

## **The Authorship of Matthew's Gospel: A Re-assessment**

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### ***Abstract***

*In the recent time, scholarship has grown beyond the way it use to be; in reinstating and re-examining ancient held traditions. This does not exempt several approaches dedicated to Biblical studies. There are several books in the Bible, some of which the authorships have been widely and diversely disputed. As a result, the New Testament, especially the Synoptics (Matthew, Mark and Luke) have received keen attention. Therefore, the focus of this research is the authorship of Matthew with an explicit exploration of evidences in maintaining a viable position*

**Keywords:** Gospel, Matthew, Synoptics

### **Introduction**

As one of the Synoptics; the gospel of Matthew is expedient about the birth, life, ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Arguably, the writer of the gospel did not identify himself by name just like other biblical books, yet the early church believed that this book was written by one of the disciples –the Tax collector Levi – also called Matthew (Matt 9:9-13). This informs the appearance of this gospel as the first among other synoptics. Matthew recorded certain events from the life of Christ to share his personal belief in Jesus Christ. The gospel made use of several quotes from the Old Testament revealing

Christ as the promised Messiah. In fact, more recent studies have argued that the writing shows whoever wrote it was more interested in things that worry the church around in the first century, not during the life time of Jesus; so, most like Matthew copied Mark, not the other way round. Therefore, this research explores a discourse on the authorship of the gospel of Matthew in view of patristic comments.

### **The statement of problem**

The research observes that the basic crux of this re-think stands on the fact that the “gospel of Matthew” did not come with ‘about the author’<sup>226</sup> (anonymity) just like the other synoptics.<sup>227</sup> Unfortunately, this gospel does not name its author and this has given room for several assertions.<sup>228</sup> However, this premise forms the framework of this discourse. Since the time of the early church, Apostle Matthew has always been credited with the authorship of the gospel of Matthew not until recently.<sup>229</sup> Since apostolicity is one of the criteria

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<sup>226</sup> About the author is a section in modern literatures where information is given about the author of the writing, sometimes authors. This exclusively gives credence, direction and ownership of the work without further argument and controversy. This section of the writing (about the author) settles the score of who owns the work. But this is not the case with the gospel of Matthew; therefore, delineating the author of Matthew is a serious struggle.

<sup>227</sup> Keith F. Nickle, *The Synoptic Gospels* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1993), 121. In fact, Strass opines that the authorship here is perhaps the most disputed historical question related to this Matthew’s gospel. Mark L. Strauss, *Four Portraits, One Jesus: an Introduction to Jesus and the Gospels*. Grand Rapids, Mich: Zondervan Publishing Company, 2007), 252.

<sup>228</sup> Since the author did not identify himself, he probably thought that it was not essential for his readers to know his name. The research notes that working through the human author was the primary Author, the Holy Spirit. W. F. Albright, and C. S. Mann, (eds) *Matthew*, Anchor Bible (New-York: Doubleday Press, 1973), 182-186.

<sup>229</sup> Bernard Orchard and Harold Riley, *The Order of the Synoptics, Why Three Synoptic Gospels?* (Macon, GA.: Mercer University, 1987), 111. See C. Steward Petrie, *The Authorship of The Gospel According to Matthew: A Reconsideration of the External Evidence,*” *New Testament Studies* 14 (1967-1968), 5. This stand is canonical in nature. Can one trust the judgment of the early church tradition? Could Apostle Matthew be the actual author, or it was just attributed to him? In view of this premises, this research explores various views and arguments raised within and without the church; in other to reach a

for canonicity;<sup>230</sup> maybe that is why the early church attributed this book to an Apostle? Could any evidence beyond the text actually speak for itself as it relates to Apostle Matthew as the author of this gospel? Or is it a mere calculated arrangement? Here, the research explores Matthew's authorship in view of the book title and external evidences.<sup>231</sup>

## The Book Title

The point of this first phase seems unimportant, but it has been a vital point of argument as it concerns the discourse here. Several scholars

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viable conclusion on the authorship of this gospel. Meanwhile, Wansbrough opined that until recently, it was a tendency to regard the four written gospels as shortened biographies of Jesus which when conflated with one another give a detailed account of his life and ministry as it actually was. However, his version of what establishes a gospel does little justice to the writers or their intentions. It seems the need to write a biography of Jesus in a modern sense was not of importance to the evangelist neither was it thought of. H. Wansbrough, *Scripture Discussion Commentary 7: Mark and Matthew*. London and Sydney: Sheed and Ward Ltd, 1971).

<sup>230</sup> Brooke Foss Westcott, *A General History of the Canon of the New Testament* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1875), 21. The first phase of canonization is called "apostolic authority" and is characterized by the use of the New Testament writings of the apostles by the earliest church fathers in the defense of the Christian faith (1st and 2nd centuries). Westcott, *A General History of the Canon of the New Testament*, 21. The second phase of canonization is called "church orthodoxy" and is characterized by the recognition of the apostolic writings into their distinctive groups (Gospels, Pauline Epistles, Catholic Epistles), as well as their use among the churches as the rules of the Christian faith (late 2nd century through 3rd century). The third phase of canonization is characterized by the "distribution and general acceptance" of the books of the New Testament by the Catholic Church at large, seen most distinctly in the lists of canonical books made during the early church councils (4th century). Gary H. Everett, *The Gospel of Matthew* (Study Notes on the Holy Scriptures Using a Theme-based Approach to Identify Literary Structures), 2018 Edition, 32.

<sup>231</sup> Concerning this categorization, Wallace argued that the three categories bear the same weight. This includes the 'internal evidence', though not in the scope of this research work. Daniel B. Wallace, *Matthew: Introduction, Argument and Outline* <https://bible.org/seriespage/matthew-introduction-argument-and-outline> (Accessed on 19th April, 2019).

have argued that the early church have assigned the titles<sup>232</sup> and not the original writers.<sup>233</sup> On a contrary, the title “according to Matthew” – “KATA MATΘAION” is found in the early manuscripts and was the most highly regard and quoted manuscript by the early church fathers.

The simplest inscription is “κατα ματθαιον” (according to Matthew) found in Codex Sinaiticus (A) and Codex Vaticanus (B). As time progressed, this became more elaborate in the fifth century; the title was customarily “εὐαγγέλιον κατα ματθαιον” (the Gospel according to Matthew); but was later called “αγιον εὐαγγέλιον<sup>234</sup> κατα

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<sup>232</sup> The title of writing in modern era is one of the most important parts of the text; it summarizes the content of the text and entices the reader to read the work. It is often used in a way that is mentally and visually memorable.

<http://www.hotype.co.uk/the-importance-of-title/> (Accessed on 14<sup>th</sup> April, 2019). In fact, the “title page” is one of the most important parts of the preliminaries of a book, as the data on it are used to establish the title proper and the data relating to publication; which informs the way people make reference to the writing. Michael Gorman, and Paul W. Winkler (eds.), *Anglo-American cataloguing rules* (London, Library Association, 1978), 571. Although, the modern understanding is similar with the ancient; there are seeming distinctions. The modern English name “The Gospel According to Matthew” arose from a variety of titles called ‘superscriptions’ placed above the beginning of the gospel text in ancient manuscripts; two of the most reliable manuscripts; *Sinaiticus* and *Vaticanus* have the simple superscription ‘εὐαγγέλιον κατα ματθαιον’. James D.G Dunn and John Williams Rogerson, *Eerdmans Commentary on the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, n.d), 1000.

<sup>233</sup> Samuel Lamerson, *Authorship*; <https://www.bibleodyssey.org/en/tools/ask-a-scholar/authorship> (Accessed on 14<sup>th</sup> April, 2019). Meanwhile, there is no positive evidence that the book ever circulated without this title; the ascription has a very early date 125 A.D. J. H. Ropes, *The Synoptic Gospels* (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University, 1960), 103 .

<sup>234</sup> The word εὐαγγέλιον passed through three stages in the history of its use. In the older Greek authors it signified *a reward for bringing good tidings*; also, a *thanks-offering for good tidings brought*. In later Greek, it indicated *the good news itself*. And finally it was employed to denote *the books in which the gospel of Jesus Christ is presented historic form*. It is used very extensively in the New Testament, and always in the second sense. This meaning is also retained in the title of the gospels. The first trace of the word as indicating a written gospel is found in the *didache*, the Teaching of the Twelve Apostles, discovered in 1873 and in all probability composed between the years 90 and 100 A. D. Here the word εὐαγγέλιον evidently refers to a written record. It is

ματθαιον” (the Holy Gospel according to Matthew) by Byzantine MS and others.<sup>235</sup> In other words, several ancient manuscripts that preserve the title of the work have some form of the words “Κατα Ματθαιον.” In view of this, Guthrie argued that the titles are at least as early as A.D. 125.<sup>236</sup> The research argues that other gospels must have been known as at when the title was added; that is if it was not actually added by the author

Although, the argument here seems convincing, there is a little problem with the grammatical emphasis “Κατα”, because it could mean “according to” as well as ‘in conformity with’. This will then be incongruent with the presupposed affirmation of the title argument. Thus, the research observes that as strong as the title argument seems to be; that the titles are early might not really exclude false claims of authorship (pseudonymity). Thus, this assertion then refers to the gospel of Matthew as being ‘internally anonymous’. In view of this,

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very explicitly and repeatedly applied to a written account of the life of Christ about the middle of the second century. The plural ‘*euanggelia*’, signifying the four Gospels, is first found in Justin Martyr, about 152 A. D. Lois Berkhof, *Introduction to the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Christian Classics Ethereal Publishing Company, 2004), 12.

<sup>235</sup> W. D. Davies and D. C. Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary of the Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, 3 Vols London: T and T Clark, 1988), 129. More so, A .W. Argyle, *The Gospel According to Matthew* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1963), 1.

<sup>236</sup> D. Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction: The Gospel and Acts* (Chicago, Downer Grover: Intervarsity Press, 1965), 33. In fact, for Salmon, this argument is not substantial because if “according to” refers to tradition that emanated from the evangelists but not written by them, then Mark will be “according to Peter” and Luke –“according to Paul” George Salmon, *Matthew*, in *The Biblical Illustrator*, ed. Joseph S. Exell (London: James Nisbet & Co., n.d.), xiii-xiv.

Stonehouse, a leading advocate of Markan priority emphasized the importance of this gospel title in his work. He then admit the tradition concerning the apostolic authorship of Matthew as strong, clear, and consistent and...the arguments advanced against its reliability are by no means decisive...the apostolic authorship of Matthew is as strongly attested as any fact of ancient church history.” Ned B. Stonehouse, *The Origins of the Synoptic Gospels* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1963) 46-47, 76-77.

Seraphim Hamilton argued that there is no evidence the Gospel ever circulated without its title; one would expect multiple traditions and some manuscripts without the title page if the authorship was once unknown. He further explained that there is no dispute in the ancient world as to the authorship of this Gospel.<sup>237</sup>

However, Garret posits; “the tradition of adding the title “saint” to Matthew’s name in some Holy Bibles is of later Roman Catholic origin and lacks any ancient authority. Every existing early manuscript that contains the Gospel of Matthew ascribes the title to him in some form. Since variations of the title “κατα Μαθθαιον” have the strong support of the early Greek manuscripts, it thus means that they are of great value in the argument for Matthean authorship.<sup>238</sup> The research asserts; even if the title of the gospel is early as argued; the assertion for the authorship of Matthew from this angle seems probable; this open door for more discourse on this argument? This brings the external evidences into limelight and it forms the discourse in the succeeding section.

### External Evidences

The external evidence (outside the Bible) for the authorship of Matthew includes several comments, claims and references of statements by people outside the confine of the scripture; several of which are mentioned and discussed here:

1. **Eusebius** (c. 260–339 A.D)<sup>239</sup> claimed to have a statement (Historia Ecclesiastica, III, 39) from someone named “Papias”

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<sup>237</sup> Seraphim Hamilton, *Matthew: Date and Authorship* in Orthodox Christianity, 2016; <http://orthodoxchristian.com/91189.html> (Accessed on 15<sup>th</sup> April, 2019).

<sup>238</sup> Everett, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 41.

<sup>239</sup> Eusebius was a pupil of the presbyter Pamphilus, who was himself a student of Origen. Many look on him as the father of church history, especially in light of his most famous work Ecclesiastical History, which surveyed the history of the church from apostolic times until A.D. 324. Farnell, *The Synoptic Gospels in the Ancient Church*. Ecclesiastical History consists of ten books, the first seven of which recount the history of the church from the beginning to A.D. 303 and

who said “Matthew compiled the sayings (*logia*) in the Hebrew language (*Hebraidi dialekto*),<sup>240</sup> and each one interpreted them as he was able.”<sup>241</sup> Eusebius took this as a reference to the book - “Gospel of Matthew”. Battle stated the title of Papias work as “Exposition of the Oracles (*logia*) of the Lord.”<sup>242</sup> On the basis of this, this Gospel is believed to be written by Matthew, the tax collector who was one of Jesus’ twelve disciples and who narrates the story of his own call in 9:9 (Mk 2:14).<sup>243</sup> In fact, Eusebius

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the last three some events in Eusebius’ own lifetime until the Council of Nicaea in A.D. 325. He wrote in a strict chronological order. On a personal ground, Eusebius notes “that John was aware of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, and confirmed their accuracy when he composed his gospel.” Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 3.24.7-8. The first choice of discussion on Eusebius by the research is based on this observation; ‘majority references to the early church is not with the engagement and attachment of Eusebius.’ This is because the works of some early church fathers are not within the reach. Therefore, his importance in this stead cannot be denied.

- <sup>240</sup> Papias, the Bishop of Hieropolis in Phrygia c. 60 - 130 A.D was the first to associate the Apostle Matthew with this document. Everett, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 36. Several scholars have argued that this Gospel in question is written in Greek, not Hebrew, and is far more than a collection of “sayings.” Therefore, Eusebius probably was wrong in thinking that Papias’ statement referred to this book in its entirety. Some scholars think that Papias was referring to the now lost “Q” source, which was incorporated into this Gospel. Liddell and Scott argued that “augmentation style” as interpretation of διαλκκτᾶ is more remote and secondary in nature. Liddell and Scott, *A Greek English Lexicon*, revised and augmented by Henry Stuart Jones, with a 1968 Supplement (Oxford: Clarendon, 1940) 401.
- <sup>241</sup> S. Mcknight Matthew, *Gospel of Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospel* (Leicester, England: Intervarsity Press, 1992), 527. Papias, “Fragments of Papias,” in *The Apostolic Fathers with Justin Martyr and Irenaeus*, ed. Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe, vol. 1, *The Ante-Nicene Fathers* (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Company, 1885), 155.
- <sup>242</sup> John A. Battle, *Christ in the Gospels* Western Reformed Seminary; Ch. 2 – introduction to the four canonical gospels, pdf. www.wrs.edu (Accessed on 15<sup>th</sup> April, 2019). David L. Tunner. *The Gospel of Matthew* in Philip W. Comfort (ed.), Tyndale: *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary* (Illinois: Tyndale House, 2006), 4.
- <sup>243</sup> The author was apparently a person of Jewish background who must have grown up in a Hellenistic city and spoke Greek, He may have been familiar enough with Hebrew for limited study (although the Greek Septuagint would have been his Bible), and enough Aramaic for informal conversation. Donald Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction*, 4th ed. (Downers Grove, IL: Inter Varsity, 1990),

taught that Matthew wrote to the Hebrews<sup>244</sup> when he was on the point of going to other nations for the propagation of the gospel.

The Greek of Matthew is generally considered good. Some have questioned whether a Jew in Israel would have such a good command of the Greek language as Matthew. It is important to note that as a tax-collector (Matt 9:9), Matthew worked with the Romans; thus the culture in Israel was probably bilingual, if not trilingual. More so, Jews such as Josephus wrote Greek that is considered good.<sup>245</sup> If this is the case, can the comment of Papias as quoted by Eusebius be harmonized with the language composition of Matthew's Gospel (Greek)?

In view of this, some scholars have understood the term "*Hebraidi dialekto*" as *Syro-Chaliach*<sup>246</sup> – which sometimes means scripture

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52. Since the Book of Matthew uses Greek sources; many scholars argued that Matthew is a Greek Gospel, written for a mixed congregation of Jewish and Gentile Christians at a time when the Jesus tradition had become mixed with legend, and when the ethical teaching of Jesus was being reinterpreted in order to apply it to new situations and codified into Law; these daunts the possibility of authorship by an eyewitness. Mark Allan Powell, *Introducing the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, Baker Publishing Group, 2009). On a contrary, as a tax collector, Matthew would have needed to know both Aramaic and Greek well, since he must have dealt with the common Jewish people, with the gentiles in Galilee, and with the officials of Herod Antipas in Galilee. Also, Apostle Matthew would need to know some Latin to converse with various Roman officials.

<sup>244</sup> C. L. Blomberg, *Matthew: New American Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1992), 38. The textual history of Matthew is exemplified in a great number of Greek manuscripts. More than twenty uncial manuscripts contain complete or nearly complete texts of Matthew including the following: a and B (fourth century); C, D, and W (fifth century); O, Z, 042, 043 (sixth century); 0211 (seventh century); L (eighth century); K, M, U, 037, and 038 (ninth century); and S (tenth century). Philip W. Comfort, *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary*, 4. There is no evidence of the claimed 'surviving copies' of the Aramaic version of the gospel.

<sup>245</sup> John Nolland, "The Gospel of Matthew" in I. Howard Marshall and Donald A. Hagner, (eds.) *New International Greek Testament Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 23–29.

<sup>246</sup> The mixture of the Hebrew, Chaldaic, and Syriac commonly called Syro-Chaldaic, or Aramaean; for this was the native language of the Jewish people

and primitive writers call Hebrew. Therefore, Papias might mean Matthew interpreted the “scripture” not necessarily Hebrew language. More so, many scholars argued that Matthew might have written two gospels; one in Palestinian language and the other in Greek. As logical as this sound it is in congruent with the fact that there is no affirmative evidence.

The research explains that Eusebius’s citation of Papias seems to say “Matthew was originally composed in Hebrew and that later editions were translated from that Hebrew original”; this is plausible. However, the expression “*Hebraidi dialeko*” instead of ‘Hebrew’<sup>247</sup> can also mean ‘Semitic rhetorical style.’ If this is the case, it means Papias says that Matthew’s style of composition was Jewish, and that subsequent individuals interpreted this Jewish style to the best of their ability. Perhaps such features as Matthew’s genealogy and stress on “fulfillment” are indicative of this Jewish compositional style.<sup>248</sup> However, Martin concludes that Papias’ tradition can at best relate only to a collection of material later used in the composition of the entire Matthew’s Gospel.<sup>249</sup>

Obviously, Bishop Papias leaves us with a lot of questions regarding Matthew’s “authorship.” Did he *write* or put together a collection of writings other people wrote? Was it the sayings of Jesus or a gospel in itself? Does the Bishop mean the text was actually *written* in Hebrew or Aramaic, or in its style? Did other people interpret it; implying that

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since the return from Babylonian captivity, while Greek and Latin were national languages imposed upon them by conquering empires. Gary H. Everett, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 41. Strauss, *Four Portraits, One Jesus: an Introduction to Jesus and the Gospels*, 252.

<sup>247</sup> Many scholars argue that Hebrew language was actually Aramaic which was the Language of common people in Palestine during the time of Jesus’ public ministry; Donald A. Hagner, *Matthew 1-13*, in *Word Biblical Commentary*, vol. 33A, eds. Bruce M. Metzger, David A. Hubbard and Glenn W. Barker (Dallas, Texas: Word Books, Publishers, 1993), xlv.

<sup>248</sup> Philip W. Comfort, *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary*, 4.

<sup>249</sup> Ralph P. Martin, *New Testament Foundations: Vol. 1* (Grand Rapids: William Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1975), 240.

Matthew was a source, not an author?<sup>250</sup> Answers to these questions as seen in the course of this discourse ensnare Papias' statement of Matthew's authorship; however, the research argues with one common theme in the discourse; the fact that Papias mentioned Apostle Matthew's relation with this gospel cannot be denied.

2. **Ireneaus** (c. 130 - 200 A.D):<sup>251</sup> Jones explained that Ireneaus cites the Gospel of Matthew at least two-hundred and fifty-five times in his extant works, listing several occasions where he uses the name of "Matthew."<sup>252</sup> Ireneaus says "Matthew published his Gospel among the Hebrews in their own language (Blomberg

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<sup>250</sup> *Who wrote the Gospels and How do we Know for Sure?*

<https://zondervanacademic.com/blog/who-wrote-gospels/> (Accessed on 16<sup>th</sup> April, 2019).

<sup>251</sup> An immigrant from Asia Minor was presbyter of the church at Lyons in Gaul. He was one of the early church's most able apologists and theologians, writing against the Marcion and Gnostics with His work *Refutation and Overthrow of Knowledge Falsely So-called*, which tradition has more conveniently labeled *Against Heresies* (c. A.D. 185). David Farnell, *The Synoptic Gospels in the Ancient Church: The Testimony to the Priority of Matthew's Gospel* in the *Masters Seminary Journal*, TMSJ 10/1 (Spring 1999), 69. Besides Polycarp, Ireneaus also had met and conversed with many apostolic and sub-apostolic fathers of Asia Minor and obtained information from them about the life and teachings of the Lord and the activities of the early church. He thus reflected information from many sources and not only from his own childhood memories. He also had traveled extensively (from Asia Minor to Gaul and also the church in Rome), so that his information is not from an isolated region but widespread. Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, 4.14.3.

<sup>252</sup> Everett, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 36. Jeremiah Jones, *A New and Full Method of Settling the Canonical Authority of the New Testament*, vol. 3 (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1827), 30-31. Ireneaus was not an interpreter of the New Testament books as such but an expositor and defender of Christian doctrine against heretics. Since, however, he recognized that Christian doctrine, preserved in special purity in the churches of apostolic foundation, was based on Scripture, he was inevitably involved in the exposition of Scripture. F. F. Bruce, "The History of New Testament Study," I. Howard Marshall, ed., *New Testament Interpretation: Essays on Principles and Methods*, 1977. Carlisle: The Paternoster Press, 1979), 25. Also, Ireneaus has been described by R. M. Grant as "the father of authoritative exegesis in the Church. R. M. Grant, *A Short History of the Interpretation of the Bible* (London 1965), 55.

citing *Adv Haer. 3. 1.1* from Eusebius, *Hist. Eccle* 5.8.1-4),<sup>253</sup> while Peter and Paul were preaching and founding the church in Rome.”<sup>254</sup> The research notes that Irenaeus’ statement regarding the gospel is very similar to that of Papias, especially in relation to the language with which the gospel of Matthew was written; this forms the basis of many scholars who argued that the statement of Irenaeus is a ‘mere repetition’, thus not independent of Papias’ assertion.<sup>255</sup> On a contrary, Filson argues that Papias is a key witness used by Irenaeus as an authority.<sup>256</sup> A proper view of Irenaeus’ work delineates a close familiarity with Greek Matthew.<sup>257</sup> Since Irenaeus claimed to be Polycarp’s disciple<sup>258</sup>;

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<sup>253</sup> Blomberg, 38. Irenaeus statement; “Now Matthew published among the Hebrews a written gospel also in their own tongue, while Peter and Paul were preaching in Rome and founding the church. But after their death, Mark also, the disciple and interpreter of Peter, himself handed down to us in writing the things which were preached by Peter, and Luke also, who was a follower of Paul, put down in a book the gospel which was preached by him. Then John, the disciple of the Lord, who had even rested on his breast, himself, also gave forth the gospel, while he was living in Ephesus in Asia.” *Eusebius, Hist. Eccle* 5.8.1-4. In view of scholars in favor of Matthean priority, Farnell argued that “Irenaeus in this context appears to be setting forth an apologetic regarding the content of each gospel as being inspired by the Holy Spirit and united in testimony about the true contents of the gospel in contrast to the teaching of heretics; not necessarily setting forth a strict compositional order” (cf. *Against Heresies*, 3.2.1). Farnell, *The Synoptic Gospels in the Ancient Church: the Testimony to the Priority of Matthew’s Gospel*, 53-86.

<sup>254</sup> Eusebius quotes Irenaeus on this tradition in *Ecclesiastical History* 5.8.2 (NPNF2.1). *Authorship of Matthew’s Gospel*, <http://www.womenpriests.org/authorship-of-matthews-gospel/> (Accessed on 19th March, 2019).

<sup>255</sup> D. E. Nineham, *St. Mark* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1963), 39. The proponents of Two-Documents Hypothesis (Mark depended on Peter’s preaching, not any written gospel either Matthew or Luke, for the composition of his writing) often disagree and explains Irenaeus’ testimony away not because of anything but due to the fact that the evidence somewhat sets a platform for Matthean priority.

<sup>256</sup> Floyd Filson, *A Commentary on the Gospel According to Matthew*, 2d ed. (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1971), 16. Also Everett argued that Eusebius quotes Irenaeus on this tradition in *Ecclesiastical History* 5.8.2 (NPNF2.1). Everett, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 36.

<sup>257</sup> This indicates that Irenaeus connects the Aramaic Matthew with the Greek Matthew (cf. Irenaeus *Against Heresies* “Preface” 2 with Matt 10:26; cf. 1.1.3

then his testimony is found credible and important in its own right, constituting an independent and reliable witness for information regarding Matthew's authorship.

3. **Clement of Alexandria** (150 – 215 A.D): this early church father declared that this gospel is credited to Matthew. The research notes that the information from Clement does not contradict this gospel being first but is an important supplement to information gleaned from other church fathers (e.g., Papias, Irenaeus, and Eusebius). Clement places the Apostle John's gospel last, saying John wrote it with full awareness of the other three and designed it to supplement the "synoptic" accounts as a "spiritual Gospel." The order of composition, then, was Matthew first, Luke second, Mark third, and John last.<sup>259</sup>
4. **Tertullian** (160 – 225 A.D):<sup>260</sup> Tertullian makes one of the earliest and clearest references to the authors of the four Gospels.

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with Matt 20:1-16; cp. 1.3.5 with Matt 10:21, 34; cf. 1.6.1 with Matt 5:13-14); eliminating several disparity on the lingua argument.

<sup>258</sup> Ecclesiastical History, 5.20.5-6. As quoted by Farnell, *The Synoptic Gospels in the Ancient Church* in *The Masters' Seminary Journal*.

<sup>259</sup> David L. Tunner. *The Gospel of Matthew* in Philip W. Comfort (ed.), Tyndale: *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary*, 4. Clement was located in Alexandria; he distinguished himself, being a scholar and a teacher for over twenty years in Alexandria. Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History, 5.11.1-2. William R. Farmer, "The Patristic Evidence Reexamined: A Response to George Kennedy," in *New Synoptic Studies*, William R. Farmer, ed. (Macon, GA: Mercer University, 1983) 7. Thomas L. Costable, *Notes on Matthew*, 2019 Edition, 2. Meanwhile, Eusebius recorded that Pantaenus (A.D. 200), teacher of Clement, was the first known head of the Catechetical School at Alexandria; He preached the Gospel in India. Upon his arrival, he found the Gospel of Matthew in the Hebrew language, having been delivered by the apostle Bartholomew years earlier. Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History, 5.10.2-3. Therefore Clement's information cannot be easily dismissed.

<sup>260</sup> The research notes that the dating of Tertullian and Clement reveals that they are contemporaries. Not much is known of him except that he was a native of Carthage who knew and used both Latin and Greek and loved the classics. He became a proficient lawyer and taught public speaking and law in Rome, where he became a convert to Christianity. Also, Cairns explained that Tertullian is a prime witness to the faith of the African church concerning the authenticity of

He refers to John and Matthew as apostles and calls Luke and Mark “apostolic men” in the context of the writings of the four Gospels.<sup>261</sup>

5. **Origen** (185 – 253 A.D):<sup>262</sup> From Eusebius’ quote of Origen; it is clear that he stressed the apostolic origin of the four gospels and rejected numerous apocryphal gospels as spurious. Origen accepted only four gospels: “*For Matthew did not ‘take in hand’ but wrote by the Holy Spirit, and so did Mark and John and also equally Luke.*” In this quotation, he does not distinguish between Greek and Aramaic versions of Matthew, but includes the Greek Matthew as written by the apostle himself along with the other three gospels (i.e., John, Mark, and Luke). However, Everett argues that Origen’s comment on the gospel centers on the number of the accounts rather than its chronological arrangement.<sup>263</sup>
6. **Jerome** (342 – 420 A.D): He says that Matthew wrote his Gospel originally in the Hebrew language.<sup>264</sup> Some scholars believe Jerome mistakenly was referring to the Gospel to the Hebrews, a New Testament apocryphal writing, in this quote because of some comments he made later. However, such propositions are made

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the gospels. Earle E. Cairns, *Christianity Through the Centuries* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 106.

<sup>261</sup> Everett, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 37.

<sup>262</sup> Olugbenga Olagunju, *The Provenance of the Gospel of St. Matthew* in American Journal of Biblical Theology, April 2011. Tunner. *The Gospel of Matthew* in Comfort (ed.), Tyndale: *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary*, 4.

<sup>263</sup> Everett, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 38.

<sup>264</sup> Tunner. *The Gospel of Matthew* in Philip, 4. “Matthew, also called Levi, apostle and aforesaid publican, composed a gospel of Christ at first published in Judea in Hebrew for the sake of those of the circumcision who believed, but this was afterwards translated into Greek though by what author is uncertain... In this it is to be noted that wherever the Evangelist, whether on his own account or in the person of our Lord the Saviour quotes the testimony of the Old Testament he does not follow the authority of the translators of the Septuagint but the Hebrew...” Everett, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 40.

within the context the popular view by scholars who doubt that Matthew initially wrote his Gospel in the Hebrew language.

7. **Augustine** (354 – 430 A.D):<sup>265</sup> The comment of Augustine as touching the authorship of Matthew is in line with other church fathers, except that later, he constantly reflects the compositional order of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John (Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History 1.2.5-6; 1.2.4; 2.8.13; 4.10.11), which is in contrast with the Clement of Alexandria.<sup>266</sup>

Almost all church fathers uniformly spoke of an Aramaic original for the gospel; yet, they accepted the Greek Matthew as unquestionably authoritative and coming from the Apostle Matthew himself.<sup>267</sup> Although, they offered no explanation concerning the change in language; they never viewed the Greek Gospel of Matthew as inferior but as equal as or better than the other Greek canonical gospels in terms of its authority and influence.<sup>268</sup>

At this point, the research notes common elements in the external testimonies;

- i. Matthew wrote something related to the life of Jesus Christ.
- ii. Matthew wrote in a Semitic tongue.

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<sup>265</sup> Augustine was somewhat a contemporary of Jerome, who studied grammar, Latin classics and rhetoric. He became a priest after his conversion, in A.D. 391 and the bishop of Hippo, North Africa in A.D. 396. In view of this, some have acclaimed him as the greatest of the church fathers. Notable among his widely known works are; the city of God and the harmony of the gospels and Christian doctrine.

<sup>266</sup> Regardless of the visible contrast between the church fathers; it is important to note that none of them placed Mark first; therefore, there is no basis for Two-Document hypothesis from this angle.

<sup>267</sup> D. Edmond Hiebert, *Introduction to the New Testament*, vol. 1. The Gospels and Acts (Winona Lake, IN: BMH, 1975) 53.

<sup>268</sup> Farnell, *The Synoptic Gospels in the Ancient Church: the Testimony to the Priority of Matthew's Gospel*, 53-86.

- iii. Recognition of Matthew along other gospels (Mark, Luke and John).

The research argues that the recurrence of the Matthew's name attached with this gospel through several individual testimonies somehow affirms his signature on this writing; even if the gospel account was completed by a later compiler. However, the research notes that none of the early father supports Two-Gospel Hypothesis and Two-Document Hypothesis. Never the less, the research asserts that the weight of credence supplied by external evidence might have been of no use if the gospel itself has provided directions for its authorship.<sup>269</sup> Although, Everett argues that a close examination of Matthew's Gospel reveals a number of clues as to its authorship;<sup>270</sup> the research explains that 'internal evidence' is not within the purview of this research.

## Conclusion

From the study so far, the research observes that there isn't enough evidence to disengage Matthew's authorship. In other words, there are several arguments for Matthew the disciple as the author of this gospel and otherwise. Yet, the church has always attributed this gospel to him, though without a direct claim in the text itself.<sup>271</sup>

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<sup>269</sup> By 'direction for its authorship', the research means an "emphatic internal authorship identification." Though this assertion might be seen as a debacle or detriment, Everett argued that some of the New Testament apocryphal gospels, which are recognized as merely imitations, frequently attribute themselves to apostolic authorship in the body of these writing. In contrast to the Gospels' lack of internal identification, such outright claims help to identify these apocryphal writings as unauthentic in origin.

<sup>270</sup> Everett, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 36.

<sup>271</sup> In certain cases, in order for Matthew to be relying on Mark, he would have to radically rearrange and dislocate sentences, so much so that it would be easier to compose it from scratch. If, by contrast, Mark relied in part on Matthew's Gospel while abridging it in places, the order makes sense; coupled with the fact that the Gospel of Matthew was quoted (copied) far more than Luke and Mark. From earliest times, the gospel was treated as canonical and authoritative on the life of Jesus Christ, regardless of authorship. Hamilton, *Matthew: Date and Authorship* in Orthodox Christianity. However, the research argues that if

However, this attribution only comes from church tradition; of which there is not much historical ground to doubt the substantial information accuracy of the early church fathers. On this note, the research concludes that this re-think on the authorship of Matthew's gospel is not to say that the church tradition is wrong by any means; only that the certainty of Apostle Matthew as the sole author though logically reasonable; is still actually probable.

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the church tradition was making it up; why would they then authenticate an apostle who is somewhat "obscure" or "less-prominent" (Farnell, 69) as Matthew? Why not Peter, John, or James? In fact, out of the Four Gospels, John (the fourth) is the only one written by a member of the Jesus' inner circle. The gospel of Mark and Luke are not even attributed to apostles. Therefore, the only adequate explanation for its influence and overwhelming popularity in the early church is the 'apostolic authority.'

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