

## MATTHEW BLACK

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Matthew Black was born at Kilmarnock on 3rd September 1908 and died at St Andrews on 2nd October 1994. He was educated at Kilmarnock Academy and at the University of Glasgow, where he took a First in Classics and a Second in Mental Philosophy and was awarded a distinction in his BD. He went on to the University of Bonn in the 1930s, was a pupil of Paul Kahle, whom he later describes as 'the doyen of European orientalists', and collected his first doctorate in 1937. It is evident that Kahle exercised a decisive influence on the young Matthew Black and inspired him at an early stage of his development as he acknowledges in the preface of *Rituale Melchitarum: A Christian-Palestinian Euchologion* (1938), his Bonn thesis. Nor does he forget in the same preface his indebtedness to Professor W B Stevenson who had taught him Hebrew and Aramaic at Glasgow and whose Assistant he had been. Stevenson's grammar of *Palestinian-Jewish Aramaic* (1924) is a reminder that the foundations of Black's scholarship were laid in Glasgow.

Matthew Black was the parish minister of Dunbarney from 1942-47, but otherwise his life was spent as a University teacher at Glasgow, Manchester, Aberdeen, Leeds, Edinburgh and St Andrews. He was elected to the Chair of Biblical Criticism and Biblical Antiquities in the University of Edinburgh in 1952 and he came to St Andrews in 1954 as Professor of Divinity and Biblical Criticism and Principal of St Mary's College. He had a long and influential tenure and became Emeritus in 1978. His scholarly output was not impaired by his new responsibilities; he was a reforming Principal and was tenacious in the pursuit of ends on which he had determined. He satisfied amply the hopes which had moved the Principal and Vice-Chancellor of the University, Professor T M Knox (later Sir Malcolm Knox) to bring him to St Andrews in 1954. He was exceptionally industrious and energetic in his pursuit of scholarship and worked at his own ideas tirelessly. He had an infectious enthusiasm for his subject which he passed on to research students with whom he was particularly effective and who came from many parts of the world to St Andrews. He leaves behind him, scattered abroad, especially in North America, a band of University teachers whose research he supervised.

He was the recipient of many honours: he had honorary degrees from Glasgow, Münster, Queen's Ontario and St Andrews. He was elected a Fellow of the British Academy in 1955 and of the Royal Society of Edinburgh in 1977. He won the Burkitt Medal of the British Academy in 1962. He was made a Corresponding Member of the Göttingen Academy in 1957 and a Member of the Uppsala Royal Society of Sciences in 1979.

His most original book, *An Aramaic Approach to the Gospels and Acts*, had been accepted by the University of Glasgow as a thesis for the degree of DLitt in 1944 and was published by the Clarendon Press in 1946. There was a second edition (1954) and a further enlarged third edition (1967). The similarity of Black's concern to that of Gustaf Dalman's *Die Worte Jesu* (1898) is noticeable. This book had been translated into English as *The Words of Jesus* (1902) by David Kay, a professor in St Mary's College. *The Words of Jesus* does not exhaust the scope of Black's interest, but the title describes an influential orientation of his book and the third edition of his *Aramaic Approach* was translated into German as *Die Muttersprache Jesu*.

Black's principal quarrel with Dalman (also with Torrey and Burney) was that he had not been sufficiently discriminating in his use of Aramaic, that he had employed Targumic Aramaic and had not identified the Palestinian Aramaic dialect which would have elucidated correctly the Aramaic background of the Gospels. Black's approach was both linguistic and textual. The latter betrayed his abiding interest in the Greek manuscripts on which a critical edition of the New Testament is founded and which are the source of its textual criticism. His book has had a considerable influence on the subsequent course of New Testament Studies and is an illustration of the advantages enjoyed by a New Testament scholar who has both classical learning and a knowledge of the Semitic languages.

Two other areas of study particularly associated with Matthew Black are the Qumran Scrolls and the 'Son of Man' title of Jesus. He was early in the new field opened up by the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls. His earliest article shows that he was already in it before September 1953 and that he was able to offer two lectures at Uppsala on that date. His book *The Scrolls and Christian Origins* (1961) arose from Morse Lectures which he had given at Union Theological Seminary, New York, in 1956, and single lectures which he delivered on the Scrolls are published. He identified the Qumran community as Essenes, set it in the context of Jewish sectarianism, and discussed the extent of its connections with Christian origins, emphasising the decisive contributions to Primitive Christianity made by John the Baptist and Jesus. Besides his articles on the Scrolls there is the book *The Scrolls and Christianity: Historical and Theological Significance* (1969) which he edited and to which he contributed.

The 'Son of Man' topic appears in Black's published articles as early as 1948 and the centre of interest is the one which prevails throughout his 'Son of Man' studies: he focuses attention on the 'Similitudes of Enoch' (1 Enoch 37-71) which he holds is a pre-Christian and Jewish Apocalypse and for which he claims an Aramaic or Hebrew original. In 1970 he published a Greek text of Enoch (*Apocalypsis Henochi Graeca*) and in 1976 he collaborated with J T Milik in the publication of *The Books of Enoch: Fragments of Qumran Cave 4*. The circumstance that no Aramaic fragments of the Similitudes of Enoch were recovered from Cave 4 was a disappointment to Black, but in 1976 he reiterated his view that the Similitudes were the foundation of the 'Son of Man' christology in the New Testament. Finally he published *The Book of Enoch or 1 Enoch* in 1985. This book was given an impetus by the year which he spent as a Member of the Institute of Advanced Studies at Princeton, New Jersey, in 1977-78.

He devoted much time to editorial tasks and some of these deserve special mention. The revision of A S Peake's *Commentary on the Bible* (1919), published in 1962, was a considerable task and Black was the editor of *New Testament Studies* from its inception (1955) for a period of twenty three years. His name appears for the last time in volume 23 (1977). Other books of which he was joint editor and to which he was a contributor are *In Memoriam Paul Kahle* (1968) and *On Language, Culture and Religion* (1974) which was presented to Eugene Nida on his sixtieth birthday.

WILLIAM McKANE