

## CHAPTER X.

## ST MATTHEW.—III.

THE Epistle of Polycarp to the Philippians was in all probability of the same date as the Ignatian Epistles, the history of which it in a manner continues. IGNATIUS, Bishop of Antioch, had been condemned to be thrown to the wild beasts at Rome in one of the persecutions which arose in the reign of Trajan. From Antioch to Smyrna he had travelled by land under the charge of a maniple of Roman soldiers, whom he calls ten leopards; and at Smyrna he wrote letters to the Ephesian, the Magnesian, and the Trallian Christians, whose representatives met him at Smyrna; and also to the Roman Christians, to whom he was going, and whom he begged to do nothing that would tend to save his life and rob him of the crown of martyrdom. After leaving Smyrna he halted at Troas, from which he would make the passage across the *Ægean* to reach the *Via Egnatia*

at Neapolis, and there he wrote a letter of thankful remembrance to the Smyrnæan Christians, another to Polycarp their bishop, and still another to the Christians of Philadelphia, whom he had seen on his way by the northern road from Antioch to Smyrna. These seven, amid a mass of letters which have come down to us in three different recensions, are now, thanks to the labours of Lightfoot, Zahn, Harnack, and other scholars, recognised as genuine; and falling as they do within the second decade of the second century, they are of the very greatest value in their bearing upon the Gospels. Of his significant testimony to St John's Gospel we shall hear in another chapter. Of the Synoptics, the parallels in Ignatius are much closer to St Matthew than to St Mark or St Luke. Indeed, there is hardly a parallel that can be maintained with St Mark, and only one or two with St Luke, whereas there are eight references which may without hesitation be assigned to St Matthew, and one or two more of somewhat doubtful claims. In the opening of the Epistle to the Smyrnæans (chap. i.), Ignatius exultingly honours Christ as "being truly of the family of David according to the flesh, Son of God according to the will and power of God, born truly of the Virgin, baptised by John in order that all righteousness might be fulfilled by

Him." The reference here is undoubtedly to St Matthew (iii. 15), because he alone of the Evangelists gives this motive for our Lord's baptism. In other letters<sup>1</sup> Ignatius says, "These are not the planting of the Father"; and "Keep yourselves away from evil plants, which Jesus Christ does not cultivate, because they are not the Father's planting,"—the reference in both being to the words of Jesus recorded by St Matthew (xv. 13), "Every plant which my Heavenly Father did not plant shall be rooted up." Another interesting parallel is found in the letter to Polycarp (c. i.), where Ignatius exhorts him—"Bear all as also the Lord beareth thee. . . . Bear the sicknesses of all like a perfect athlete." Here the somewhat unusual word (*βάσταζε*) is that of St Matthew, and not the word of the LXX translating the well-known passage of Isaiah (liii. 4) on which it is founded, and it can scarcely be doubted that Ignatius has taken it from our First Gospel (Matt. viii. 17). In the same letter (c. ii.) and in the very next verses we seem to have reminiscences of St Matthew again: "If you love disciples who are good, no thanks to you for it: rather by meekness subdue the more pestilent. Every wound is not healed by the same application: stay violent attacks with gentle applications. Be

<sup>1</sup> Trallians, xi. 1; Philad., iii. 1.

thou wise as a serpent in all things, and always harmless as the dove" (Matt. v. 46, x. 16). In the Epistle to the Ephesians<sup>1</sup> Ignatius has a reference to the incident of the anointing of the Lord at Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, which is recorded by St Matthew, St Mark, and St John: "For this cause," says Ignatius, "the Lord received ointment upon His head that He might breathe immortality upon His Church." In St John it was not the head but the feet which Mary anointed. As between St Matthew and St Mark, the verbal coincidence is more on the side of St Matthew (xxvi. 6), which is most likely the source of the reference. In the Epistle to the Magnesians there is a very striking reference to the *descensus ad inferos*, and Christ is represented as having visited the souls of patriarchs and prophets and to have raised them up. "How," exclaims Ignatius,<sup>2</sup> "shall we be able to live without Him for whom the prophets waited as their teacher, being His disciples by the Spirit? And because of this, He whom they righteously waited for, when He was come, raised them from the dead." This refers in all probability to the difficult passage in St Matthew (xxvii. 52), where we read "Many bodies of the saints that had fallen asleep arose; and coming forth from the

<sup>1</sup> Ephes. xvii. i.

<sup>2</sup> Magnes. ix. 3.

tombs after His rising, entered into the Holy City and appeared unto many." There are also allusions which point to the Synoptic tradition—such as "Be ye salted in Him"<sup>1</sup> (Matt. v. 13, Mark ix. 50, Luke xiv. 34); and "The tree is known by its fruit"<sup>2</sup> (Matt. xii. 33, Luke vi. 44). There are other passages in which traces or echoes of the Gospel of St Matthew are to be found, but the proofs of the knowledge of this Gospel by Ignatius are sufficiently clear. It is a question whether he is not indebted to some other source for the statement—highly coloured even for Ignatius—that at our Lord's manifestation to the ages "a star shone in heaven above all the stars, and its light was inexpressible, and its strangeness caused astonishment; and all the rest of the constellations, with sun and moon, formed themselves into a chorus round it, while it with its light outshone them all."<sup>3</sup> Ignatius keeps so strictly within the Gospel tradition, that it is very doubtful whether we need to go beyond the star in the East in the second chapter of St Matthew for the allusion, which contains also a manifest reminiscence of Joseph's early dream (Gen. xxxvii. 9).

From Ignatius we pass on upwards to CLEMENT OF ROME. His First Epistle to the Corinthians,

<sup>1</sup> Magnes. x. 2.<sup>2</sup> Ephes. xiv. 2.<sup>3</sup> Ephes. xix. 2.

which is usually set down to 96 A.D., and is written by him in name of the Church of Rome, contains numerous and lengthened quotations from the Old Testament, especially from the Pentateuch, the Psalms, and the Prophet Isaiah, occupying in all nearly a quarter of the whole Epistle. But whilst he quotes so copiously, he gives no references to Old Testament books. His formulæ of quotation are fairly numerous and varied (*λέγει γάρ που: συνεπιμαρτυρούσης καὶ τῆς γραφῆς: οὕτω γὰρ γέγραπται: ὡς ἐπαγγελιαμένου τοῦ Θεοῦ: οὕτως γὰρ φησιν ὁ Θεός: προλέγει γὰρ ἡμῖν*). His Old Testament quotations are often very loose, and his manner of quotation in the New Testament is marked by the same characteristic, so that verbal divergence from the canonical text need not imply any other source. The Epistle to the Hebrews is quoted at least a dozen times, and St Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians, perhaps both Epistles, are alluded to by name. Of references to the Gospels that can be tabulated there are not more than a dozen altogether, and of these not more than four can be attributed to St Matthew. One reference brings into juxtaposition a passage of an ancient prophet—Jeremiah—and words of our Lord in the Sermon on the Mount. Clement first quotes<sup>1</sup> Jeremiah (ix. 23, 24), "Let us do according as it stands

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. xiii.

written (for the Holy Spirit saith, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, neither let the rich man glory in his riches, but rather let him that glorieth glory in the Lord, to seek Him, and to do judgment and righteousness), especially remembering the words of the Lord Jesus which He uttered as He taught meekness and patience, for thus He said, Be merciful, that ye may obtain mercy; forgive, that ye may be forgiven; as ye do, it shall be done unto you; as ye give, so shall it be given to you; as ye judge, so shall ye be judged; as ye show kindness, so shall kindness be shown to you; with what measure ye mete it shall be measured to you" (Matt. vi. 14, 15; vii. 1, 2; Luke vi. 31, 36-38). Another reference<sup>1</sup> strongly suggesting St Matthew, but also St Mark and St Luke, is, "Remember the words of Jesus our Lord: for He said, Woe to that man; it were better for him that he had not been born than that he should make one of My chosen ones to offend; it were better for him that a millstone were hanged round his neck and he cast into the sea, than that he should cause one of My little ones to stumble" (Matt. xxvi. 24, xviii. 6; Mark ix. 42; Luke xviii. 2). The occurrence here of the rare word translated "cast into the sea" (*καταπορεύεσθαι*), used by St Matthew alone of the New

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. xlvii.

Testament writers, fixes the main reference as being to St Matthew. Clement shows no signs of knowing other Gospels than the canonical Four, and his Christian literature mirrors itself not merely in the few direct quotations. It lies behind his way of thinking, behind his way of putting things, and behind his language. Nothing in this Epistle points to other writings, and his testimony can be claimed without hesitation for St Matthew's Gospel.<sup>1</sup> "These Epistles of Clement and Polycarp," says Dr Charteris<sup>2</sup>—and we may add those of Ignatius—"imply the previous acceptance of the existing documents and doctrines of the New Testament; and the very fact that in the case of those to whom they were writing, as in their own, they constantly assume that the religion of Jesus Christ has been known and believed, is a powerful testimony to the acceptance of the same facts, and the prevalence of the same truth. We may see that Clement knew his readers to be more familiar with the life of Jesus Christ than with the biographies of Old Testament saints; for when he speaks of Abraham, or Moses, or David, he thinks it necessary to remind them of the general character of the life, whereas a simple allusion to

<sup>1</sup> Compare Gregory, 'Canon and Text of the New Testament,' p. 66.

<sup>2</sup> *Canonicity*, p. xvii.

the facts of the history of Jesus Christ is enough."

Clement represents Rome; our next witness represents Alexandria. This is the Epistle of BARNABAS, one of the most ancient witnesses, although it is not possible to define his place in the patristic succession with exactitude. Harnack places the Epistle at 130-131 A.D., and Lightfoot somewhere between 70-79. The latest discussions indicate no ground for placing the Epistle later than the first century. It was apparently written when Jerusalem and the Temple were already in ruins, and *Ælia Capitolina* had not been founded. It is now almost unanimously agreed that Barnabas, "the son of consolation" (Acts iv. 36), was not the author.<sup>1</sup> Judging from the fact that it was in Egypt that the Epistle was first known and most highly esteemed, we should say that Alexandria was the place of its composition. What, then, are the Gospels known to the writer, whoever he may have been? St Mark and St Luke can hardly be said to find any attestation; but it is scarcely possible to doubt the knowledge and use of St Matthew. There are at least two or three clear indications of knowledge of our First Gospel. "Let us give heed," says the writer,<sup>2</sup> "lest, as

<sup>1</sup> My venerated predecessor, Professor Milligan, who wrote the article "Barnabas" in *Smith's Dictionary*, held to the view that the apostolic Barnabas was the author.

<sup>2</sup> Bar. iv. 14.

it is written (*ὡς γέγραπται*), we be found many called but few chosen" (Matt. xx. 16, xxii. 14). The expression, "as it is written," occurs now for the first time in its application to New Testament Scripture. It is worth noticing that it was only when the Sinaitic Manuscript was discovered by Tischendorf in 1859, with a complete Greek text of Barnabas incorporated in it, that the reading *ὡς γέγραπται* was ascertained for certain. The expression points at least to a written record, and it is important as showing that this record was treated by the author of the Epistle as Scripture, on the same footing as the Old Testament, which is cited with the same formula. Another clear parallel with St Matthew is,<sup>1</sup> "When He chose as His own Apostles to go and preach His Gospel men who were wicked beyond all sin, in order that He might show that He did not come to call righteous men, but sinners, He thus manifested Himself to be the Son of God."<sup>2</sup> It was an early charge brought against Christianity that its first preachers were some of them taken from the lowest of the people, and Celsus in particular made it, founding, as Origen<sup>3</sup> thinks, on the exaggerated language used "in the Catholic Epistle of Barnabas." Barnabas<sup>4</sup> in another place gives an

<sup>1</sup> Bar. v. 9.

<sup>2</sup> The best texts of St Matthew read here, "For I came not to call the righteous, but sinners" (Matt. ix. 13).

<sup>3</sup> Contra Cels., i. 63.

<sup>4</sup> Bar. xii. 11.

interpretation of Psalm cx., which he may very well have derived from our Lord's words in His disputation with the Pharisees, recorded in St Matthew (xxii. 45). The author quotes frequently from the Old Testament, and he cites his authorities with varying degrees of accuracy. Dr Sanday<sup>1</sup> reckoned sixteen exact, twenty-three slightly variant, and forty-seven variant citations of the Old Testament in the Epistle. It was to be expected that his New Testament citations would have something of the same character, and we see this in his references to St Paul's Epistles, of which Romans and Ephesians are quoted. There need be no hesitation in admitting his Gospel citations, even though they may not all be exact. There is a saying, supposed to be attributed to Jesus, which is not found in the Gospels<sup>2</sup>—"So, He says, they who wish to see Me and to attain unto My kingdom must receive Me in tribulation and suffering." It may, however, be no more than a dramatic enforcement of the meaning of the emblem of the scarlet wool caught in the bramble bush, referred to in the preceding sentences. But the quotations already given, and other allusions or echoes, all point to the ancient and much-quoted Gospel according to Matthew.

From Irenæus, Hippolytus, Epiphanius, and others who have left particulars of the views

<sup>1</sup> Gospels in the Second Century, p. 31 ff.

<sup>2</sup> Bar. vii. 11.

of EARLY HERETICS, we gather what was their attitude to the New Testament books. The Ebionites appear to have known of a Hebrew Gospel of St Matthew. The Ophites, while apparently acquainted with apocryphal writings, allude also to New Testament books, and are known to have used St Matthew. Cerinthus, the contemporary of St John at Ephesus, was acquainted with St Matthew's genealogy of our Lord, but denied the Supernatural Birth, making Jesus to be the son of Joseph and Mary, and the Christ to descend upon Him at His baptism. From what Hippolytus tells us of Simon Magus and his heresy, we may infer that he had some acquaintance with St Matthew's Gospel.<sup>1</sup>

We have thus traced the existence and use and growing authority of our First Gospel up to the last decades of the first century. It is with the TEACHING OF THE TWELVE APOSTLES that we reach in all probability the earliest written records which have survived outside the canon of New Testament Scripture.<sup>2</sup> The discovery of this early Christian document by Bryennios in the library of the Jerusalem Monastery of the Holy Sepulchre at Constantinople in 1873, in a manuscript volume containing complete Greek texts of the two Epistles of

<sup>1</sup> *Canonicity*, p. 384.

<sup>2</sup> Funk, *Patres Apostolici*, pp. vi-xix.

Clement and other writings, was a notable event in the history of patristic literature. The *Didache* or Teaching is referred to in early lists of Christian books, and is included by Eusebius among his spurious books along with the Shepherd and others. It is even quoted (as is the Shepherd) by Clement of Alexandria as inspired Scripture, and such quotation is at least a tribute to its high antiquity. It is a moot-point whether Barnabas quotes from the *Didache* or the *Didache* from Barnabas, but there are many considerations favouring the former alternative. Hermas, in the Shepherd, appropriates almost verbatim passages of the *Didache*.<sup>1</sup> Its date may be fixed somewhere between 80 and 90 A.D. Here again St Matthew is the best known Gospel,<sup>2</sup>—in fact, it appears to be the only one known to the writer. St Luke may be alluded to twice or thrice; St Mark once; St John's cannot be referred to, for it was not yet written, and yet there

<sup>1</sup> Mandat. ii. 4-6; compare with *Did.*, cc. i. 5, 6; iv. 7.

<sup>2</sup> Of express references to Scripture there are eight in the whole book. Two of them are to the Old Testament, with the formula of quotation—"For this is what was spoken by the Lord, as it was said." Five are to the Gospel—(1) "As the Lord commanded in His Gospel" (viii. 2); (2) "Concerning this the Lord has said" (ix. 5); (3) "According to the decree of the Gospel" (xv. 3); (4) "As ye have it in the Gospel of our Lord" (xv. 4); (5) "As ye have it in the Gospel" (xv. 3); and one is to an unknown authority—"Concerning this it has been said" (i. 6). It is undoubtedly St Matthew which is the Gospel of the *Didache*.

are expressions which might be taken to show signs of his influence. There are twenty-five coincidences with St Matthew, and as the *Didache* was probably written in Palestine, it is natural that St Matthew should be its authority. It is in the *Didache*<sup>1</sup> that we find the first notice of the Lord's Prayer outside the New Testament, given in the form in which our Evangelist has recorded it. It has the Doxology, which is omitted in the oldest manuscripts and versions, and now also in our Revised Version; and it gives it with only very slight verbal variations, the most important of which is the omission of "the kingdom," so that it runs, "For thine is the power and the glory for ever." There is also a word-for-word quotation of the Baptismal formula,<sup>2</sup>—"Baptise them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost" (Matt. xxviii. 19). Notable too is the version given<sup>3</sup> of the Golden Rule, which takes a negative form, as contrasted with the positive form in St Matthew and St Luke: "All things whatsoever thou wouldest not should be done to thee, do thou also not to another." It is not given in the *Didache* with a formula of quotation, and we cannot, perhaps, claim the reference as exclusively to St Matthew.<sup>4</sup> It does,

<sup>1</sup> *Did.*, c. viii.

<sup>2</sup> *Did.*, c. vii.

<sup>3</sup> *Did.*, c. i.

<sup>4</sup> The negative form of the Golden Rule is older than the Gospels, and was current among the Jews at an earlier time. In the Talmud

however, differ verbally from any of the Rabbinical forms, and the frequency of the references to St Matthew otherwise makes the allusion to the First Gospel probable, even though put in a negative form. To the Great Invitation (Matt. xi. 28) there is what is regarded by critics of various schools as a clear reference in "the yoke of the Lord,"<sup>1</sup>—"If thou canst bear the whole yoke of the Lord, thou shalt be perfect,"<sup>2</sup> where the easy yoke of Christ, in His gracious teaching and commands, is contrasted with the yoke of the law of Moses and the additions of the Pharisees, which their fathers were not able to bear (Acts xv. 10). Whilst most of the references are to discourses and sayings of Jesus, there are allusions also to incidents in the Gospel history as recorded by St Matthew; and

it is attributed to Hillel in the form, "Do not to thy neighbour what is disagreeable to thee." In Tobit (iv. 15) it appears in the form, "What thou thyself hatest, do to no man"; and in Philo almost the same, "What any one hates to endure, do not to him." The Stoics had it in this negative form, and Isocrates, the Attic orator, put it in this form, "What stirs your anger when done to you by others, that do not to them." Buddhist and Chinese ethics are said to possess the negative form also. Dr Charles Taylor derives the saying from the Second Table of the Law by supposing a question asked, "What are those things which thou shalt not do to thy neighbour?" And the answer given, "What to thyself is hateful." Thus the origin of the saying would be accounted for, and its description as the sum total of the Law. See C. Taylor, 'Sayings of the Fathers'; Erich Bischoff, 'Jesus und die Rabbinen,' p. 92.

<sup>1</sup> Did., c. vi. See Funk, *ad loc.*

<sup>2</sup> Harnack, *Sprüche und Reden Jesu*, p. 213 n.

based not upon learned conjecture but upon facts which in that age were incontrovertible.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Zahn, *Einleitung*, ii. 392 (English translation). Zahn's judgment of this Gospel is worth quoting, as that of one who has devoted to its exposition much study and vast erudition: "If the preceding summary of the principal thoughts of the book is in the main correct, we must admit that the work is exceedingly rich in its content, that it is constructed according to a plan, and that this plan is carried out to the smallest detail. In greatness of conception, and in the power with which a mass of material is subordinated to great ideas, no writing in either Testament dealing with a historical theme is to be compared with Matthew. In this respect the present writer would be at a loss to find its equal also in the other literature of antiquity" (ii. 556).