled "The Composition of St. Matthew's Gospel."

THE COMPOSITION OF ST. MATTHEW'S GOSPEL

B. F. C. ATKINSON, ESQ., M.A., PH.D.

SYNOPSIS

The author may perhaps be identified from Matt. 9:10, and the identification confirmed by his interest in money, his curt style and his methodical arrangement of his matter.

The first readers may be supposed to have been Jewish religious leaders or Hebrew Christians from the occurrence of various Jewish expressions and an interest in things Jewish.

An early date may be implied from some of the material and from the text of quotations from the Septuagint. There are many small indications that Jerusalem was the place of publication.

The relationship of the Gospel with that of Mark is discussed. The best modern views are shown to be not necessarily conclusive, and the suggestion is made, based on a close examination of the parallel texts, that Mark knew that Matthew had been an eyewitness of the facts reported in parts of his Gospel and, writing subsequently to Matthew, treated differently the sections of Matthew's text where the author was an eyewitness from those of which he was not.

AUTHOR

THE first Gospel like the rest is anonymous. An ancient and commonly-held tradition has connected it with the apostle Matthew, one of the twelve (Matt. 9:9; 10:3; Mark 2:14; 3:18; Luke 5:27; 6:15), a tradition that is usually traced back at least as far as a well-known statement of Papias in the second century. It is not certain that Papias means to state that Matthew was the author of the first Gospel in Greek as we have it. However, we find some slender evidence in the Gospel itself that points to Matthew's authorship.

After Matthew's call we find Jesus invited to a meal (Matt. 9:10). We know from Mark 2:15 and Luke 5:29 that the meal

took place in Levi's (that is, Matthew's) house at his invitation. In the parallel account in Matt. 9:10 the pronoun "his" after "house" (in the Greek) is omitted, and the statement is made that Jesus sat down to table "at home". This cannot have been the Lord's house, as we know it from the other Gospels to have been Matthew's. It must therefore have been the home of the writer of the Gospel. The writer must therefore have been Matthew.

Now, Matthew before his call was a publican or tax-collector. He was therefore a business man whose chief secular interest was financial. It would not therefore be surprising to find a certain interest in *money* appearing in his work, and this is what in fact we find. He alone supplies the detailed description of money in 10:9, "gold, silver, brass." Peculiar to Matthew are the parables of the treasure hid in the field and of the pearl of great price (13:44-46). These parables have a commercial flavour, which at least would appeal to the former business man and tax-collector. No one but Matthew tells the story of the tribute money in the mouth of the fish (17:24-27). This story would interest him because it concerned money. The discovery of money needed for paying a tax in so remarkable a manner could not fail of course to attract the attention of a former tax-collector, and it is natural to find the story included in his Gospel on this ground alone.

Matthew alone records the parable of the unforgiving servant (18:23-25). It may be that its interest for him again lay in the fact that it dealt with debts and money. The parable of the talents, reported by Matthew at length (25:14-30), would have particular interest for him as dealing with financial matters, although Luke in another context has a very similar parable.

No one can read through this Gospel without noticing the curt style in which much of it is written. This trait is not a proof of authorship, but it is not inconsistent with the author having been a business man. The first occasion on which it becomes noticeable is in the account of the healing of the centurion's servant (7:5-13). If we compare the description of the miracle with the Lucan version, we shall find in Matthew an omission of detail, and a running together of incidents. He leaves out the fact that the centurion addressed the Lord through intermediaries. He is inclined not to be able to see the trees for the wood. He gives us no vivid picture. This agrees well with the Matthean authorship.

If we compare Matt. 8:21, 22 with Luke 9:39, 60, we shall

notice another instance of Matthew's compression of style. The account of the storm on the lake (8 : 23-27) is given in the same curt and unadorned style. If we look carefully at the section of the Gospel between 9 : 9 and 13, we shall see that the curt style is evident in the description of events, though not always when the evangelist reports what the Lord said. In the account of the healing of the demoniac boy (17 : 14-21) the curt style becomes specially evident again. The account of the preparation for the Passover (26 : 16-19) is in the same curt business-like style. Again if we contrast Matthew's account of the Lord's trial before the council with that of Mark (26 : 57-75), we shall see the curt style appearing again. The details of the resurrection narrative are blurred, and the story is run together (28 : 1-10), while the last four verses of the Gospel again betray the curt business-like style (28 : 16-20).

There is another characteristic of the first evangelist which does not prove authorship, but points in the same direction as does the style. The events described in between the discourses are sometimes arranged in groups of three. This is to facilitate memory. The same kind of methodical arrangement is found in the Lord's genealogy which opens the book (1 : 1-17), where the individual generations are arranged in three groups of fourteen at the cost of omitting some of the links. This method fits in well with the authorship of Matthew, who was a business man engaged on revenue duty before his call to discipleship.

Arrangement is apparent in the connecting words with which the evangelist begins 8 : 1. Matthew alone puts the Lord's words to the disciple who was too eager and to the disciple who hung back in a time setting (8 : 18-22). There is a mark of time in 12 : 1, although it is a vague and general one. Matthew alone preserves the connection between the lament over Jerusalem (23 : 37-39), which contains the words, "Your house is left unto you desolate," with the discourse on Olivet which in his Gospel immediately follows it. The remarks by the disciples on the temple buildings (24 : 1) and the Lord's prophecy of the destruction of the temple (24 : 2) fit into the background of 23 : 38.

None of these things amounts to proof of authorship, for even the reference to Matthew's home in 9 : 10 stands alone, but taken cumulatively they provide a working hypothesis upon which it seems safe to rely apart from direct contradiction, which does not seem to be forthcoming.

THE FIRST READERS

Are there in the first Gospel any indications of the readers to whom the Gospel was immediately addressed? There seem several reasons for supposing that those whom the evangelist was aiming to reach were Jews, or Hebrew Christians, or both. In the sermon on the mount the important teaching about the law (5 : 17-20), some of that about murder (5 : 21-24), and the principal sentence about adultery (5 : 27, 28) are peculiar to Matthew. These passages have a strictly Jewish, even rabbinic setting, which makes them difficult for Gentiles to understand even today. In a Gospel written for converted or seeking religious leaders in Jerusalem they have an apposite place. The same sort of Jewish ecclesiastical atmosphere comes out in the evangelist's account of the discourse which followed the dispute as to who was the greatest (18 : 17). He speaks of the "church" and the "heathen" and has a poignant reference to the "publican."

The first evangelist's use of certain *expressions* confirms this suggestion. In 4 : 17 occurs for the first time his peculiar expression, "*the kingdom of heaven.*" This, as is well known, is a Jewish euphemism for "the kingdom of God," the phrase used by the other evangelists and elsewhere in the New Testament. Semitic thought, if not Semitic language, lies behind the expression, and it may indicate that the author's usual language was Aramaic. But so was that of the fourth evangelist, and perhaps also that of the second. The evangelist is not afraid of speaking himself of the kingdom of God, as is shown by his use of the expression in 12 : 28 ; 21 : 31-43. Does he not use the expression "*kingdom of heaven*" out of deference to the thought and custom of his readers, and if so, who are they more likely to be than the religious leaders and those at the centre of the cultural life of Judaism?

The first evangelist alone refers to the levitical offering for leprosy as τὸ ἔδωρον, 'the gift,' perhaps a technical religious term used and understood by the priests for whom we have suggested that he was primarily writing (8 : 4). His use of the term πορνεία, 'fornication', in 19 : 9, omitted by Mark, has perhaps a technical rabbinical significance and is in accord with the Jewish tendency of his expression. He supplies in addition to the other accounts the statement about judging the twelve tribes of Israel (19 : 28), though Luke has this in another context, and he again alone uses the semi-technical term *regeneration*.

The use of certain other expressions by the first evangelist suggests that he was writing for Jews. Such is the word *Gentiles*,

in 5 : 47, where the Lucan parallel has *ἁμαρτωλοί* 'sinners'. This has a peculiarly Jewish tone. There is a clearly Jewish atmosphere in the use of *τὰ ἔθνη* in 6 : 32, an expression which the third evangelist does not indeed obliterate, but expands to *τὰ ἔθνη τοῦ κόσμου* (Luke 12 : 30). The reference in 12 : 5 to the priests in the temple and to the One greater than the temple confirms the Jewish trend of the evangelist. Again in contrast to Mark, Matthew calls the Gospel "this Gospel of the Kingdom," a phrase that would make a special appeal to Jewish readers, as well as remind them that in the Christian Gospel was the fulfilment of their hopes of a Messianic Kingdom (24 : 14).

The Jewish emphasis again comes out in the expression, 'the lost sheep of the house of Israel' (10 : 6, repeated in 15 : 24) recorded only by Matthew. Another possible indication of the intended readers is the reference to the cities of Israel (whatever its exact meaning) in 10 : 23. This does not occur outside the first Gospel.

The author's well-known habit of *quotation* from the Old Testament, sometimes in a version that is not that of the Septuagint but seems to be taken direct from the Hebrew, or at least a Semitic source, confirms the impression that he was writing for Palestinian Jews. All the New Testament writers relate what they have to say to the Old Testament by the method of direct quotation or identity of thought, but the author of the first Gospel makes quotations with a view to supplying his readers with such evidence of the Messiahship of Jesus as would particularly appeal to them, often in a version with which Palestinian, rather than Hellenistic, Jews would be likely to be familiar. This trait occurs throughout the Gospel.

The golden rule (7 : 12) is followed in Matthew's version by a reference to *the law and the prophets*, only relevant in the case of those brought up to them. This strengthens our impression of the evangelist's Jewish background and outlook, and agrees with the suggestion that he wrote for converted religious leaders. The allusion to prophets and righteous men in 10 : 41 points in the same direction.

Matthew alone in his account of the miracle of the healing of the centurion's servant records the Lord's words that "the sons of the kingdom shall be cast out" (8 : 12). He records much the same thing in 21 : 43. Though he writes to Jewish religious leaders and aims at including what might specially appeal to them, he writes of course as a Christian missionary. It is because

he is writing to them that he emphasises the change that has taken place from the old Israel to the new. He reports the parable of the wicked husbandmen at greater length than the other evangelists, and adds to it a saying of fundamental importance for Judaism, as we have seen (21 : 33-44, especially ver. 43). He alone records the parable of the wedding-feast (22 : 1-14), (though Luke has something like it in another context (Luke 14 : 16-24)), which contains a saying with the same anti-Judaistic emphasis (ver. 7).

Peculiar to Matthew is the parable of the tares (13 : 24-30, 36-43). This parable presents a picture not only of the then future visible church in the Gospel age, but also of Old Testament Israel as a whole. It therefore would have great significance for the Jewish religious leaders.

There seems too to be a certain significance in the emphasis laid by Matthew upon the *Pharisees and Sadducees*. He alone of the synoptists mentions them in connection with the ministry of John (3 : 7). The teaching about almsgiving (6 : 1-4) and about prayer (6 : 5-8) was given by the Lord against a background of Pharisaic hypocrisy appreciated by His hearers. Matthew retains this teaching and background, a fact that suggests that both were still applicable when he wrote. Both other synoptists drop them. The same is true of the Lord's words about fasting (6 : 16-18).

The incident of the healing of the paralytic (9 : 1-8) took place before the call of Matthew, as all three synoptists agree. It happened however in Capernaum, where Matthew's home and business were, and there were crowds present (ver. 8). It is quite possible that Matthew was among them. The incident appears to have immediately preceded his call. Perhaps he shared the emotions of the crowd who were struck with fear and gave glory to God (ver. 8). In this way perhaps his mind was prepared for the call which followed. The emphasis given by Matthew in his Gospel to the opposition of the religious leaders may be due to the impression made on his mind by this incident in which, with other observers, he must have been aware of the atmosphere of antagonism created by the Scribes (ver. 3). If it were in fact this incident which finally softened his heart, this antagonism would be likely to assume large proportions in his mind, which might partly account for the large amount of space given to the Scribes and Pharisees in his Gospel, and might even have finally led him to address a Gospel primarily to them.

The saying about the householder inserted in 13 : 52 speaks in a rather unexpected way about a "scribe." Here perhaps is another link with those who we have suggested may have been the evangelist's first readers.

The rather difficult saying in the sermon on the mount about casting pearls before swine would perhaps be more intelligible to those who had been accustomed to the *exclusiveness* of Judaism. It is peculiar to Matthew (7 : 6).

In the account of the arrest of the Lord His words about the sword, the twelve legions of angels, and the Scriptures, recorded only by Matthew (26 : 52-54), are particularly suited to Jewish readers. The principle relating to the use of violence would help to correct their ideas about the establishment of the Messianic Kingdom, and their interest in angels is well known.

A final indication that points in the direction of the readers for whom the Gospel was first intended is the interest shown by Matthew in the apostle Peter. In the account of the apostle's call (4 : 18-22) where the second Gospel is content with the name Simon, Matthew calls this apostle "Simon called Peter." This implies that the apostle was known to the evangelist's intended readers as Peter, a fact that further implies that these readers were not Galileans, though there are many indications that they were Jews. In his account of the healing of Peter's wife's mother (8 : 14-17) the evangelist again refers to the apostle by the name by which he was known in the Christian church and not in his Galilean home town. Again in the list of names of the twelve we find the emphasis upon the name Peter as that by which the apostle was naturally known to the readers of the Gospel in contrast to that in Mark (3 : 16), where the opposite is implied.

Matthew alone tells the story of Peter's walking on the sea (14 : 28-32) and reports at length the Lord's words to him after his confession (16 : 17-19). The apostle is called throughout the account of these incidents by the name Peter by which he was known in the church at Jerusalem. Perhaps these things were reported by Matthew with a view to giving the Hebrew Christians to whom he wrote additional confidence in, and respect for, the apostle who was charged with the spiritual welfare of 'the circumcision' (Gal. 1 : 8).

We have seen that the incident of the discovery of the tribute money in the mouth of the fish may have specially interested the evangelist because it concerned money (17 : 24-27). It also concerned Peter. As we have seen, he seems to have had for the

purpose of his Gospel a special interest in Peter, the reason for which may have lain in the particular concern of Peter for the spiritual welfare of those to whom the evangelist was writing. Incidentally we may notice again that, while he reports the Lord's address to the apostle by the familiar name of Simon (ver. 25), he himself, as always, refers to him as Peter (ver. 24).

In themselves these indications amount to little, but taken together they have a certain weight. All seem consistent with the suggestion that the Gospel was first written to Hebrew Christians, or to religious leaders among the Jews, who were either seeking for faith in Christ or had already been converted.

THE DATE OF THE GOSPEL

We have seen that there is some slender direct evidence in the first Gospel pointing to its authorship, and that there are indications that it is primarily written for Hebrew Christians, possibly for those who were or had been Jewish religious leaders. Similarly there appear to be one or two indications, external and internal, which point to its having been written at an early date. The widely held view that the Gospel dates from after the siege of Jerusalem seems to be based upon preconceived notions that certain elements in its teaching could not have belonged to the original doctrine of the Lord, but represent later ecclesiastical tradition.

Against this view the following points taken together appear to have some weight. The matter of the sermon on the mount is basic to Christian teaching. The sermon lays the foundation of Christian ethic. It deals with fundamental principles, and with reality in religion. It obviously stands in its right place almost on the threshold of the New Testament. In the same way it is the opening of Matthew's Gospel most definitely of the four that throws back tentacles to grip the Old Testament. The genealogy at the beginning is a deliberate link with the Old Testament Scriptures. The Gospel stands in its right place at the beginning of the New Testament.

Did someone realise this in very early days and place it in the primary position standing before at least one Gospel which was the earliest written, as soon as ever the four Gospels—or the three synoptists—were collected together? Is it not as probable that, whether or not the Epistle of James or the Epistles to the Galatians and Thessalonians had already been written, the evangelist himself realised that he was compiling the first systema-

tic narrative of events, which he regarded as the fulfilment of the Old Testament and as having an intimate connection with it? In other words, Matthew's Gospel actually was the earliest. If so the writer would of course not know that other Gospels would follow. When they did follow, their writers had no need to repeat the link with the Old Testament, which was already in existence. We shall of course discuss this question of the priority of Matthew more fully when we come to deal with the material which he has in common with Mark.

Meanwhile a few further indications point to the early date of his Gospel. In common with all the New Testament writers the synoptic evangelists take the majority of their Old Testament quotations from the Septuagint version. The proportion is least in Matthew, but even here quotations taken from the Septuagint as opposed to direct translations from Semitic texts amount to about two-thirds of all quotations. Now when a quotation from the Septuagint appears in a parallel context in one or both of the other synoptists as well as in Matthew, and when, as is usually the case, the wording of the quotation differs in the different Gospels, it is Matthew's quotation which in almost every case is nearest to the Septuagint text. Mark's quotations are less near, and Luke's least near of all. This fact suggests that Matthew's quotations are those which were originally taken from the Old Testament text, whether by copying or from memory, and that Mark's quotations are an edited version of Matthew's, Luke's again of Mark's. Let anyone examine the parallel quotations and judge of the effect on his mind. This does not amount to proof, but it is suggestive and indicative.

The Olivet discourse, often referred to as the Little Apocalypse (Matt. 24-25), provides further indications. The phenomenon of the *quotations is marked in it. The discourse is more of a unity in Matthew's account, and a culmination is supplied by the judgement scene at the end, absent in the other synoptists. Again it is Matthew's version of this discourse, not the Marcan or Lucan versions, which forms the background of some of the eschatological statements of the apostle Paul in the Thessalonian epistles, which are among the earliest of the apostle's writings. It thus appears that the first Gospel may have been written some fifteen years after Pentecost.

*It must be remembered that the original Sept. text of the Book of Daniel is not that which appears in the printed versions, but that represented by the copy once in the Palazzo Chigi at Rome, and (since 1931) by the portions of Daniel in the Chester Beatty Biblical Papyri.

Here and there again the text of Matthew gives the impression of breaking new ground. The methodical arrangement may perhaps imply this. The same impression seems to be given in a case such as Matthew's description of the incident of the call of the disciples (4 : 18-22). He does not introduce the two pairs by name as is the case in the parallel passage in the second Gospel (Mark 1 : 16, 19). He refers to each pair as *δύο ἀδελφούς*, *two brothers* (ver. 18, 21). This suggests that his account is the earlier, introducing the incident to the public for the first time.

There are two points in the text of Matthew's Gospel which appear at first to suggest the very opposite of an early date for its appearance. The time-phrase with which the evangelist opens chapter 3 is peculiar to him, and it is not easy to visualise its standpoint: "In those days". The events now to be described took place some thirty years after those of which the story had just been told. To cover events taking place thirty years apart by the expression, "In those days", purely as a mark of time, must indicate a long interval between the events and the description, perhaps two or three generations. But there is another explanation. The intervention of a crisis or series of critical events of such force as to appear to change the world causes anyone passing through them to lump together the whole past in which he or his parents once moved as a single whole in contrast with the present. Elderly people today speak of the whole Victorian age and the years immediately following it up to 1914 in the same way, while many who are not elderly speak of the years from 1919 to 1939 similarly.

In the case of our evangelist a crisis greater than any other in the world's history had supervened upon the events which he was describing. After his association with the Lord, the passion, the resurrection and Pentecost, the period which was normal to him in his childhood and youth, even if it extended to within ten years of his writing, would be naturally referred to by him in this way.

The second point is to be found in the language of 27 : 15. This implies that the custom of releasing a prisoner at the Pass-over had ceased by the time that the Gospel was written. This can of course be taken to indicate that the Gospel was written long after the events that it records took place. But this need not be the case. There appears to be very little, if any, evidence outside the Gospels of this custom of releasing a prisoner. Per-

haps it was devised and practised by Pilate alone. If so, this would account for the past tense used by the evangelist in describing it, even if he wrote only some ten or fifteen years after the crucifixion.

PLACE OF PUBLICATION

There are various indications in the Gospel which point to Jerusalem as the place where the evangelist was when he wrote his Gospel, and where the readers were whom he intended first to read it. The way in which Jerusalem is introduced in 2 : 1 suggests, but does not prove, that the author was there as he wrote.

We may notice also the use by the first evangelist of the word *ἀνεχώρησεν* to describe the Lord's withdrawal to Galilee. It gives a strong, though perhaps not conclusive, impression that the writer is speaking from a point outside Galilee. The second evangelist gives quite definitely the opposite impression, while the word used by the third is neutral. Matthew's use of the word would be natural if he was writing in Jerusalem and addressing himself primarily to the inhabitants of that city.

Again it is noticeable that Matthew speaks in 9 : 26, 31 of the district surrounding Capernaum as if it were a foreign land. While this would be the case if the Gospel had been written a generation or two later away from Palestine, it is equally compatible with publication in Jerusalem designed primarily for the people of the capital.

Matthew deals in considerable detail with the deliberations of the priests and elders, which he describes after the Lord's prediction of His coming crucifixion (26 : 3-5). The naming of the place of meeting would be natural in Jerusalem. The introduction of the high priest's personal name need not mean that the Gospel was written many years after his death for people who had never heard of him. He may only be named to distinguish him from Annas (see John 18 : 13).

The evangelist's information about the Lord's trial before Pilate may well have come from one of the priests or officials who afterwards became obedient to the faith (Acts 6 : 17). His informant must have been someone who saw Judas in his remorse and terror throw down his money in the temple precincts and was probably present at the deliberation which followed (27 : 3-10). This means that the evangelist must have had direct contact with the priestly circles at Jerusalem.

Information about the priests' interview with Pilate is likely to have been obtained by the evangelist from the same source as that from which he derived his account of the trial before Pilate. Matthew alone tells of the setting of the watch and of the subsequent adventures of its members. It was current talk in Jerusalem. Elsewhere the fact would have little force. Matthew may have been the only evangelist who had access to the source of information (27 : 62-66).

In his account of the arrest of the Lord (26 : 47-56) the evangelist Matthew in common with the other two synoptists fails to name the one who struck the high priest's servant, though he must have known it to have been Peter. This is natural and intelligible if his Gospel was written in Jerusalem in the early years after Pentecost. Malchus himself or his relatives would still be alive, and a disclosure of names might have had serious consequences. There was no need for concealment by the time the fourth Gospel was written and there does not appear to be any intrinsic reason for the omission by Mark and Luke. Were they not simply following Matthew?

The story of the message from Pilate's wife is told only by Matthew (27 : 19). It must have come from someone standing near Pilate at the time and was doubtless thought by the evangelist to possess special interest for those in Jerusalem who remembered the events. Naturally it adds force to the account as a whole. Again the incidents of Pilate's washing his hands, and of the people's calling down the blood of Jesus upon their own heads, are peculiar to Matthew's Gospel (27 : 24-25). They would have a special and indeed poignant interest for the people of Jerusalem. The account of the resurrection of the sleeping saints is given by Matthew alone (ver. 52, 53), and was of course of special interest in Jerusalem where the phenomenon had occurred.

The descent of the angel and the rolling away of the stone at the time of the Lord's resurrection are facts recorded only by Matthew. They must have come originally from the members of the watch, who actually saw the occurrence and fled in terror from the angel whom they last saw seated on the stone. Again, this may have been current talk for a long time in Jerusalem. At any rate these facts soon became public in Jerusalem, and it would naturally be there that the recollection of them would tend to confirm faith in the resurrection by contrast to the shifts to which those who would not accept it were obliged to resort. The story of the watch would be of interest in Jerusalem because

it dealt with ground familiar to the readers, and most people enjoy hearing stories about things with which they are familiar (28 : 1-15).

There is perhaps some significance in the fact that when describing the ministry of John the Baptist Matthew mentions Jerusalem first (3 : 5), the order in Mark being opposite. We may again notice that in 4 : 25 Jerusalem precedes Judea in contrast to the order in Mark 3 : 7, 8. All these things perhaps indicate an emphasis upon Jerusalem.

There are further indications that the city of Jerusalem took a prominent place in the author's thought. His Gospel is the only one that refers to it as "the holy city" (4 : 5; 27 : 53). He refers either to Jerusalem as a whole or to the temple precincts as "the holy place" (24 : 15), an expression for which Mark has a circumlocution (Mark 14). Luke says bluntly "Jerusalem" (Luke 21 : 20). Matthew alone calls Jerusalem "the city of the great King" (5 : 35), and his reference to the city set on the hill would have special force with the people at Jerusalem (5 : 14). The passage about the temple and the altar (23 : 16-22), which is peculiar to this evangelist, would have special significance in Jerusalem. It is also worth noticing that Matthew alone of the evangelists in his account of the cleansing of the temple refers to it as "the temple of God" (21 : 12). This again fits in with the suggestion that he wrote in Jerusalem for the religious leaders and other inhabitants of the city who had believed.

Slighter indications pointing in the same direction may perhaps be seen in the reference to the military law of the occupying power (5 : 41), and in the occasional prominence given in the narrative to the Sadducees, who were the dominant party in Jerusalem after Pentecost. The former might be relevant anywhere in the Roman empire, but seems peculiarly applicable to Palestine. Of course it was there that the Lord uttered the words, but the point is that it is this evangelist alone who retained it as useful for his readers. The Pharisees and Sadducees are mentioned by Matthew alone in the context of the ministry of John the Baptist (3 : 7). The Sadducees are also introduced in 16 : 1, 6, 11, 12, though they are not mentioned in this connection by the other synoptists. Both these trifles confirm our suggestion that the religious leaders at Jerusalem were in the writer's mind when he produced the Gospel. What is said about them is intended either to remind those converted of what they had been, or to warn the Christian inhabitants of Jerusalem against them.

SOURCES OF THE GOSPEL

No conclusion can be reached about the sources of the first Gospel without first discussing the relationship between it and the other synoptists. There were many other things that Jesus did (John 21 : 25) which have never been recorded in writing. The material that we have in the Gospels represents a selected cross-section of this activity which is illustrative of the whole. The fact that we have in the first three Gospels so much of the same material, largely the same cross-section, proves their interdependence. If they were all writing independently of each other, they must have made different selections from the material at their disposal, as in fact the fourth evangelist did.

The prevailing view of this interdependence today is that the second Gospel, which we know as Mark, was the earliest written of the three, and that the remaining two used his Gospel and other sources of their own in the compilation of their work. There is as a matter of fact only a negligible amount of the Gospel of Mark which does not appear in varying style and form in the other two, so that it is almost certainly true to say that it is Mark which forms the link between Matthew and Luke.

The classical English work of modern times on the origins of the Gospels is *The Four Gospels* of Canon B. H. Streeter, of Queen's College, Oxford, first published in 1924, and reprinted at least twice since. Canon Streeter sums up the argument for the priority of Mark under five heads (2nd edition, 1926, pp 159-169), and strongly expresses his view of the complete finality of the conclusion (p. 164). The five points are as follows: firstly, over nine-tenths of the material of Mark appears in Matthew in an abbreviated form comprising nearly half of Matthew, yet in the overlapping material about half of the vocabulary is the same. Secondly, in vocabulary and structure of sentences Matthew and Luke are singly or together generally in agreement with Mark but never agree against him. Canon Streeter considers this conclusive proof that Mark was original. Thirdly, "the order of incidents in Mark is clearly the more original; for wherever Matthew departs from Mark's order Luke supports Mark, and whenever Luke departs from Mark, Matthew agrees with Mark" (*The Four Gospels*, 2nd ed., p. 161). Fourthly, Matthew and Luke both in their varying ways improve upon Mark's language, which appears to be conversational. Matthew and Luke turn it into literature. Finally, Matthew and Luke combine the Marcan material with other sources in different ways. Matthew fits other matter into

a framework formed by the Marcan material. Luke starts with another framework into which he fits the matter that he takes from Mark.

There is no dispute over the relationship of Luke to Mark that is outlined above, and there is no dispute over the facts as they appear in the Gospels. It seems however that the same facts, in so far as they apply to the relationship of Matthew and Mark, are capable of the opposite interpretation. Let us look at Canon Streeter's five heads again. Firstly, the extent of the identical vocabulary in Matthew and Mark clearly proves that one† took from the other. True, the narrative portions of the common material (most of it, that is to say) are almost always briefer in Matthew than in Mark. But where Mark includes teaching or discourses, such as the parables or the Little Apocalypse, he is generally shorter than Matthew. On the same reasoning Mark boiled down the discourses of Matthew. Again Mark's Gospel contains about half of Matthew's material. Why may we not suppose that Mark produced his own shorter Gospel by editing Matthew?

The difficulty seems to lie in the length and fulness of Mark's narrative portions. Is this not explained by the fact that, as we shall see, he had been for long engaged in teaching the material orally to catechumens and those newly converted? He was also in close touch with the apostle Peter, from whom he had heard the stories. He therefore selects such material as he requires for his purpose from Matthew's Gospel, but tells it in the style and manner to which he had long been accustomed.

The facts brought out in Canon Streeter's second point would be equally satisfactorily explained if Mark took his material from Matthew and Luke later took his Marcan material from Mark. As a matter of fact there are a considerable number of places where Luke borrows Matthew's and not Mark's vocabulary. He used both Gospels. In the arrangement of the account of the Baptist's ministry, for example, Luke agrees with Matthew against Mark. The same may be said of Canon Streeter's third point. The departure of Matthew from Mark's order means that Mark altered Matthew's order. As Luke takes from Mark, he naturally follows him. Luke himself sometimes alters the order, but as he is taking from Mark, he naturally never agrees with Matthew

†We need not consider the possibility of both taking from an earlier document, for which Canon Streeter does not contend.

against Mark. He might sometimes have an independent order, and in fact taking his Gospel as a whole, we find that he not infrequently has. Moreover in Matt. 9:18 we find Matthew's chronology correct as against that of Mark and Luke.

Fourthly, the improvement by both Matthew and Luke of Mark's style is a matter of judgment. The style of each differs. We have already remarked on Matthew's curt business-like style and accounted for it from the personality and occupation of the writer. Is this style an "improvement" upon Mark's? All would not agree that the conversational dramatic story of the miracles appearing in Mark does not give a more vivid impression of what happened and rouse the emotions more than the abstract supplied by Matthew. In the same way Luke writes in his own more elegant style.

Canon Streeter's fifth point is again consistent with Mark's editing of Matthew. There is no dispute over what he says about Luke. If his judgment of the respective purposes of Matthew and Luke had been reversed, his own conclusion on the priority of Mark would have been final. As it is, the facts seem open to the interpretation which we have put upon them.

We have to remember that the prevalent judgment of scholars upon the relationship of the synoptic Gospels, including that of Canon Streeter, is based upon the phenomena they exhibit as literary documents only. Their nature as historical documents is ignored. In fact Canon Streeter accepts only a partial historicity. To ignore such indications as we have tried to give above of the authorship of the first Gospel, or to overlook the need for accounting for the transmission of the facts, seems to leave out much that ought to be taken into account in assessing the relationship of the authorship of the synoptists. If Matthew were the author of the first Gospel, he was an eyewitness of much of what he wrote. If he was an eyewitness, it is unreasonable to suppose that he depended upon Mark. Eyewitnesses are mentioned by Luke in his preface among those who had produced written accounts of the facts. It is unlikely that neither of the two Gospels that were already in existence when Luke wrote, being of such a quality that they have survived till today and are likely to live while the world lasts, is among those to which he referred. At least one of the two is therefore likely to have been written by an eyewitness.

There is a further consideration. Identity of vocabulary in many places proves the dependence of one Gospel upon another.

But the selection of material may well have taken place long before the Gospels were written. It was the custom from the first to give instruction to those who were seeking baptism, and it may very well be that the selection of the material which was later incorporated in the written Gospels was drawn up by the apostles as early as the days immediately following Pentecost as being appropriate for teaching to new converts, whether before or after baptism. Indeed there is evidence that the Lord Himself, even before His death, took certain steps in the direction of such a selection (Matt 26 : 13, Mark 14 : 9). Again it may have been to such an early compilation that Papias refers when he says that Matthew compiled τὰ λόγια in Aramaic. Matthew may have been entrusted with the task.

The teaching must generally have been given orally, and we must remember that eastern and ancient memories were extremely tenacious as compared with ours. In this connection it is interesting to find that when Barnabas and Saul set out on their first missionary journey, they took with them John Mark as their "minister". The word translated "minister" in the original is *ὑπηρέτης*, which appears to have been the technical term for the official attached to each synagogue who gave oral instruction to the young. This implies that Mark accompanied the apostles in the capacity of catechist or instructor, who taught the converts by rote the facts about the Lord, which he himself carried in his own head.

This fact accounts for Mark's vivid style. He was not an eyewitness. He had obtained the facts from an eyewitness, probably the apostle Peter, who was a familiar visitor in his mother's house. When, years afterwards, he came to write down what he had been teaching orally for so long, what more natural than that he should use the Gospel of Matthew in which the incidents which he intended to relate, being part of the original selection, had for some years appeared in the published account of an eyewitness?

The above suggestions cannot be conclusively proved. Comparison of the parallel texts of Matthew and Mark reveals a medley of likenesses and of differences of varying degree and extent so tantalising, that unless other features are taken into consideration it seems impossible to decide with certainty how much of the text of one is dependent upon the other and how much either is independent. The degree of dependence differs and varies throughout. Would this not be the expected result, if we were to conceive of Mark using Matthew's written Gospel as an aid in

the compilation of a work substantially based on his own oral teaching ?

Both Gospels are anonymous. No question directly affecting inspiration arises if we prefer to regard Matthew as dependent on Mark. We may solve a literary problem in this way, but we do not touch the question of the source of the information. Mark was not an eyewitness. In taking into consideration such evidence, slight as it may be, that points to the apostle Matthew as the actual author of the first Gospel and that indicates an early date, we are able to see in the author of the earliest Gospel an actual eyewitness of the majority of what he narrates, and we thus have a firmer foundation for the facts than much modern scholarship has allowed itself. Our evidence is supported by a tradition that was not seriously challenged in the church between the second and the nineteenth centuries.

If we are right in the conclusions that we have reached about the author and date of Matthew's Gospel—conclusions admittedly contrary to the prevalent theory of today, but more agreeable to the documents taken at their face value, and not inconsistent with common sense—it is obvious that the first Gospel was the main written source of the second. While in Mark there are many additions to Matthew in detail, there is little substantial addition. The stories, especially the miracle stories, are told with fuller outline, but the framework is substantially Matthew's.

As well as additions to Matthew's text there are re-arrangements, abbreviations and omissions. Where the narratives are parallel, there are both similarities and differences, tantalisingly mingled and effectively preventing any dogmatic precision in estimating the extent to which Mark was dependent. Meanwhile there is one generalisation that we can cautiously suggest. It is this. Passages in which the similarity is most evident, that is to say, in which the appearance in Mark of sentences or phrases taken verbatim, or almost so, from Matthew are most obvious, are with scarcely an exception passages which we find to be related by Matthew as an eyewitness, or derived from information likely to have been supplied by the immediate entourage of disciples. On the other hand almost all those passages in Matthew where facts are told of which he was not an eyewitness appear in Mark, if they appear at all, either re-arranged in the telling, or told in words that do not follow Matthew's phraseology so closely, or show an extra vividness in the telling, or are abbreviated, or show additions. These include passages where the information

may be thought of as public knowledge, the passion narratives, the temptation, and the account of the death of John the Baptist. Of course there are many eyewitness passages included in these in addition.

If we add further passages in which Matthew has been re-arranged, abbreviated or added to, we shall account for nearly all the non-eye-witness sections. Take for instance the few passages where there is marked abbreviation of Matthew. They are in two classes, incidents and discourses. The incidents are as follows: the baptism (Mark 1 : 9-11; Matt. 3 : 13-17); the temptation (Mark 1 : 12, 13; Matt. 4 : 1-11); the arrest (Mark 14 : 43-50; Matt. 26 : 47-56); trial before Pilate (Mark 15 : 6-15; Matt. 27 : 15-26); the events at the crucifixion (Mark 15 : 38, 39; Matt. 27 : 51-54). All these incidents but one are from non-eye-witness sections of Matthew. The discourses are abbreviated in accordance with the general plan of Mark's work.

If we can accept such a division as actually representing differences in the extent to which Mark followed Matthew's language, then we may tentatively suggest that Mark was aware that Matthew was an eye-witness. He would have been further aware of those facts of Matthew's Gospel which depended upon the writer's first-hand evidence, and on the whole took pains to follow it more closely in phraseology. On the other hand he was rather freer with those parts of the narrative that were derived from public knowledge or from sources outside the apostolic circle.

Matthew's Gospel thus lay before Mark.

DISCUSSION.

The CHAIRMAN (Rev. A. M. STIBBS) said : I am sure you would like me to begin by thanking Dr. Atkinson for his valuable contribution to this particular study, for it is a subject on which such attention to detail and such intensiveness of mind as Dr. Atkinson brings, and has given, to its study, are particularly welcome ; and that applies, perhaps, most of all to the last section of the paper about the sources of the Gospel, and the relationship of St. Matthew to the other two Synoptics. For we live in a day in which the predominant theory so holds sway that very few ever give any alternative serious and adequate thought ; and, therefore, the fact that Dr. Atkinson has given serious attention to, and seen in the evidences ground for setting out a reasoned case for, an entirely

different theory is something which is to be welcomed in the pursuit of truth and in the right use of study and of learning.

Dr. Atkinson's contribution is the more important because this particular Gospel—the first Gospel—has been severely criticised in the last few decades, in what I should regard as a very extreme and unfair way, as to its historical reliability; and, therefore, a serious hypothesis of this kind, which puts it further back in writing, and makes its statements more authoritative as direct testimony from an eyewitness, is the more welcome and to be valued.

One knows that a similar case for the priority of Matthew's Gospel has been made by Roman Catholic writers, but their contribution has been suspected of special pleading to support their own ecclesiastical position; and, therefore, it is welcome to have a contribution from one who cannot be suspected of motives of that kind.

As far as my own reaction to this paper is concerned, I feel that its detailed argument does demand considerably more attention, by examining the texts of the Gospels themselves, before one can come to an adequate considered judgment. The measure of my reaction so far is that I am more persuaded now in the light of this paper to treat Matthew as possibly more independent of Mark and Luke than the predominant theory would allow. I was somewhat disappointed that no reference was made to the hypothetical document "Q"; for one would greatly like to know Dr. Atkinson's considered attitude to this hypothesis, and whether he thinks such a document existed.

I was interested by what seemed to be implied in one of Dr. Atkinson's suggestions that it was possible that Matthew began to write down not only the sayings of our Lord very early, which modern scholarship has stated as a possibility, but also that he started to write very early a written record of incidents. One would like to see that idea developed a little further; it might alter one's attitude to the synoptic problem very considerably.

On the question of authorship and date, I felt that some of the points made by Dr. Atkinson might support the idea that the gospel is more like the work of a converted rabbi than a converted publican. One wonders a little how a converted publican could adapt himself to Jewish ideas and prejudices in the way here suggested. As far

as I have any suggestions along that line, it seems to me possible to suppose that Matthew's treatment of his material had been influenced by evangelism among that particular kind of audience; and if he had done that evangelising together with Peter, such personal connection with Peter, first on the part of Matthew and later on the part of Mark, may explain some of the very close similarity between their written gospels.

I would like, therefore, to say how much I appreciate the potential significance of some of the thoughts which Dr. Atkinson's paper stimulates; and now leave the meeting open to you for some contributions.

Rev. J. STAFFORD WRIGHT said: It is a good thing for accepted beliefs to be challenged from time to time, and Dr. Atkinson has certainly given a powerful exposition of what would normally be called the old-fashioned view. His purpose has been to vindicate the Matthaean authorship of the first Gospel, but I believe that this can still be done on the four-document hypothesis.

The *logia* in the Hebrew (Aramaic) tongue that Papias ascribes to Matthew may well be "Q," and it is possible that much of the first Gospel peculiar to Matthew (M) also belongs to "Q." We may imagine Matthew working particularly among the Jewish Christians in Palestine, and compiling for them a record of those teachings of Jesus Christ that had a special interest for them.

Eusebius suggests that Matthew later extended his ministry and had wider contacts with Greek-speaking peoples. He would naturally translate his *logia* into Greek for their benefit and Luke may well have used this translated version.

About this time Matthew received a copy of Mark, in which the outline of Christ's ministry was set out with far more narrative than he himself had used in his *logia*. Mark's Gospel was more than simply one man's story of Christ. It represented the *kerygma* of the early Christian Church and had the additional imprimatur of Peter himself. In these circumstances, it would be natural for Matthew, even though he himself had been an eyewitness, to use Mark as the framework of a fuller Gospel. A few years ago I did a similar thing when writing the history of a college with which I had been personally associated. I took the annual reports of the college activity as a basis on which to work, and wove into them facts that I remembered from personal experience.

With Matthew we may believe that originality was not so important as accuracy. Yet, with the privilege of an eyewitness, he employed a certain freedom. Thus, he did not always observe Mark's chronological order, but preferred a greater measure of arrangement by topics. Moreover, he had no hesitation in making some minor changes in Mark's version by way of amplification (e.g., 20 : 30 ; 21 : 1-7).

WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS

Mr. F. F. BRUCE wrote : The Gospel of Matthew presents more problems in respect of authorship, purpose and life-setting, possibly than any of the other three Gospels, and certainly than either of the other two Synoptics.

Dr. Atkinson has therefore earned our gratitude by drawing our attention to certain aspects of this Gospel, which must be allowed due weight in trying to solve some of these problems. If, after reading his paper, I remain a believer in the priority of Mark, that does not detract from my appreciation of Dr. Atkinson's arguments.

Certainly the hypothesis of a simple dependence of Matthew on Mark is inadequate. The relation is more complicated. In *Christ in the Gospels* (1930), p. 20, B. S. Easton points out that, whereas Matt. 24 is dependent on Mark 13, "Matt. 10 contains elements earlier than Mark 13 ; similarly, the mission charge in Matt. 10 is partly more primitive than the parallel in Mark 6. The result is, of course, a problem of great complexity that certainly will always defy final solution ; but we should not forget that the problem exists."

Two books on the subject, later than Streeter's, should be referred to : B. W. Bacon, *Studies in Matthew* (1931), and G. D. Kilpatrick, *The Origins of the Gospel according to St. Matthew* (1946).^{*} The Clarendon Bible volume on Matthew, by F. W. Green (1936), is largely a popularisation of Bacon's work. Professor Kilpatrick suggests that a study of the relations between Jews and Christians between A.D. 70 and 132 will throw light on the life-setting of this Gospel. As he proposes to undertake such a study himself, we await his findings with interest.

^{*} A more recent work, and one which approaches more closely to Dr. Atkinson's position, is *The Originality of St. Matthew* by Dom B. C. Butler (Cambridge, 1951).

Mr. L. D. FORD wrote : It is some relief to see so able a pen as Dr. Atkinson's turning the tables on the modern scholars, and by their own arguments showing that St. Matthew's Gospel might have been the first written (instead of St. Mark's Gospel, as commonly considered the first). As St. Matthew, was a chosen Apostle from the beginning, he would hardly need to turn to one who was not even there for his matter, if his writing was of such a kind as to need documentary helps. But whence comes all this "rummaging" in things which surely are here for our learning of what Jesus did and taught and that we might worship as we learn, and learn as we read? I think we greatly err in our present generation by seeking to do to the Scriptures the very thing that the Scriptures do to us. They are advertised to us as being "quick and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword," dividing asunder soul and spirit, discerning the thoughts and intents of the heart (Heb. 4 : 12). They (by God's power) penetrate the spirit of man and reveal all things to him, showing him his sin and bringing him into the consciousness that he is thoroughly known by God. *They* are critical (*κριτικός*) : but modern scholars say, "We are critical." *They* judge of man and all his works. Modern scholarship says, "We judge of *them* and all *their* works."

Whilst appreciating the intentions of our learned contributor, which is to hold at bay the wolves of "higher criticism" (as I judge), perhaps the day will come again when these inquisitions into how the Scripture came will be a thing of the past and men will humbly return to the traditional attitude of the Church of receiving the Scriptures as being God's word, and thus above all assessment as ordinary writings—which they are not.

Lt.-Col. L. MERSON DAVIES wrote : This is a most valuable paper, whose conclusion is well worth noting ; for Modernists, denying our Lord's Virgin Birth, insist on the priority of Mark's Gospel when arguing that the first Christians knew nothing about such a Birth, the very idea of which came later. Another plea to similar effect is that only two of the four Gospels talk of the Virgin Birth.

I would therefore stress what I have long held to indicate Matthew's authorship of the first Gospel, that he gives what is clearly Joseph's account of our Lord's Birth. Obviously, the circumstances of that Birth were too delicate a subject for either Joseph or Mary

to tell to all; and whom would Joseph select for his confidence if not the most legally trained person among our Lord's disciples? For tax-gatherers were not only business men, as Dr. Atkinson rightly emphasises, but they also had to know the law, on which their revenue claims were based. Many of them might be "rascally lawyers," but lawyers of a sort they had to be. Hence (I hold) Joseph's approach to this one among our Lord's most intimate followers.

And to whom would Mary—woman-like—speak on this subject but to a doctor? So it is significantly Luke, "the beloved physician" (Col. 4: 14), who gives what is essentially, from first to last, Mary's account of that unique Birth. All Christians should note that both the third Gospel and Acts are packed with medical terms and notes which prove their *medical* authorship, and are unlike the terms, etc., used by the other three evangelists, even when describing the same events. See, *e.g.*, Inter-Varsity Paper No. 4, *A Doctor looks at the Bible*, by the late D. M. Blair, Regius Professor of Anatomy in the University of Glasgow, being his Presidential Address at the Inter-Varsity Conference in 1936; also the monumental work by W. K. Hobart on *The Medical Language of St. Luke* (Longmans Green & Co., 1882), to which Professor Blair referred as long ago proving Luke's authorship in unanswerable manner.

Dr. Atkinson's paper shows that Matthew's Gospel was also written by a technically trained man, although of a different type. And each man learns, and records, the facts as one of his kind would. Joseph apparently died before the Crucifixion, but what proof is there that he died before Matthew's call? And how, in that case, did Matthew acquire Joseph's details regarding his personal visions (Matt. 1: 20; 2: 13, 19) and reactions?

It is notable that while Matthew only traces our Lord's genealogy back to Abraham, Luke traces it back to Adam. Here we surely get another characteristic difference between the Jewish legalistic and the medical humanistic outlooks of these two complementary testifiers to the Virgin Birth.

AUTHOR'S REPLY.

I am most grateful to my Chairman and to the other gentlemen.

who have made comments on my paper, which I half suspected would come in for rougher weather than has actually been the case.

I see the force of Mr. Stibbs' remark about the "converted rabbi." It seems to me to strengthen the view that the Gospel, or the underlying substance of it, appeared very early, when the Gospel was being preached only or mainly to Jews.

The comments both of Mr. Stibbs and of Mr. J. Stafford Wright demand some expression of my opinion about the existence of Q. Here I will be cautious. I think it likely that Q existed, but I cannot say that I feel this to be proved beyond doubt. To the statement of Mr. Wright as a whole I feel I could, broadly speaking, subscribe. I should feel quite satisfied with it as a statement of the origin of the first Gospel.

I agree with Mr. Bruce that the relation between Matthew and Mark, indeed, between all the synoptists, is much more complicated than that of simple dependence the one upon the other. I should, however, very much doubt the dependence of Matt. 24 upon Mark 13. The opposite seems to me more probable. I should also feel that a study of the years 70 to 132 was a study of a period too late to affect the first Gospel at all.

I agree with the substance of Mr. L. D. Ford's remarks, but I think no aspect of reverent study of the Scriptures can do otherwise than help us to see something of the wonder of inspiration.

There is only one question for me to answer in Col. Merson Davies' remarks. He asks how Matthew received information from Joseph, if the latter died before Matthew's call. I believe that he received it from James, the Lord's brother, after he became leader of the church in Jerusalem.