RESPONSES TO THE MESSIANIC CLAIM: CHARACTERIZATION AS RHETORICAL DEVICE IN THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

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Allan Thomas Loder

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RESPONSES TO THE MESSIANIC CLAIM:

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Allan Thomas Loder

Read and Approved by:

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Robert L. Plummer (Chair)

_____
Jonathan T. Pennington

_____
William F. Cook

Date_____

To Joy, my beloved wife and best friend,

a praiseworthy woman who fears the Lord

(Prov 31:30).

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AB	Anchor Bible
ABD	*The Anchor Bible Dictionary*
AnBib	Analecta Biblica
ANTC	Abingdon New Testament Commentaries
ASR	*American Sociological Review*
ASTI	*Annual of the Swedish Theological Institute*
AThRSup	*Anglican Theological Review Supplemental Series*
ATJ	*Asbury Theological Journal*
ABR	*Australian Biblical Review*
BARev	*Biblical Archaeology Review*
BBR	*Bulletin for Biblical Research*
BETL	Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovanniensium
BibInt	*Biblical Interpretation Series*
BibSac	*Bibliotheca Sacra*
BJRL	*Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*
BRev	*Bible Review*
BRLJ	Brill Reference Library of Judaism
BTB	*Biblical Theology Bulletin*
CBQ	*Catholic Biblical Quarterly*
CBQMS	Catholic Biblical Quarterly Monograph Series
CBR	*Currents in Biblical Research*
CJA	Christianity and Judaism in Antiquity

ConBNT	Coniectanea Biblica New Testament Series
CurTM	*Currents in Theology and Mission*
DSD	*Dead Sea Discoveries*
ER	*The Ecumenical Review*
ERATS	*E-Journal of Religious and Theological Studies*
ExpT	*The Expository Times*
FRLANT	Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments
GTJ	*Grace Theological Journal*
HeyJ	*The Heythrop Journal*
HTS	*Hervormde Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies*
HTR	*Harvand Theological Review*
HUCA	*Hebrew Union College Annual*
ICC	International Critical Commentary
ITQ	*Irish Theological Quarterly*
JAAR	*Journal of the American Academy of Religion*
JAF	*Journal of American Folklore*
JBL	*Journal of Biblical Literature*
JETS	*Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*
JGRChJ	*Journal of Greco-Roman Christianity and Judaism*
JJMJS	*Journal of the Jesus Movement in Its Jewish Setting*
JRS	*Journal of Religion & Society*
JSHJ	*Journal for the Study of the Historical Jesus*
JSJ	*Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic, and Roman Period*
JSNT	*Journal for the Study of the New Testament*
JSNTSup	Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series
JSP	*Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha*

JSPSup	Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha Supplement Series
JSSR	*Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*
JTS	*Journal of Theological Studies*
KEJT	*Kairos Evangelical Journal of Theology*
LNTS	Library of New Testament Studies
McMNTS	McMaster New Testament Studies
MelTheol	*Melita Theologica*
MQR	*Mennonite Quarterly Review*
NAC	New American Commentary
NICNT	The New International Commentary on the New Testament
NIGTC	New International Greek Testament Commentary
NLH	*New Literary History*
NovT	*Novum Testamentum*
NovTSup	Supplements to Novum Testamentum
NSBT	New Testament Studies in Biblical Theology
NTOA	Novum Testamentum et Orbis Antiquus
NTS	*New Testament Studies*
PR	*Philosophy and Rhetoric*
PRSt	*Perspectives in Religious Studies*
PSBS	*Procedia: Social and Behavioral Sciences*
RevIntPhil	*Revue internationale de philosophie*
RB	*Revue Biblique*
RevQ	*Revue de Qumrân*
SBLAB	Society of Biblical Literature Academia Biblica
SBLMS	Society of Biblical Literature Monograph Series
SBLRBS	Society of Biblical Literature Resources for Biblical Study
SBLSP	*Society of Biblical Literature Seminar Papers*

SBLSup	Society of Biblical Literature Supplement
SBLSymS	Society of Biblical Literature Symposium Series
SCJR	*Studies in Christian-Jewish Relations*
SFSHJ	South Florida Studies in the History of Judaism
SJT	*Scottish Journal of Theology*
SNTSMS	Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series
STDJ	Studies on the Texts of the Desert of Judah
SubBi	Subsidia Biblica
SyLI	Synthese Library Book Series
TRE	*Theologisches Realencyclopädie*
TrinJ	*Trinity Journal*
TynBul	*Tyndale Bulletin*
USQR	*Union Seminary Quarterly Review*
VTSup	Supplements to Vetus Testamentum
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament
ZWN	*Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft*

PREFACE

This project would not have been possible without the help and encouragement of some very important people in my life, especially my wife Joy who has never wavered in her support—even though the road has been long. I also owe a great deal of gratitude to my faculty advisor, Dr. Robert Plummer, who has been a constant source of inspiration and encouragement to me. I am thankful not only for his advice and thoughtful critique throughout the process of writing this dissertation, but also for modelling what it is to be a devoted follower of Jesus. I endeavor to follow his example. I would like to thank the other members of my dissertation committee, Dr. Jonathan Pennington and Dr. William Cook, for their academic expertise, direction, and valuable insight. I have been truly blessed to study at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and will always be grateful for their investment in my life.

I was inspired to research and write on the topic of this dissertation primarily out of a desire to engage in positive open dialogue with my Jewish friends (who are very dear to me). I want them to hear the "good news" about Jesus (Ἰησοῦς = ישוע), *their* Messiah, and help them make an informed decision about whether to accept or reject him. I feel I have a responsibility to present to them the NT messianic claims about Jesus truthfully and as clearly as possible.

Allan Loder

Louisville, KY

May 2023

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

While the Gospel of Matthew has long been recognized as having a distinctly "Jewish" orientation, the decades following World War II witnessed a growing interest among scholars asking whether Matthew could be regarded as "anti-Jewish," or as some would argue, "anti-Semitic." The presence of what appears to be "anti-Jewish" elements in the New Testament is especially troubling to those who hold to a more conservative view of the Bible as the inspired word of God, but at the same time recognize that there is something fundamentally wrong with how Christians have treated Jews in the past. Most troubling is what came to light when the gates of Nazi Germany's concentration camps were flung open in 1945. The world stood in horror and wondered how such atrocities could ever be allowed to take place in the heart of what was then considered "Christian" Europe. While there is no demonstrable link between Nazi ideology and the Christian worldview, what does seem clear is that the way in which Christians traditionally interpreted certain New Testament passages—specifically those concerning Jews—had helped create the socio-religious context in which such ideology could take root, or at the very least be tolerated.[1] "It is a troubling fact, for instance, that Martin Luther's theologization of 'the Jews' as villains of the faith contributed to German anti-Jewish

[1] See Henry Munson, "Christianity, Antisemitism, and the Holocaust," *Religions* 9, no. 26 (2018): 1–15; Robert P. Ericksen, *Complicity in the Holocaust: Churches and Universities in Nazi Germany* (Cambridge: University Press, 2012); Eric W. Gritsch, *Martin Luther's Anti-Semitism: Against His Better Judgment* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2012); Rainer Bucher, *Hitler's Theology a Study in Political Religion* (New York: Continuum International Publishing, 2011); Massimo Faggioli, "Jewish Conscience of the Church: Jules Isaac and the Second Vatican Council," *SCJR* 13, no. 1 (2018): 1–2.

sentiments and preaching, which later played roles in the tragic unfolding of the Holocaust."[2] If nothing else, the events of the last century gave a sobering reminder of how one's interpretation (or misinterpretation) of Scripture can have far-reaching and sometimes even dire consequences.[3]

For those who view the Christian and Jewish religions as human constructs perhaps whatever problems may be posed by so-called "anti-Jewish" elements in the New Testament can be solved more easily. By abandoning any notion of Scripture as divinely inspired and/or authoritative for faith and practice, one can accept passages from the Bible that fit comfortably with his or her own contemporary worldview (maybe even call it a form of "mature Christianity"[4]), while at the same time lay aside those passages that appear "anti-Jewish" or "anti-Semitic" as relics of the past. Such passages can then be treated as artifacts of the experiences and sentiments of others from long ago, but with no real relevance for the present—other than perhaps being sources of embarrassment for which one should apologize. Included in this could even be those passages making messianic/christological claims about Jesus that some may find offensive.

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[2] Paul N. Anderson, "Anti-Semitism and Religious Violence as Flawed Interpretations of the Gospel of John," in *John and Judaism: A Contested Relationship in Context*, ed. R. Alan Culpepper and Paul N. Anderson, Resources for Biblical Study 87 (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2017), 273. See also Christopher J. Probst, *Demonizing the Jews: Luther and the Protestant Church in Nazi Germany* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2012); Brooks Schramm and Kirsi I. Stjerna, eds., *Martin Luther, the Bible, and the Jewish People: A Reader* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Press, 2012). The link between Christian anti-Semitism and the Holocaust is further explored in Randolph L. Braham, ed. *The Vatican and the Holocaust: The Catholic Church and the Jews During the Nazi Era* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000).

[3] For a historical survey of how Christians have used so-called "anti-Jewish' statements in the NT to justify their appalling treatment of Jews, see Marvin Perry and Frederick M. Schweitzer, *Anti-Semitism: Myth and Hate from Antiquity to the Present* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2002). See also Donald J. Dietrich, *God and Humanity in Auschwitz: Jewish-Christian Relations and Sanctioned Murder* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1995).

[4] See, for example, Norman Beck, *Mature Christianity in the 21st Century: The Recognition and Repudiation of the Anti-Jewish Polemic of the New Testament*, rev. ed. (New York: Crossroad, 1994); William A. Holmes, *Mature Christianity: For Come-of-age Christians in a Come-of-age World* (Lutz, FL: Resurgence Publishing Corporation, 2010).

This is the approach taken by scholars such as Rosemary Radford Ruether, A. Roy Eckardt, and others who claim that the basis of anti-Semitism, and thereby the responsibility for the Holocaust, lies squarely with the New Testament itself.[5] Accordingly, they call for the abandonment of the New Testament as authoritative Scripture, along with any other text that sounds even remotely "anti-Jewish."[6] Others say translations of the NT, as well as Church lectionaries, ought to be toned down to make them sound less anti-Jewish. For example, Norman Beck asserts that "[m]ature sensitivity is needed in our translation and usage of New Testament material that includes anti-Jewish supersessionistic polemic."[7] Some even argue that the Church must change its Christology in order to make it less offensive to Jews. For example, Ruether declares that any attempt to link Jewish salvation with the Christian Savior is inherently anti-Jewish and must be avoided to foster positive open dialogue between Christians and Jews.[8] She

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[5] Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Faith and Fratricide: The Theological Roots of Anti-Semitism* (New York: Seabury Press, 1974); A. Roy Eckhardt, *Elder and Younger Brothers: The Encounter of Jews and Christians* (1967; repr., New York: Schocken Books, 1979); Timothy P. Jackson, *Mordecai Would Not Bow Down: Anti-Semitism, the Holocaust, and Christian Supersessionism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2021).

[6] A. Roy Eckardt, *Jews and Christians: The Contemporary Meeting* (Indiana: University Press, 1986). See also David Paulsen, "Church Faces Renewed Pressure to Change Good Friday Liturgy That Risks Fueling Anti-Jewish Hatred," *Episcopal News Service*, March 29, 2021, accessed September 24, 2021, https://www.episcopalnewsservice.org/2021/03/29/church-faces-renewed-pressure-to-change-good-friday-liturgy-that-risks-fueling-anti-jewish-hatred/.

[7] Beck, *Mature Christianity in the 21st Century*, 285. See also Beck, "Removing Anti-Jewish Polemic from our Christian Lectionaries: A Proposal," *Jewish-Christian Relations*, accessed September 24, 2021, https://www.jcrelations.net/ article/removing-anti-jewish-polemic-from-our-christian-lectionaries-a-proposal.html; Howard Clark Kee and Irvin J. Borowsky, eds., *Removing the Anti-Judaism from the New Testament* (New York: American Interfaith Institute/World Alliance, 1998); Paul Hedges, "White Jesus and Antisemitism: Toward an Antiracist and Decolonial Christology," *ER* 72, no. 5 (2021): 777–96; Peter Admirand, "The Future of Post-Shoah Christology: Three Challenges and Three Hopes," *Religions* 12, no. 6 (2021): 407.

[8] For responses to Ruether, see John M. Oesterreicher, *Anatomy of Contempt: A Critique of R. R. Ruether's "Faith and Fratricide*" (South Orange, NJ: Institute of Judaeo-Christian Studies, Seton Hall University, 1975); Yosef Haim Yerushalmi, *Auschwitz: Beginning of a New Era? Reflections on the Holocaust*, ed. Eva Fleischner (New York: KTAV Publishing House, 1977); Alan T. Davies, *Anti-Semitism and the Foundations of Christianity* (New York: Paulist Press, 1979); Sarah. K. Pinnock, "Atrocity and Ambiguity: Recent Developments in Christian Holocaust Responses," *JAAR* 75, no. 3 (2007): 499–523;

states, "Christians must be able to accept the thesis that it is not necessary for Jews to have the story about Jesus in order to have a foundation for faith and hope of salvation."[9] This type of approach may give the impression of having dealt with the matter in a progressive and "more mature" manner, but in reality it only reaffirms the traditional "anti-Jewish" reading of the text and then rejects it as primitive and unpalatable. But as Luke Timothy Johnson points out, such approaches fail to "adequately address the full complexity of the issue, above all because they do not deal sufficiently with the literary and rhetorical character of the New Testament compositions themselves."[10]

Regardless of one's view of the New Testament in terms of whether or not it is divinely inspired and/or authoritative for faith and practice, a careful and honest reading of the text—even if only from a non-religious literary perspective—requires that one take into account not only the historical socio-religious context in which it was written, but also its literary and rhetorical character. The following study is a narrative-rhetorical

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Samuel Marlowe, *Christianity and Anti-Semitism: An Evaluation of Rosemary Ruether's Faith and Fratricide* (Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press, 2016).

[9] Ruether, *Faith and Fratricide*, 256. James Parkes pioneered the idea of a "theology of equality"—that is, that Christianity must acknowledge the Jewish tradition as an equally valid path to salvation—in his book, *Prelude to Dialogue: Jewish-Christian Relations* (New York: Schocken Books, 1969). See also Clark M. Williamson, *A Guest in the House of Israel: Post-Holocaust Church Theology* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1993). Williamson proposes a theological paradigm in which Jesus's death and resurrection is understood in terms of having value only for Gentiles, inasmuch as it allows the Gentiles access into the covenant relationship that God had already established with Israel. In Williamson's view, Jesus is of no real consequence or significance to Jews since they are already in a continuing covenant relationship with God. For a similar perspective, see Michael B. McGarry, *Christology after Auschwitz* (New York: Paulist Press, 1977); James F. Moore, *Christian Theology after the Shoah* (Lanham: University of America Press, 1993); John T. Pawlikowski, "Christology after the Holocaust," *Encounter* 59 (1998): 345–368; Pawlikowski, "Christology and the Jewish-Christian Dialogue: A Personal Theological Journey," *ITQ* 72 (2007): 147–67; Michael S. Kogan, *Opening the Covenant: A Jewish Theology of Christianity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008); Peter Admirand, "The Future of Post-Shoah Christology: Three Challenges and Three Hopes," *Religions* 12, no. 6 (2021): 407.

[10] Luke Timothy Johnson, "Anti-Judaism and the New Testament," in *Contested Issues in Christian Origins and the New Testament – Collected Essays*, NovTSup 146 (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 547. See also John J. Johnson, "A New Testament Understanding of the Jewish Rejection of Jesus: Four Theologians on the Salvation of Israel," in *Currents in Twenty-First-Century Christian Apologetics: Challenges Confronting the Faith* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2008), 541-68.

analysis of the Gospel of Matthew. The goal is to determine how the so-called "anti-Jewish" elements in Matthew may best be understood when read in the context of a rhetorical argument presented in narrative form that is designed both to *affirm* the acceptability of the author's claim for believers and to *persuade* non-believers to accept that claim; namely, God's plan of salvation for Israel, and indeed for all people, is realized in and through Jesus the Messiah.

The Problem and Its Setting

Among the New Testament writings, the Gospel of Matthew has attracted considerable scholarly attention for its so-called "anti-Jewish" elements. This is not surprising given that Matthew is generally considered to be the most "Jewish" of the four canonical Gospels, and yet contains some of the most anti-Jewish-sounding statements.

A major topic of discussion in Matthean studies—especially since the 1940s—is Matthew's relationship to Judaism.[11] One contentious issue is whether Matthew represents a community that is still under the umbrella of first-century Judaism,[12] one that

[11] In his overview of Matthean studies from 1945 to 1980, Graham Stanton outlines four main views concerning the evangelist and his community's relationship to Judaism: (1) Matthew is the earliest Gospel, originally written in Aramaic for a Jewish-Christian community; (2) Matthew's Gospel was written (in Greek) sometime after 70 CE but before 85 CE, for a Jewish-Christian community closely related to its parent body Judaism; (3) Matthew wrote for a Jewish-Christian community that had already experienced a definite break with the synagogue (hence after 85 CE), but remained in debate with Judaism; and (4) Matthew was a Gentile writing (most likely) for a Gentile community no longer engaged in debate with Judaism. See "The Origin and Purpose of Matthew's Gospel: Matthean Scholarship from 1945 to 1980," in *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt*, ed. W. Haase and H. Temporini (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1985), 1910–21. This topic continues to attract scholarly attention. See, for example, Craig Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-rhetorical Commentary* (1999; repr., Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2007), 36–51.

[12] See Anders Runesson and Daniel M. Gurtner, eds., *Matthew Within Judaism: Israel and the Nations in the First Gospel* (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2020); John Kampen, *Matthew Within Sectarian Judaism* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2019); Anders Runesson, *Divine Wrath and Salvation in Matthew: The Narrative World of the First Gospel* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 2016); David L. Turner, *Israel's Last Prophet: Jesus and the Jewish Leaders in Matthew 23* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 2015); Matthias Konradt, *Israel, Church, and the Gentiles in the Gospel of Matthew*, trans. Kathleen Ess, BMSEC 2 (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2014); Günther Bornkamm, *Jesus of Nazareth* (1961; repr., Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1995); Anthony J. Saldarini, *Matthew's Jewish-Christian Community*

had recently undergone a painful separation from Judaism,[13] or one made up of mostly Gentile Christians no longer engaged in debate with Judaism.[14] The problem is complex, and the picture that emerges from the text seems ambiguous and not easy to interpret. On the one hand, there are several features in the Gospel that could suggest a non-Jewish or even anti-Jewish reading: the motif of hostility toward "the Jews" (especially the Jewish leadership, 23:1–39); the emphasis on the universal aspect of the Gospel; the teaching on the transference of the Kingdom to "a people/nation (ἔθνος) producing its fruit" (21:43); and references to "*their* synagogues" (4:23; 9:35; 10:17; 12:9; 13:54), "*their* scribes" (7:29), and "the *Jews* (Ἰουδαίοις) to this day" (28:15). Moreover, in Matthew's Passion Narrative the Jewish people (λαός) naively accept responsibility for Jesus's condemnation with the statement, "His blood be on us and on our children" (27:25).[15] On the other

(Chicago: University Press, 1994), 2–4, 84–87; George D. Kilpatrick, *The Origins of the Gospel According to St. Matthew* (Oxford: University Press, 1946).

[13] See Donald A. Hagner, "Matthew: Christian Judaism or Jewish Christianity?" in *The Face of New Testament Studies: A Survey of Recent Research*, ed. Scot McKnight and Grant R. Osborne (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004), 263–83; Robert H. Gundry, "Matthew: Jewish-Christian or Christian-Jewish? At an Intersection of Sociology and Theology," in *The Old Is Better: New Testament Essays in Support of Traditional Interpretations*, ed. Robert A. Gundry (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), 111–19; Nils Alstrup Dahl, *Jesus the Christ: The Historical Origins of Christological Doctrine*, ed. Donald H. Juel (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1991); Norman A. Beck, "Anti-Jewish Polemic in Matthew," in *Mature Christianity in the 21st Century*, 174–98; Irwin Buck, "Anti-Judaic Sentiments in the Passion Narrative According to Matthew," in vol. 1 of *Anti-Judaism in Early Christianity*, ed. Peter Richardson (Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1986), 165–80; Robert J. Banks, ed. *Reconciliation and Hope: New Testament Essays on Atonement and Eschatology, Presented to L. L. Morris on His 60th Birthday* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1974).

[14] See Georg Strecker, *Der Weg der Gerichtigkeit: Untersuchung zur Theologie des Matthäus*, FRLANT 82 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1962); Wolfgang Trilling, *Das wahre Israel. Studien zur Theologie des Matthäus Evangeliums*, 3rd ed. (München: Kösel, 1964); Kenneth W. Clark, "The Gentile Bias in Matthew," *JBL* 66, no. 2 (1947): 165–68; Michael J. Cook, "Interpreting 'Pro-Jewish' Passages in Matthew," *HUCA* 54 (1983): 135–46; Michael J. Cook, *Modern Jews Engage the NT: Enhancing Jewish Well-Being in a Christian Environment* (Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights, 2008), 192–209; Herbert W. Basser, *The Gospel of Matthew and Judaic Traditions: A Relevance Based Commentary* (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 19–21.

[15] For more on this see Scot McKnight, "A Loyal Critic: Matthew's Polemic with Judaism in Theological Perspective," in *Anti-Semitism and Early Christianity: Issues of Polemic and Faith*, ed. Craig A. Evans and Donald A. Hagner (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1993), 55–79; Samuel Sandmel, *Anti-Semitism in the NT?* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978); Francis W. Beare, *The Gospel According to*

hand, in contrast to the so-called "anti-Jewish" elements are the "pro-Jewish" features that seem to indicate a distinctly Jewish orientation.[16] For example, nearly all of the major positive characters in the story are Jewish. Matthew's theology is grounded in the Jewish Scriptures. His interpretive principle is one of promise and fulfillment—that is, the prophecies concerning Israel are fulfilled in and through Jesus of Nazareth (e.g., 1:23; 2:6, 15, 18, 23). Jesus is presented as the definitive interpreter of the Torah (5:3–7:29). In addition, only Matthew recounts the words of Jesus restricting his and his disciples' immediate ministry to Israel (10:5; 15:24). Matthew also conveys a positive view of the Law. It seems for the Matthean community the sincere and heartfelt practice of the Law, rightly interpreted, is still very much a part of religious life (5:17–20).[17]

One obvious feature of Matthew's Gospel is the clear distinctions the author makes among various groups in his story such as the disciples, the Jewish leaders, and the crowds/people.[18] The disciples consist of those who follow Jesus closely, accept his

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Matthew (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1981); Seán Freyne, "Vilifying the Other and Defining the Self: Matthew's and John's Anti-Jewish Polemic in Focus," in *'To See Ourselves as Others See Us': Christians, Jews, 'Others' in Late Antiquity*, ed. Jacob Neusner and Ernest S. Frerichs (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1985), 117–43; David Garland, *The Intention of Matthew 23* (Leiden: Brill, 1979); Hans Kosmala, "His Blood Be on Us and Our Children," *ASTI* 7 (1970): 94–126; J. Andrew Overman, "Heroes and Villains in Palestinian Lore: Matthew's Use of Traditional Jewish Polemic in the Passion Narrative," *SBLSup* 29 (1990): 585–96; Anthony J. Saldarini, "Delegitimation of Leaders in Matthew 23," *CBQ* 54 (1992): 569–80.

[16] John Nolland suggests that "the profound Jewishness of the whole Gospel of Matthew . . . is so pervasive that it hardly needs to be documented" (Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary [Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2005], 17).

[17] See William R. G. Loader, "Attitudes to Judaism and the Law and Synoptic Relations," in *New Studies in the Synoptic Problem*, ed. Paul Foster, Andrew Gregory, John. S. Kloppenborg, and Joseph Verheyden (Leuven, Belgium: Peeters Press, 2011), 347–70; Élian Cuvillier, *Torah Observance and Radicalization in the First Gospel. Matthew and First-Century Judaism: A Contribution to the Debate.* (Cambridge: University Press, 2009); Francois P. Viljoen, "Matthew and the Torah in Jewish Society," *In die Skriflig* 49 no. 2 (2015): 1–6; Ho Jin Nam, "Attitude Towards the Torah and Gentiles in Matthew 28:18–20: End-Time Proselytes, Righteous Gentiles or New People?" (PhD diss., University of St. Michael's College, 2017).

[18] David D. Kupp identifies five basic characters or character groups in the Gospel of Matthew: (1) Jesus, (2) the disciples, (3) the crowds/people, (4) the Jewish leaders, and (5) an assortment of Gentiles.

authority and teaching on such matters as the proper interpretation of the Torah, and recognize him as Israel's Messiah (16:15–16). They also actively take part in proclaiming Jesus's message to Israel (10:5–15) and are later commissioned by Jesus to extend his message to "all the nations/Gentiles" (28:16–20). A second group consists of the opponents of Jesus, the antagonists, represented in the narrative by the Jewish religious leaders who mislead the crowds/people (15:14; 23:16, 24), challenge Jesus's authority, and engage in debates with him over *halakhic* issues, such as purity and dietary laws (15:1–20) and Sabbath observance (12:1–13).[19] As the story progresses, their level of antagonism toward Jesus becomes more acute, to the point where eventually they take measures to bring about his death. A third group, the crowds/people, consists of those who listen to Jesus's teaching and witness the miracles but are still not persuaded to become disciples. This is a group "out of which come those who will become disciples of Jesus, and those who will decide against Jesus."[20] They are often seen with the disciples as part of Jesus's audience, but are characterized as unreliable, gullible, unable to "hear" (13:2–15), and in need of proper leadership and care (9:36; 10:6). From this third group there is a range of responses to Jesus, from being amazed at his teaching (7:28–29) and celebrating his triumphal entry into Jerusalem (21:1–11) to shouting, "Crucify him!" as they follow the Jewish leaders in their rejection and condemnation of Jesus (27:20–25). Another notable group in Matthew's story consists of the Gentiles (ἔθνη). They are clearly not the target recipients of Jesus's ministry prior to his resurrection (10:5; 15:24),

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Kupp, *Matthew's Emmanuel: Divine Presence and God's People in the First Gospel*, SNTSMS 90 (Cambridge: University Press, 1997).

[19] Saldarini convincingly argues that "Jesus' opponents in the gospel narrative are symbolic neither of Jews in general nor of Israel as a corporate entity, but of the leaders of the Jewish community in both Jesus' and Matthew's time" (Saldarini, *Matthew's Christian-Jewish Community*, 195). Matthias Konradt presents the same argument in his book *Israel, Church, and the Gentiles in the Gospel of Matthew*.

[20] Michael J. Wilkins, *The Concept of Disciple in Matthew's Gospel: As Reflected in the Use of the Term "Mathētēs,"* NovTSup 59 (Leiden: Brill, 1988), 171.

but afterwards the invitation is extended to them (28:19–20). These non-Jewish characters show up only occasionally during Jesus's ministry and are seen on the periphery of Jewish society. Nevertheless, they are characterized as having "such faith not found in anyone in Israel" (8:10), and as having "great faith" (15:28)—in contrast to the disciples who sometimes show "little faith" (6:30; 8:26; 14:31; 16:8; 17:20).

Matthew's negative attitude toward the Jewish religious leaders may be contrasted with his positive attitude toward the disciples, and his *mostly* positive attitude toward the crowds/people—and even toward some Gentiles. The disciples and crowds/people are positioned between the protagonist (Jesus) on the one side and the antagonists (Jewish religious leaders) on the other.[21] This arrangement of characters presents a two-sided argument in which two opposing sides are clearly in competition for the allegiance of those in the middle. Matthew's[22] attempt to persuade the implied reader[23] to accept his viewpoint regarding Jesus's identity and the significance of his life and ministry comes not in the form of an imperative, but in the form of a compelling story in which the line between those who are 'for' and 'against' Jesus is clearly drawn

[21] The mission to the Gentiles, which is to be carried out later by Jesus's followers, does not come into view until after the resurrection. During Jesus's ministry to "the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (15:24) this group of characters sit on the sidelines, except for when they are brought in to serve some sort of secondary function such as acting as exemplars of the kind of faith one would expect from the people of Israel (8:10; 15:28) or as actors in positions of power who facilitate the movement of events (Herod, 2:1–16; Pilate, 27:2–65). The question of how the Gentile mission fits into Matthew's story/argument will be addressed in chapter 6 of this study.

[22] In this study, "Matthew" is used to designate the Gospel traditionally known by that name. For the sake of convenience, the name "Matthew" is also used interchangeably with "implied author" for stylistic variation. In cases where the discussion pertains to the flesh-and-blood historical author of the narrative, this is indicated by the term "real" author.

[23] "Implied reader" (or "postulated reader") is a term used by narrative critics to refer to the "imaginary person in whom the intention of the text is to be thought of as always reaching fulfillment." Jack Dean Kingsbury, *Matthew as Story* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986), 36. The term "implied reader" was coined by Wayne C. Booth in *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (Chicago: University Press, 1961).

(12:30).[24]

Among the various proposals put forward regarding the historical circumstances surrounding the writing of Matthew's Gospel, the one that best accounts for the available evidence is that the author and his community were Jewish believers-in-Jesus who found themselves engaged in *intra muros* Jewish religious conflict as reform groups competed for dominance following the destruction of the Temple in 70 CE, as stated by Anthony J. Saldarini, J. Andrew Overman, and others.[25] On this hypothesis, Matthew's polemic is understood as a thoroughly Jewish critique of Jewish opponents.

Several studies have shown that Matthew's use of heated rhetoric bears much resemblance to modes of thought and argument found in some other Jewish writings from the Second Temple period. For example, Overman draws a number of parallels between the Gospel of Matthew and *Psalms of Solomon*, 1 *Enoch*, 2 *Baruch*, 4 *Ezra*, *Testament of Levi*, *Cairo Damascus Document*, 1QpHab, 1QS, and 1QM to show that Matthew should be understood squarely within the context of Jewish sectarian rivalry.[26] Graham Stanton

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[24] Matthew, of course, does not need to persuade those who identify with the disciples to follow Jesus. For them, Matthew's persuasive argument would serve as a formal defense and justification for a decision they already made.

[25] Anthony J. Saldarini, *Matthew's Jewish-Christian Community* (Chicago: University Press, 1994); J. Andrew Overman, *Matthew's Gospel and Formative Judaism: The Social World of the Matthean Community* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Press, 1990). See also Aaron M. Gale, *Redefining Ancient Boundaries: The Jewish Scribal Framework of Matthew's Gospel* (London: T & T Clark, 2005); Anders Runesson, "Rethinking Early Jewish-Christian Relations: Matthean Community History as Pharisaic Intragroup Conflict," *JBL* 127, no. 1 (2008): 92–132; Runesson, "Behind the Gospel of Matthew: Radical Pharisees in Post-war Galilee?" *CurTM* 37 (2010): 460–71; David C. Sim, "Matthew: The Current State of Research," in *Mark and Matthew I: Comparative Readings: Understanding the Earliest Gospels in Their First-Century Settings*, ed. Eve-Marie Becker and Anders Runesson, WUNT 271 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 33–51; Runesson, *Divine Wrath and Salvation in Matthew: The Narrative World of the First Gospel* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Press, 2016); Kampen, *Matthew Within Sectarian Judaism*; Runesson and Gurtner, eds., *Matthew Within Judaism*. Konradt, *Israel, Church, and the Gentiles in the Gospel of Matthew*, Bornkamm, *Jesus of Nazareth*; Kilpatrick, *Origins of the Gospel According to St. Matthew*.

[26] Overman, "The Background and Horizon of Matthean and Formative Judaism," in *Matthew's Gospel and Formative Judaism*, 6–34.

has published a similar comparative study of the Gospel of Matthew and the *Damascus Document*.[27] In addition, David L. Turner and Luke Timothy Johnson have convincingly argued that heated rhetoric in the service of Jewish religious quarrels was the norm in ancient times.[28] As Johnson points out, "The polemic of the New Testament becomes more intelligible if it is placed in the social context in which such slander was at home, and if the conventions of such slander are understood."[29] W. D. Davies and Dale Allison have also noted that "the ferocity of rhetoric in Jewish texts, and especially the volatile language of the Dead Sea Scrolls, shows that Matthew's polemic need not signal a break with Judaism."[30] The sort of heated rhetoric one finds in Matthew is found also in the writings of other first-century Jewish religious and philosophical rival groups.[31]

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[27] Graham Stanton, *A Gospel for a New People* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1993), 85–107. Stanton points out the following similarities: (1) both contain polemical statements against the leaders of the parent body; (2) both express condemnation of members who go astray (cf. Matt 7:19, 23; 13:36–43; 24:51); (3) both groups tend to be egalitarian at the beginning, but then gradually develop organizational and sociological structures; and (4) both groups seek to legitimatize their own position by claiming that they are not a new religion but a continuation of the old, and that it is the parent body that has gone astray. Stanton interprets these parallels as evidence that the Matthean community had already separated from Judaism. However, given the evidence cited by Stanton—particularly the last point—a more plausible explanation seems to be that Matthew's community, like the Qumran community, saw itself as a distinct group but still *within* Judaism.

[28] David L. Turner, "Matthew 23 and Prophetic Critique," *JBS* 4, no. 1 (2004): 23–42; Luke Timothy Johnson, "The New Testament's Anti-Jewish Slander and the Conventions of Ancient Polemic," *JBL* 108, no. 3 (1989): 419–41.

[29] Johnson, "Anti-Judaism and the NT," 558.

[30] William D. Davies and Dale C. Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint Matthew: Matthew 19–28*, ICC, vol. 3 (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1997), 260.

[31] It is now generally acknowledged that there was much diversity within Judaism during the first century CE, both in Palestinian and Diaspora Judaism. This frequently led to sectarian rivalry expressed in the form of heated rhetoric that was used for demarcating and fortifying the boundaries of self-definition. See Kampen, "Matthew and the First-Century Jewish World," in *Matthew Within Sectarian Judaism*, The Anchor Yale Bible Reference Library (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2019), 6–37; Robert A. Kraft and George W. E. Nickelsburg, eds., *Early Judaism and Its Modem Interpreters* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1986); J. Andrew Overman and William Scott Green, "Judaism in the Greco-Roman Period," in *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 1037–54.

This study builds on the conclusion of others who have convincingly argued that Matthew should be viewed *within* Judaism, rather than *against the backdrop* of Judaism. Accordingly, this study presupposes that the "real" author of the First Gospel is a Jewish believer-in-Jesus writing within a Jewish context for a mainly Jewish audience.[32] It also presupposes that Matthew's so-called "anti-Jewish" elements are to be understood in the context of Jewish sectarian rivalry in late antiquity. This study does not assume, however, that Matthew's heated rhetoric can be explained *fully* just by locating the author and his first readers within the first-century Jewish socio-religious setting. That alone would not *necessarily* rule out the possibility of Matthew having given up on his own people as a lost cause and turning to another people/nation who would produce the fruit of the kingdom (cf. 21:43). Moreover, Matthew's emphasis on the Gentile mission and apparent inclusion of Gentiles in his ἐκκλησία of Jesus-followers further complicates the idea of Matthew's location *within* sectarian Judaism. Historical-critical and socio-critical methods have thus proven inadequate for determining the most plausible explanation for the presence of the so-called "anti-Jewish" elements in Matthew. Further explanation is needed.

This narrative-rhetorical study will show that when Matthew's narrative is allowed to speak for itself as a self-contained literary work, it becomes evident that such heated rhetoric is best understood as part of a rhetorical argument designed to persuade and affirm the acceptability of the author's claim that God's plan of salvation for Israel, and indeed for all people/nations, is realized in and through Jesus the Messiah.

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[32] Here, the term "real" author refers to the actual flesh and blood person behind the writing of the First Gospel, which may be distinguished from the "implied" author. For more on this, see chapter 3.

Thesis

The thesis of this study is that the Gospel of Matthew may be read as a two-sided rhetorical argument presented in narrative form in which the author uses characters and characterization to represent divergent standpoints and different responses to the claim that God's plan of salvation for Israel, which now encompasses all nations/Gentiles, is realized in and through Jesus the Messiah.[33] To assist him in reaching his argumentative objective, the author employs four main literary characters to represent standpoints in his argument; namely, the protagonist (Jesus), the antagonists (religious leaders), the disciples, and the crowds/people. Accordingly, Matthew's so-called "anti-Jewish" elements are to be understood not as commentary on ethnic Jews, nor as a sign of rejection of Judaism, but rather as heated rhetoric used to describe and highlight certain details about some characters in his story who represent the antithesis to his argument. These characters are not symbolic of Jews in general nor of Israel as a corporate entity, but rather of those who reject the claim that Jesus is Israel's Messiah, and that through him God restores all humankind to a right relationship with himself. From this perspective, any reader of Matthew's Gospel who rejects this claim would identify with the antagonists in the story, regardless of his or her historical or socio-religious context, ethnicity, or religious affiliation.

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[33] The term *character* refers to a person or group of persons portrayed in the narrative. *Characterization* refers to how perceptions of characters are shaped by the narrator. See Powell, "Narrative Criticism," 245–46. For more on characters and characterization in ancient Greco-Roman literature, see Koen de Temmerman, "Ancient Rhetoric as a Hermeneutical Tool for the Analysis of Characterization in Narrative Literature," *Rhetorica* 28, no. 1 (2010): 23–51; Koen De Temmerman and Evert van Emde Boas, eds., *Characterization in Ancient Greek Literature*, Studies in Ancient Greek Narrative, vol. 4 (Leiden: Brill, 2018); David Rhoads and Kari Syreeni, eds., *Characterization in the Gospels: Reconceiving Narrative Criticism*, JSNTSup 184 (Sheffield: Academic Press, 1999); Christopher W. Skinner, ed. *Characters and Characterization in the Gospel of John*, LNTS 461 (New York: Bloomsbury, 2014); Christopher W. Skinner and Matthew Ryan Hauge, eds., *Character Studies and the Gospel of Mark*, LNTS 473 (New York: Bloomsbury, 2014).

Summary of Research

Overman, Saldarini, Turner, Johnson, and some others mentioned above have made valuable contributions that help readers consider the historical socio-religious context when interpreting Matthew's heated rhetoric.[34] But these contributions mark a noticeable shift in focus among scholars in recent decades away from Matthew's message about Jesus as Israel's Messiah, and what that means for contemporary readers "theologically" and "existentially," to questions about the author and his community's relationship to Judaism. These questions are important, to be sure. But Matthew did not write to inform his readers about his *Sitz im Leben,* nor the nature of the conflict between his ἐκκλησία of Jesus-followers and the synagogue across the street. His primary reason for writing was to persuade his readers that God's plan of salvation for Israel, and indeed for all people, is realized in and through Jesus the Messiah. This narrative-rhetorical study is intended to complement the works of others, while at the same time refocus the discussion back to this *main* point.

A survey of published works from all sides of the debate regarding Matthew's relationship to Judaism shows that, despite differences of opinion on other matters, there is consensus among scholars that Matthew's ἐκκλησία of Jesus-followers separated (or were driven out) from the rest of Judaism primarily because of its Christology. Other boundary marking mechanisms were important for demarcating and fortifying the boundaries of self-definition, but none of those were the *main* point of contention.[35] Rather, it was their claim that Jesus of Nazareth is Israel's Messiah.

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[34] I am indebted to these scholars for their work on reconstructing the historical socio-religious setting of the Matthean community.

[35] Several contentious issues remain the subject of scholarly debate such as whether Matthew's ἐκκλησία of Jesus-followers were Torah-observant, and whether Gentiles who join their ranks were required to take on the obligations of Torah observance. See, for example, Amy-Jill Levine, *The Social and Ethnic Dimensions of Matthean Social History* (Lewiston, NY: E. Mellen Press, 1988); Terence L. Donaldson, "Proselytes or 'Righteous Gentiles'? The Status of Gentiles in Eschatological Pilgrimage Patterns of Thought," *JSP* 7 (1990): 3–27; David C. Sim, *The Gospel of Matthew and Christian Judaism: The History and Social Setting of the Matthean Community* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1998), 138–39; C. M.

Literary-Critical Approaches to Matthew

One of the biggest challenges when attempting to uncover the historical circumstances surrounding the writing of the First Gospel is how to resolve the tension between Matthew's so-called "anti-Jewish" and "pro-Jewish" elements. Some have opted for a dichotomist approach in which only certain elements are regarded as having determinative importance, while others are passed over as irrelevant to the life situation of the author and his readers. For example, Strecker,[36] Trilling,[37] and Clark[38] argue that the pro-Jewish elements ought to be understood as "remnants of earlier tradition which the evangelist did not assimilate to his own viewpoint."[39] Others offer a harmonizing solution in which all of Matthew's statements are interpreted as supporting a certain (usually anti-Jewish) viewpoint. For example, Michael J. Cook claims that there is no real tension in Matthew because there are no actual "pro-Jewish" elements. According to Cook, the passages that seem "pro-Jewish" are merely part of "a literary device by which

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Tuckett, "Matthew: The Social and Historical Context—Jewish Christian and/or Gentile?" in *The Gospel of Matthew at the Crossroads of Early Christianity*, ed. Donald Senior, BETL 243 (Leuven: Peeters Publishers, 2011), 99–129. Matthew's emphasis on Torah observance clearly shows a distinctly Jewish orientation. It appears that new Gentile believers were expected to be Torah-observant, *as interpreted by Jesus*, but Matthew is unclear about what that means exactly for Gentiles.

Another contentious issue is whether the mission to the Gentiles (28:19) marked the end of Jesus's mission to "the lost sheep of the house of Israel" or an extension of it (15:24). See Kenneth W. Clark, "The Gentile Bias in Matthew," *JBL* 66, no. 2 (1947): 165–72; Douglas R. A. Hare and Daniel J. Harrington, "'Make Disciples of All the Gentiles' (Mt 28:19)," *CBQ* 37 (1975): 359–69; John P. Meier, "Nations or Gentiles in Matthew 28:19?," *CBQ* 39 (1977): 94–102. For discussions on the issues involved see Konradt, *Israel, Church, and the Gentiles in the Gospel of Matthew*; Terence L. Donaldson, "'Nations,' 'Non-Jewish Nations,' or 'Non-Jewish Individuals': Matthew 28:19 Revisited," in *Matthew Within Judaism*, 169–209.

[36] Strecker, *Der Weg der Gerichtigkeit*, 15–35.

[37] Trilling, *Das wahre Israel*, 215.

[38] Clark, "Gentile Bias in Matthew," 167. Clark argues that Matthew was a Gentile-Christian. The Christian gospel was originally delivered to the Jews, but they rejected it. Now God has turned his back on Judaism and turned instead to the Gentiles.

[39] Donald A. Hagner, "The *Sitz im Leben* of the Gospel of Matthew," in *Treasures Old and New: Recent Contributions to Matthean Studies*, ed. David. R. Bauer and Mark Allan Powell, SBLSymS 1 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1996), 34.

Matthew is setting up the Jews for eventual vilification."[40] The drawback with such one-sided arguments, however, is that they do not adequately account for all the data. What is needed is a solution that takes seriously the tension between the so-called "anti-Jewish" and "pro-Jewish" elements in Matthew as somehow truly reflecting the evangelist's rhetorical situation.[41]

Narrative criticism. In his *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative* Hans Frei highlights the fact that the gospels "are stories about Jesus, not compilations of miscellaneous data concerning him. They are intended to be read from beginning to end, not dissected and examined to determine the relative value of individual passages."[42] When Frei's book was published in 1974 the dominant method of biblical research had been for more than a century the historical-critical method. His concern was that scholars had focused so much attention on discovering the historical circumstances surrounding the writing of the gospels that they had failed to take seriously their narrative character. Source-critical, form-critical and redaction-critical studies may all prove valuable for learning something about the world behind the text, but the gospel stories themselves ought to be read on their own terms and appreciated as well-crafted, internally coherent, finished products. "Ultimately, it makes no difference for a literary interpretation whether

[40] Cook, "Interpreting 'Pro-Jewish' Passages in Matthew," 142.

[41] "Rhetorical situation" refers to a rhetor's perception and construction of reality within a given text as he or she attempts to formulate a convincing argument. Literary critics normally distinguish between "rhetorical situation" and *Sitz im Leben* in that the latter generally implies a sense of "objective historical reality." This distinction is made in order to study the text as a self-contained literary work, without having to concern oneself with aligning the argument with the author's *Sitz im Leben*.

[42] Hans Frei, *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1974), 2. Frei was just one of many biblical scholars at the time expressing their dissatisfaction with historical critical methods for interpreting the New Testament. See, for example, James Barr, *The Bible in the Modern World* (New York: Harper & Row, 1973), 62–63; Edgar V. McKnight, *Meaning in Texts: The Historical Shaping of a Narrative Hermeneutics* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978); Norman R. Petersen, *Literary Criticism for New Testament Critics* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978), 9–23.

certain portions of the text once existed elsewhere in some other form. The goal of literary criticism is to interpret the current text, in its finished form."[43]

Biblical scholars began using narrative criticism in the 1970s.[44] This method grew in popularity among New Testament scholars during the 1980s following the publication of Robert Alter's book *The Art of Biblical Narrative* in 1981, and David Rhoads and Donald Michie's book *Mark as Story* in 1982.[45] Jack Dean Kingsbury pioneered the application of narrative criticism to the Gospel of Matthew in the mid–1980s with his book *Matthew As Story*.[46] Kingsbury echoed Frei's earlier concern that scholars had focused so much on matters extrinsic to the text that they failed to read the story as it was intended to be read; as a well-crafted, internally coherent, finished product.

Among the important contributors to the field of New Testament studies during the 1970s to 1990s, Mark Allen Powell stands out as being perhaps the most helpful for

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[43] Mark Allan Powell, *What is Narrative Criticism?*, Guides to Biblical Scholarship, New Testament Series (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Press, 1990), 7.

[44] Following the Seminar on Mark at the annual meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature in 1971, there were several articles published on narrative criticism that proved to be influential for Gospel studies. Among these were, Robert C. Tannehill, "Disciples in Mark: The Function of a Narrative Role," *JRS* 57 (1977): 386–405; Tannehill, "The Gospel of Mark as Narrative Christology," *Semeia* 16 (1979): 57–95; Norman R. Petersen, "Point of View in Mark's Narrative," *Semeia* 12 (1978): 97–121; David Rhoads, "Narrative Criticism and the Gospel of Mark," *JAAR* 50 (1982): 411–34.

[45] Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (1981; repr., New York: Basic Books, 2011); David M. Rhoads and Donald Michie, *Mark as Story: An Introduction to the Narrative of a Gospel* (1982; repr., Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Publishing, 2012).

[46] Jack Dean Kingsbury, *Matthew As Story* (1986; repr., Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988), 2. In 1985, Richard A. Edwards drew attention to the importance of reading Matthew as a narrative (i.e., as a complete story) in his book *Matthew's Story of Jesus* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985). Edwards focused primarily on the narrator's role in establishing the story's point of view and discussed various reader-response issues. His aim, he said, was not to write a complete commentary but "to point to significant features of the narration" (10). Two years earlier, H. J. Bernard Combrink also drew attention to the importance of reading Matthew as a narrative in an article titled, "The Structure of the Gospel of Matthew as Narrative," *TynBul* 34 (1983). But it was Kingsbury who gave a more comprehensive overview and demonstrated how the narrative-critical method can be applied to the Gospel of Matthew.

those studying biblical narratives.[47] In his monograph, Powell provides a general overview of narrative criticism and demonstrates how this method may be applied effectively using the Gospel of Matthew as a case study. Particularly relevant for this study are Powell's observations regarding how Matthew uses character and characterization to develop his plot. Powell also identifies two elements that are key for understanding Matthew's plot; namely, causation and conflict resolution.[48] The first is about how events are linked together and relate to the main point of the story. The second concerns how Matthew develops his theme of conflict by recounting events where characters in the story clash with one another. In Powell's view, the character conflict in Matthew's story reflects something greater; the cosmic conflict going on behind the scenes. "What this narrative is really about," says Powell, "is conflict on a deeper level, namely, conflict between God and Satan."[49]

Rhetorical criticism. In 1969, James Muilenburg drew attention to the benefits of rhetorical criticism for the study of the OT.[50] Similar to Hans Frei, he turned to literary criticism due to his dissatisfaction with historical-critical methods—specifically form criticism. Muilenburg did not introduce a new method, but rather, helped modern scholars "*re*-discover" a then largely neglected discipline that had been

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[47] Powell, *What is Narrative Criticism?* See also Powell's more recent work, *Literary Approaches and the Gospel of Matthew* (Cambridge: University Press, 2009), and James L. Resseguie, *Narrative Criticism of the New Testament: An Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005).

[48] Powell, *What is Narrative Criticism?*, 45–48. In *Matthew As Story*, Kingsbury also identifies conflict as central to the plot of Matthew but limits his discussion to conflict between characters. He does not deal with the topic of cosmic conflict.

[49] Powell, *What is Narrative Criticism?*, 47. The theme of "cosmic conflict" in Matthew is further developed by Robert Charles Branden, *Satanic Conflict and the Plot of Matthew*. Studies in Biblical Literature 89 (New York: Peter Lang, 2006) and Matthew Jay McMains, "Deliver Us From the Evil One: Cosmic Conflict in Matthew's Gospel." (PhD diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2018).

[50] James Muilenburg, "Form Criticism and Beyond," *JBL* 88 (1969): 1–18.

used earlier in biblical studies going all the way back to some early Church Fathers such as Chrysostom and Augustine.[51]

Around the same time New Testament scholars became interested in narrative criticism as a method for studying the Gospels and Acts, there was also a growing interest in rhetorical criticism as a method for studying other literary genres such as the Pauline epistles. In the mid–1970s, Hans Dieter Betz *re*-introduced rhetorical criticism to the field of New Testament studies when he applied ancient rhetorical methods in his studies on Galatians.[52]

Muilenburg and Betz both pursued their interests in rhetorical criticism through exegesis of certain biblical texts, without having developed a comprehensive critical system. The first in the modern period to have done so was George A. Kennedy.[53]

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[51] For an overview of the long and varied history of the use of rhetorical criticism in biblical studies, see James J. Murphy, *Rhetoric in the Middle Ages: A History of Rhetorical Theory from Saint Augustine to the Renaissance* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974), 47–63; Duane F Watson, *The Rhetoric of the New Testament: A Bibliographic Survey* (Blandfoed Forum, UK: Deo Publishing, 2006). See also Thomas H. Olbricht, "Rhetorical Criticism in Biblical Commentaries," *CBR* 7, no. 1 (2008): 11–36; Janet Fairweather, "The Epistle to the Galatians and Classical Rhetoric: Parts 1 & 2," *TynBul* 45 (1994): 1–38; Kennedy, New Testament *Interpretation*, 11. One notable example of a biblical scholar from the Reformation period who used rhetorical criticism is Philip Melanchthon. See Robert L. Plummer, "Melanchthon as Interpreter of the NT," *WTJ* (2000): 257–65. C. Joachim Classen suggests that "few have done more for the study of ancient rhetoric, for its development and its application to the needs and requirements of his own time and for the interpretation of the Bible than Philip Melanchton." Classen, "St Paul's Epistles and Ancient Greek and Roman Rhetoric," in *Rhetoric and the NT: Essays from the 1992 Heidelberg Conference*, ed. Stanley E. Porter and Thomas H. Olbricht, JSNTSup 90 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), 271.

[52] Hans Dieter Betz, "The Literary Composition and Function of Paul's Letter to the Galatians," *NTS* 21, no. 3 (1974): 353–79; Betz, *Galatians: A Commentary on Paul's Letter to the Churches in Galatia* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979). For more on Bitz's contribution to biblical studies, see Troy W. Martin, "Hans Dieter Betz: Ur-ancestor of New Testament Rhetorical Criticism," in *Genealogies of New Testament Rhetorical Criticism*, ed. Troy W. Martin (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Press, 2014), 13–43.

[53] George A. Kennedy, *Classical Rhetoric and Its Christian and Secular Tradition from Ancient to Modern Times* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1980); Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation through Rhetorical Criticism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984). For an overview of the rhetorical features of early Greek literature, see Kennedy, *A New History of Classical Rhetoric* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994.

Kennedy's method is still widely used by scholars for analyzing the "rhetorical effect" of texts.[54] Nevertheless, there have been considerable criticisms launched against it. One common criticism has to do with Kennedy's use of ancient Greco-Roman rhetorical categories for the study of the NT. Some argue that categories found in ancient handbooks on rhetoric refer only to speeches, and therefore, are inappropriate for studying *written* documents such as the Pauline epistles.[55] But such criticism seems unwarranted, given that the line between oral and written forms of rhetoric was not as clearly drawn in ancient times as what some have suggested.[56] For example, Aristotle himself discusses principles of rhetoric in the context of written communication.[57] It is also worth noting that the term ἐπιστολή sometimes referred to "an *oral* communication sent by messenger."[58] Moreover, the distinction between oral and written communication

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[54] For an overview and critical review of Kennedy's method, see Steve Walton, "Rhetorical Criticism: An Introduction," *Themelios* 21, no. 2 (1996). For more on Kennedy's influence on biblical scholarship, see C. Clifton Black and Duane F. Watson, eds., *Words Well Spoken: George Kennedy's Rhetoric of the New Testament* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2008).

[55] Abraham J. Malherbe, *Ancient Epistolary Theorists* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988); C. Joachim Classen, "St Paul's Epistles and Ancient Greek and Roman Rhetoric," in *Rhetoric and the NT: Essays from the 1992 Heidelberg Conference*, ed. Stanley E. Porter and Thomas H. Olbricht, JSNTSup 90 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), 265–91.

[56] See, for example, Classen, "Paul's Epistles," 282; Stanley E. Porter, "The Theoretical Justification for Application of Rhetorical Categories to Pauline Epistolary Literature," in *Rhetoric and the New Testament: Essays from the 1992 Heidelberg Conference*, ed. Stanley E. Porter, and Thomas H. Olbricht, JSNTSup 90 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), 100–22.

[57] Aristotle, *The 'Art' of Rhetoric*, 1.10.1ff.

[58] Cf. David E. Aune, *The New Testament in its Literary Environment* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1987), 158 (emphasis his); cf. Peter T. O'Brien, "Letters, Letter Forms," in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, ed. G. R. Hawthorne and R. P. Martin (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 550–54; M. Luther Stirewalt, Jr., *Studies in Ancient Epistolography*, SBLRBS 27 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1993) 67–87. See, for example, Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War*, 7.10.1 τοῦ δ' ἐπιγιγνομένου χειμῶνος ἥκοντες ἐς τὰς Ἀθήνας οἱ παρὰ τοῦ Νικίου ὅσα τε ἀπὸ γλώσσης εἴρητο αὐτοῖς εἶπον, καὶ εἴ τίς τι ἐπηρώτα ἀπεκρίνοντο, καὶ τὴν ἐπιστολὴν ἀπέδοσαν. ὁ δὲ γραμματεὺς ὁ τῆς πόλεως παρελθὼν ἀνέγνω τοῖς Ἀθηναίοις δηλοῦσαν, "The following winter the messengers of Nicias, on reaching Athens, gave the messages which they had been ordered to give by word of mouth, answering any questions that were asked, and delivered the Letter. And the clerk of the city came before the Athenians and read them the letter" (trans. C. F. Smith).

is less clear when considering New Testament documents, as most (if not all) were meant to be read aloud at public gatherings (cf. Col 4:16; 1 Tim 4:13).[59]

Another issue to be considered, which is also important for this study, is whether the conventions of ancient rhetoric are relevant when studying narratives.

For several decades biblical scholars using narrative criticism and those using rhetorical criticism tended to work independently of one another. Apparently, the underlying assumption was that rhetorical criticism concerns classical conventions of persuasion, whereas narrative criticism concerns matters related to storytelling. This was due in part to two different schools of thought on what rhetorical criticism is and how it should be carried out. The first, commonly referred to as the *heritage school*, says rhetorical critics must follow the conventions laid out in ancient handbooks on rhetoric—including Aristotle's three divisions of species or genres of rhetoric; namely, deliberative, judicial, and epideictic. From this perspective, rhetorical criticism is limited to these genres. The second, commonly referred to as the *dialectical school,* "emphasizes the rhetoricity and power dynamics inherent in all language."[60] From this perspective, the art of storytelling is seen as a persuasive act in and of itself. This idea is, of course, nothing new.[61] The first-century Roman educator and rhetorician Quintilian defined narrative as

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[59] See P. Botha, "The Verbal Art of the Pauline Letters: Rhetoric, Performance, and Presence," in *Rhetoric and the New Testament: Essays from the 1992 Heidelberg Conference*, ed. Stanley E. Porter, and Thomas H. Olbricht, JSNTSup 90 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), 409–28. Botha, commenting on the social context in which Paul's letters were written and received, states, "Paul's dictation of his letters was, in all probability, also a coaching of the letter carrier and eventual reader. The carrier of the letter would most likely have seen to it that it be read like Paul wanted it to be read" (417).

[60] Michal Beth Dinkler, "New Testament Rhetorical Narratology: An Invitation Toward Integration," *BibInt* 24, no. 2 (2016): 214. For more on this, see Kathleen E. Welch, *The Contemporary Reception of Classical Rhetoric: Appropriations of Ancient Discourse* (New York: Routledge, 1991).

[61] Douglas D. Hesse argues that Aristotle's *Poetics* advances a fourth mode of persuasion; that is, the narrative mode. See "Aristotle's Poetics and Rhetoric: Narrative as Rhetoric's Fourth Mode," in *Rebirth of Rhetoric: Essays in Language, Culture, and Education*, ed. Richard Andrews (London: Routledge, 1992), 19–38.

"an exposition, designed to be persuasive, of an action done or deemed to be done (*Institutio Oratoria*, 4.2.31)."[62] Other ancient authors write about how stories can "lead the soul" (ψυχαγωγεῖν) toward virtue and away from vice.[63] Livy (*ca.* 64 BCE–CE 17), for example, stated that "what makes the study of history particularly advantageous and fruitful" is that one can chose from the examples given "what to imitate, and what to mark for avoidance what is shameful in the conception and shameful in the result" (*Ab Urbe Condita, Praefatio,* 10–12).[64]

Even this small sampling of ancient sources demonstrates that the brand of rhetorical criticism espoused by the *heritage school* is too narrowly focused. Ancient rhetoricians did not distinguish sharply between spoken (oratory) and written (epistolary) forms of rhetoric. They also recognized the persuasive power of storytelling. Therefore, literary critics are justified when they apply the conventions of ancient rhetoric to the study of narratives.[65]

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[62] Quintilian, *The Orator's Education, Volume II: Books 3–5*, ed. and trans. Donald A. Russell, Loeb Classical Library 125 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002), 7.

[63] There is ample historical evidence to support the point that ancient Greek and Roman rhetoricians used stories to convince readers to adopt a certain viewpoint. For example, the ancient historian and teacher of rhetoric Dionysius of Halicarnassus (*ca.* 60 BCE - 7 CE) said he wanted "to remove erroneous impressions . . . from the minds of the many and to substitute true ones" by presenting "infinite examples of virtue in men" (*Roman Antiquities*, 1.5.3, trans. Earnest Cary). The historian Appian (*ca.* 95–165 CE) said, "I have written and compiled this narrative, which is well worth the study of those who wish to know the measureless ambition of men, their dreadful lust of power, their unwearying perseverance, and the countless forms of evil" (*The Civil Wars, Praefatio*, 6, trans. Horace White).

[64] Livy, *History of Rome, Volume II: Books 3–4*, trans. B. O. Foster, ed. Jeffery Henderson, Loeb Classical Library 114 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1919), 7.

[65] Further to this point, American literary scholars James Phelan, Matthew Clark, and Michael Kearns, make a convincing case that rhetoric is not genre specific. See James Phelan, *Narrative as Rhetoric: Technique, Audiences, Ethics, Ideology* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1996); Phelen, *Somebody Telling Somebody Else: Toward a Rhetorical Poetics of Narrative* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2017); James Phelan, David Herman, Peter J. Rabinowitz, et al. *Narrative Theory: Core Concepts and Critical Debates* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2012); Michael Kearns, *Rhetorical Narratology*, Stages 16 (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1999); Matthew Clark and James Phelan, *Debating Rhetorical Narratology: On the Synthetic, Mimetic, and Thematic Aspects of Narrative* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2020).

Toward a more nuanced literary-critical method. A survey of literary-critical studies on the Gospels and Acts published over the past three decades shows New Testament scholars taking advantage of a variety of more nuanced literary critical approaches that employ principles from both narrative criticism and rhetorical criticism (using ancient and modern techniques).[66] To what extent these principles are used, and the weight given to each one, depends largely on one's perspective on where the locus of meaning lies.

All agree that storytelling is an act of communication involving an author, a text, and a reader, and that behind the text there was once a real flesh and blood person who wrote with the intention of conveying a certain meaning. Some argue that the key to understanding the meaning of the text is to determine the author's intent by reconstructing the immediate historical socio-religious context in which he wrote. But the problem, say literary critics, is that this alone does not disclose authorial intent because there is no way of knowing for sure what was in the author's mind. "With this approach, . . . what one ends up examining in order to understand the Gospel is not the narrative text but something external to the text."[67] Since modern readers have no access to the "real" author, one can only infer what he intended to say from what is accessible; namely, the

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[66] Some notable recent examples include C. Clifton Black, *Rhetorical Texture and Narrative Trajectories of the Lukan Galilean Ministry Speeches: Hermeneutical Appropriation by Authorial Readers of Luke-Acts* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2007); Black, *The Rhetoric of the Gospel: Theological Artistry in the Gospels and Acts.* 2nd ed. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2013); Andy Chambers, *Exemplary Life: A Theology of Church Life in Acts* (Nashville: B & P Publishing Group, 2012); Michael Strickland and David M. Young. *The Rhetoric of Jesus in the Gospel of Mark* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Press, 2017); Harold W. Attridge, *History, Theology, and Narrative Rhetoric in the Fourth Gospel* (Milwaukee, WI: Marquette University Press, 2019); Michal Beth Dinkler, "The Politics of Stephen's Storytelling: Narrative Rhetoric and Reflexivity in Acts 7:2–53," *ZWN* 111, no. 1 (2020): 33–64; Robert Matthew Calhoun, David P. Moessner and Tobias Nicklas, eds., *Modern and Ancient Literary Criticism of the Gospels: Continuing the Debate on Gospel Genre(s)* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2020).

[67] David B. Howell, *Matthew's Inclusive Story: A Study in the Narrative Rhetoric of the First Gospel*, JSNTSup 42 (Sheffield: Academic Press, 1990), 23.

text itself. While understanding something about the historical socio-religious context may be helpful, the inquiry must be text-centered.

Narrative-rhetorical critics who undertake a text-centered approach focus on features in Matthew's Gospel that indicate the meaning and intention, not of the "real" author *per se*, but of the "implied author." The implied author is a persona created in the text by the "real" author, which speaks primarily through the voice of the narrator, and may be perceived by the "real" reader by observing the author's choices in the writing of the narrative.[68] Strictly speaking, narrative critics are not concerned with matters external to the text such as authorial intent, but do recognize that the "real" author's most probable meaning can be inferred from the text by observing what is said through the "implied author."[69] This allows the text itself to set the parameters for determining with some degree of confidence the real author's meaning and intention. But as Tremper Longman III rightly observes, "we must always retain a level of humility in our interpretations because of our inability to read the mind of the author of the text."[70]

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[68] Wayne Booth defines "implied author" as "the creating person who is implied by the totality of a given work when it is offered to the world." Booth, *Critical Understanding: The Powers and Limits of Pluralism* (1979; repr., Chicago: University Press, 1982), 269. Seymour Chatman, identifies the "implied author" as "not the narrator, but rather the principle that invented the narrator, along with everything else in the narrative, that stacked the cards in this particular way, had these things happened to these characters, in these words or images." Chatman, *Story and Discourse*, 148.

[69] Some narrative critics distinguish between the implied author and narrator, especially in literary works where the narrator is deemed unreliable. That is, when the narrator obviously does not represent the implied author's point of view. The implied author is understood as "the created version of the real man; he is the sum of his own choices" (Booth, *Rhetoric of Fiction*, 74–75). The "narrator" is not identical to the implied author. It is but one aspect of the implied author's work, along with other choices made while writing the narrative such as what direct speech to report on and what OT quotations to include. In the Gospel of Matthew, the implied author and narrator share a common point of view, and so, in terms of "point of view" the distinction is unnecessary. Given that the author presents his story as "a reliable record of recent events," one may rightly assume that the words and events reported on are understood and accepted by the narrator.

[70] *Literary Approaches to Biblical Interpretation*, Foundations of Contemporary Interpretation, vol. 3, ed. Molsés Silva (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987), 64.

Literary critics identify three types of readers: *original*, *implied*, and *later*. The first denotes the real flesh and blood person for whom the text was originally written. The second is the "implied reader" which, like the "implied author," is something created by the "real" author while telling the story. It is "an imaginary reader with the ideal responses implied or suggested by the narrative."[71] The third type of reader is the real flesh and blood person who later reads and interprets the text but was not part of the author's original audience or historical socio-religious setting. The term "later reader" is used when referring to the history of interpretation(s), including contemporary interpretation(s). Some argue that *meaning* for the "later reader" is determined not by the original author nor by the text, but by one's response to the text.[72] This approach, known as reader-response theory, is highly popular in contemporary scholarship.

This study makes no attempt to argue against reader-response theory. Since literature is an act of communication involving an author, a text, and a reader, then it is fair to ask also about the role of the reader in the interpretative process. Rightly or wrongly, readers do indeed respond to texts and create meaning. The issue is whether the meaning so created corresponds with the text or is it just something generated in the mind of the reader once the text is filtered through the reader's political, social, or aesthetic convictions. "The boundary where the interpretive interaction between the implied author and reader occurs is none other than the finished form of the entire text."[73]

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[71] David Rhoads and Donald Michie, *Mark as Story: An Introduction to the Narrative of a Gospel* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982), 137.

[72] In his book *Matthew's Inclusive Story: A Study in the Narrative Rhetoric of the First Gospel*, JSNTSup 42. (1990; repr., New York: Bloomsbury, 2015), David B. Howell discusses how "implied author," text, and "implied reader" work together to provide what is necessary to prevent fanciful interpretations. He states, "the biblical literary critic who adopts some of the critical assumptions of reader-response criticism must take care not to focus too much attention on the act of reception by the reader. . . . the text thus contains restraints which limit the range of possible meanings and interpretations." (41).

[73] InHee C.Berg, *Irony in the Matthean Passion Narrative* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Press, 2014), 14.

The real author and first readers of Matthew's Gospel lived in a particular historical socio-religious setting that provided the context in which the text was to be understood. For them, there were two determining factors that helped elicit the kind of reader response expected by the author; namely, the text and the first-century Jewish socio-religious context in which it was originally written and received. However, as the historical situation changed, the second determining factor was no longer present. This most likely resulted in reader responses not anticipated by the real author. Later readers were able to appropriate (or misappropriate) Matthew's text to fit their own historical socio-religious situations and use it to address their own concerns. If the thesis of this study is persuasive, the "anti-Jewish" reading of the First Gospel must be seen not as coming from the author nor the text, but as something created by later reader responses to the text. In the case of Matthew's heated rhetoric, it seems the text took on an "anti-Jewish" reading very soon after the socio-religious context had changed (cf. early Church Fathers). Thus, modern scholars who argue for the abandonment of Matthew as authoritative Scripture because it is "anti-Jewish" are doing so on the basis of post-first-century reader responses that interpret the text as anti-Jewish or anti-Semitic. This study will show that such an unguided (or misguided) reader response is precisely the problem.

This study is a text-centered approach. It asserts that the means to legitimize interpretations and avoid fanciful interpretations is provided by the text itself. In the same way that the "real" author's most probable meaning and intention can be inferred from the text by observing the "implied author" (a creation of the "real" author), so also the appropriate reader response expected by the "real" author can be determined with some degree of confidence by observing the "implied reader" (also a creation of the "real" author).

Character and Characterization in Matthean Research

Koen De Temmerman notes that character depiction was commonly used by ancient Greek and Latin authors and rhetors, but "[l]ike many rhetorical phenomena, characterization was universal in real life and literature alike before it was described (and, later, prescribed) in rhetoric."[74] The Hebrew Bible contains numerous examples where characters are presented as exemplifying certain traits and behaviors to be imitated or avoided (e.g., Joseph/Potiphar's wife; Moses/Pharaoh; David/Saul). There is little wonder, then, that the author of Matthew also uses characters and characterization in the same way.

Numerous narrative critical studies on character and characterization in the Gospels and Acts have been published since the mid–1980s.[75] The first dealing with the Gospel of Matthew appeared in Kingsbury's *Matthew as Story* in 1986, and Powell's *What is Narrative Criticism?* in 1990.[76] However, the number of studies on character and characterization in the Gospel of Matthew during the past thirty-five years since Kingsbury is surprisingly small.[77] Those who do mention the subject concentrate mainly

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[74] Temmerman, "Ancient Rhetoric, 28.

[75] Some recent examples include Alicia D. Myers, *Characterizing Jesus: A Rhetorical Analysis on the Fourth Gospel's Use of Scripture in Its Presentation of Jesus*, LNTS 458 (New York: T&T Clark, 2012); Christopher W. Skinner, ed., *Characters and Characterization in the Gospel of John*; Steven A. Hunt, D. Francois Tolmie, and Ruben Zimmermann, eds., *Character Studies in the Fourth Gospel: Narrative Approaches to Seventy Figures in John.* WUNT 314 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013); Christopher W. Skinner and Matthew Ryan Hauge, eds., *Character Studies and the Gospel of Mark;* Cornelis Bennema, *Encountering Jesus: Character Studies in the Gospel of John.* 2nd ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2014); Frank Dicken and Julia Snyder, eds., *Character and Characterization in Luke-Acts*, LNTS 548 (New York: T&T Clark, 2016).

[76] Kingsbury, *Matthew as Story*, 9–27; Powell, *What is Narrative Criticism?*, 51–67. Similar studies on Mark and John appeared in Rhoads and Michie, *Mark as Story*, 101–36; and R. Alan Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel: A Study in Literary Design* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983), 99–148.

[77] Donald A. Carson, "Jewish Leaders in Matthew's Gospel: A Reappraisal," *JETS* 25, no.2 (1982): 161–74; C. Clifton Black, "Depth of Characterization and Degrees of Faith in Matthew," in *Society of Biblical Literature 1989 Seminar Papers*, ed. David J. Lull (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989), 604–23; Warren Carter, "The Crowds in Matthew's Gospel," *CBQ* 55 (1993): 54–67; David D. Kupp, *Matthew's Emmanuel: Divine Presence and God's People in the First Gospel*, SNTSMS 90 (Cambridge: University Press, 1997); Boris Repschinski, *The Controversy Stories in the Gospel of Matthew: Their Redaction, Form*

on one or two characters or character groups, or some aspect of characterization. It seems most examine Matthew's character depictions only to determine what light it may shed on the Matthean community's *Sitz im Leben*.[78] This study aims to fill a gap in the literature by examining character and characterization as a literary rhetorical device.

Argument

Chapter 1 serves as the introduction to this dissertation. It provides a description of the problem and its setting, followed by a statement setting out the hypothesis this study seeks to demonstrate. Also included is a summary of the research, highlighting relevant points with implications for this study. The following integrated text-centered approach employs principles from both narrative criticism and rhetorical criticism.

Chapter 2 will set out the methodology used to advance the argument. This will lay the groundwork for a more detailed narrative-rhetorical analysis of the Gospel in the following chapters.

Chapter 3 will consider what the text reveals about the "implied author," to determine the perspective from which Matthew's story appears to have been written. This will be followed by a discussion on what the text reveals about the "implied reader"—the

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und [*sic*] *Relevance for the Relationship Between the Matthean Community and Formative Judaism* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2000); J. Robert C. Cousland, *The Crowds in the Gospel of Matthew*, NovTSup 102 (Leiden: Brill, 2001); Jeannine K. Brown, *The Disciples in Narrative Perspective: The Portrayal and Function of the Matthean Disciples*, SBLAB 9 (Leiden: Brill, 2002); Matthias Konradt, "The Role of the Crowds in the Gospel of Matthew," in *Matthew within Judaism: Israel and the Nations in the First Gospel*. ed. Anders Runesson and Daniel M. Gurtner, 213–32 (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2020). Two well-known earlier works are Sjef Van Tilborg, *The Jewish Leaders in Matthew* (Leiden: Brill, 1972); Paul S. Minear, "The Disciples and the Crowds in the Gospel of Matthew," *AThRSup* 3 (1974): 28–44.

[78] One notable exception is David R. Bauer, "The Major Characters of Matthew's Story: Their Function and Significance," *Interpretation* 46, no. 4 (1992): 357–67. Bauer discusses how interactions between Jesus and other characters in the story communicate the message of the Gospel as it pertains to God, Christ, and discipleship. However, Bauer does not discuss how Matthew's characters function to represent different standpoints in a rhetorical argument.

"one who actualizes the potential for meaning in a text, who responds to it in ways consistent with the expectations that we may ascribe to its implied author."[79]

Chapter 4 will identify those passages that specifically have to do with the main characters in Matthew's story who represent divergent standpoints in a two-sided rhetorical argument; namely, the protagonist (Jesus), the antagonists (the Jewish religious leaders), and those in the middle (the disciples and crowds/people). A detailed analysis of explicit and implicit statements about these main characters will determine what the author's statements reveal about his special interests and perspective. It will also determine what can be learned about the implied author's *intended rhetorical effect* on the implied reader from the characterizations of the main characters in his narrative, and the interactions among them.

Chapter 5 will clarify what is meant by "rhetorical argument" in the context of this study, and explain why the Gospel of Matthew should be read as such. This is followed by a discussion on how character and characterization functions in the narrative as a "rhetorical device."

Chapter 6 will investigate Matthew's characterization of the non-Jewish (Gentile) characters in the story. What standpoint in the argument do they represent? What role do Gentiles play in the Jesus-story as Matthew presents it?

Chapter 7 will conclude the study with a summary of the argument, a review of the discussion and conclusions, and suggest how this study may contribute to further Matthean research.

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[79] Powell, "Narrative Criticism," in *Hearing the New Testament: Strategies for Interpretation*, 2nd ed. ed. Joel B. Green (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2010), 241.

CHAPTER 2

METHODOLOGY

A survey of scholarly works published in recent decades addressing the problem of so-called "anti-Jewish" elements in the Gospel of Matthew shows that most use the historical-critical and socio-critical methods.[1] The underlying assumption seems to be that the key to interpreting the First Gospel is to reconstruct *the world behind the text.* Such studies are indeed beneficial in that they promote a better understanding of the historical and socio-religious context in which the text was written, which in turn helps determine from the available historical evidence the *most probable* scenario regarding the author's and his community's *Sitz in Leben*. There are gaps, however, in the historical record leaving many questions unanswered. Consequently, there is still much scholarly debate about *the world behind the text*. And it seems unlikely that questions regarding Matthew's relationship to Judaism or the Church's relationship to Israel will be answered to everyone's satisfaction any time soon. This study will not attempt to settle such matters. It does, however, contribute to the conversation. Rather than asking questions about matters extrinsic to the text, this study addresses the problem of so-called "anti-Jewish" elements in the Gospel of Matthew by examining the interpretative clues found in the text itself. What is presented here is not meant to downplay the importance of the historical-critical and socio-critical studies done by others. Rather, the intent is to

[1] For an overview/survey of the use of the historical-critical method in Matthean studies, see Donald A. Hagner and Stephen E. Young, "The Historical-Critical Method and the Gospel of Matthew," in *Methods for Matthew*, ed. Mark Allan Powell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 11–43. For a helpful collection of essays on sociological approaches to Matthew, see David L. Balch, ed. *Social History of the Matthean Community: Cross-Disciplinary Approaches* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Publishing, 1991); Troy W. Martin, ed. *Genealogies of New Testament Rhetorical Criticism* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 2015).

complement them by employing literary-critical methods such as narrative criticism and rhetorical criticism that focus on *the world of the text*. Questions about how the text aligns with the author's *Sitz im Leben* are suspended temporarily to allow the text to speak for itself as a self-contained literary work.[2]

This study accepts that Matthew's Gospel is a *rhetorically shaped* narrative presented by the author as a reliable record of recent events. Regardless of whether one believes the account, it is "a narrative mode of representation that *claims* to rely on evidence."[3] This study also accepts that it is entirely possible (or even probable) that there were some among Matthew's original readers who had living memory of the events reported. Perhaps some characters in the story reminded these readers of certain individuals in the real world. But asking questions about the extent to which literary characters reflect real life people is beyond the scope of narrative-rhetorical criticism. Narrative-rhetorical critics are concerned primarily with how characters are depicted and how they function within a "story world."

This study presupposes that a more comprehensive understanding of Matthew requires an integrated approach.[4] Accordingly, the following narrative-rhetorical analysis should be considered as one part of an interpretative paradigm that takes into account the interrelation of historical, socio-religious, and literary contexts. The results of this study are to be compared later with results from other historical-critical and socio-critical

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[2] For more on reading narratives as a self-contained literary works, see Louis Mink, "History and Fiction as Modes of Comprehension," *NLH* 1 (1970): 541–48; Robert Culley, *Studies in the Structure of Hebrew Narrative* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976), 13–20; Livia Polanyi, "What Stories Can Tell Us about Their Teller's World," *Poetics Today* 2, no. 2 (1981): 97–112.

[3] Michal Beth Dinkler, "What is Genre?" in *Modern and Ancient Literary Criticism of the Gospels: Continuing the Debate on Gospel Genre(s)*, ed. Robert Matthew Calhoun, David P. Moessner, and Tobias Nicklas (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2020), 93 (emphasis hers).

[4] See Randolph Tate, *Biblical Interpretation: An Integrated Approach*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008).

studies to help determine the *most plausible* explanation for the presence of so-called "anti-Jewish" elements in the Gospel of Matthew. "Although the two methods [historical criticism and literary criticism] cannot be used simultaneously, they can be used side by side in a supplementary fashion. They might even be viewed as necessary complements, each providing information that is beneficial to the exercise of the other."[5]

Narrative Criticism

This study employs the basic principles of narrative criticism outlined by Mark Allan Powell, such as the implied author, implied reader, and the normative process of reading.[6] A more detailed analysis and discussion of how these principles apply specifically to the Gospel of Matthew is the topic of chapter 3. Narrative criticism also calls attention to other literary dynamics such as point of view, the ordering of events, causal links, conflict, setting, symbolism, character, characterization, etc. Of these, special attention is given in this study to *character* and *characterization*.

Character and Characterization

Powell defines characterization as "the process through which the implied author provides the implied reader with what is necessary to reconstruct a character from the narrative."[7] In the context of this study, the term *character* refers to a person or a group of persons portrayed in a narrative. *Characterization* refers to how perceptions of

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[5] Powell, *What is Narrative Criticism?* Guides to Biblical Scholarship, New Testament Series. (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Press, 1990), 98.

[6] Powell, *What is Narrative Criticism?*; Powell, "Narrative Criticism," in *Methods of Biblical Interpretation*, 169–72; Powell, "Narrative Criticism," in *Hearing the NT: Strategies for Interpretation*, 2nd ed., ed. Joel B. Green (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2010), 240–58. See also Jack Dean Kingsbury, *Matthew As Story* (1986; repr., Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988); Kingsbury, ed. *Gospel Interpretation: Narrative-critical and Social-scientific Approaches* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity University Press, 1997).

[7] Powell, *What is Narrative Criticism?*, 52.

these characters are shaped by the author.[8] This is achieved in two ways. First, the implied author/narrator may say something direct or explicit about the attributes or qualities of a character, have others in the story say something about a character, or even have a character speak on his or her own behalf. Second, characterization is achieved by using indirect or implicit statements whereby the implied reader must infer what the character is like from that person's thoughts, speeches, actions, physical appearance, interactions with others, and reactions from others in the story.[9]

A theory of character. Space considerations here preclude a more comprehensive review of the vast array of approaches to character and characterization in the New Testament. The purpose here is to highlight some theoretical frameworks that are most relevant for providing a rationale for the theory of character used in this study.

To date, there is no universally agreed upon theory of character.[10] Alex Woloch observes that "characterization has been the *bête noire* of narratology, provoking either cursory dismissal, lingering uncertainty, or vociferous argument."[11] John Frow calls it "the most inadequately theorized of literary concepts."[12] Cornelis Bennema

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[8] For more on this see David Rhoads, "Narrative Criticism and the Gospel of Mark," *JAAR* 50 (1982): 417; Martin Harrison, *The Language of Theatre* (London: Routledge, 1998), 51–52; Robert A. Georges, "The Kaleidoscopic Model of Narrating: A Characterization and a Critique," *JAF* 92, no. 364 (1979): 164–71; C. Clifton Black, "Depth of Characterization and Degrees of Faith in Matthew," in *Society of Biblical Literature 1989 Seminar Papers*, ed. David J. Lull (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989), 604–23.

[9] Booth, *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (Chicago: University Press, 1961), 3–20.

[10] For further discussion on this, see Mieke Bal, *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative*, 4th ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto, 2017), 105; Cornelis Bennema, *A Theory of Character in New Testament Narrative* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Press, 2014), 2; Alex Woloch, *The One vs. the Many: Minor Characters and the Space of the Protagonist in the Novel* (Princeton: University Press, 2003), 14–15; Petri Merenlahti, "Characters in the Making: Individuality and Ideology in the Gospels," in *Characterization in the Gospel: Reconceiving Narrative Criticism*, ed. David Rhoads and Kari Syreeni, JSNTSup 184 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1999), 49–72.

[11] Woloch, *The One vs. the Many*, 14, italics mine. (*bête noire*, "black beast" = "the bane of one's existence.")

[12] John Frow, *Character and Person* (Oxford: University Press, 2014), vi.

suggests that the lack of consensus may be attributed in part to "the Aristotelian idea that character is fixed and secondary to plot."[13] Other likely reasons, he says, include "the complexity of the concept of character (characters resemble people but are not real) and the difficulty of analyzing character (something one can rarely read from the surface of the text)."[14] Whatever the cause, the absence of a universally agreed upon theory of character—plus the surprising scarcity of studies on character and characterization specific to the Gospel of Matthew—calls for an explanation of and rationale for the theory of character used in this study.

An important topic of debate among literary critics is whether a literary character should be thought of as a *person* defined by a set of character traits or as a *function* of the plot, or some combination of the two. This relates to how one understands the mode of a character's existence in a literary work. There are two main views. The first is the "mimetic"[15] (also called "realistic") view in which characters are autonomous beings depicted in a story as though they are real-life people and may be analyzed as such. In this case, readers can imagine characters in the story as though they are "alive" and can identify with them—even to the point of feeling a sense of empathy or sympathy toward them. Mieke Bal calls this the "anthropomorphic aspect" of *character-effect*.[16] "Character-effect occurs when the resemblance between human beings and fabricated

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[13] Bennema, *Theory of Character*, 2.

[14] Bennema, *Theory of Character*, 2.

[15] The term μίμησις was used by Plato to refer to the imitative nature of human activities. See Richard McKeon, "Literary Criticism and the Concept of Imitation in Antiquity," *Modern Philology* 34, no. 1 (1936): 1–35. It was later used by Hellenistic authors to refer to the practice of imitating the masters of rhetoric and literary composition. See D. A. Russell, "De Imitatione," in *Creative Imitation and Latin Literature*, ed. David West and Tony Woodman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 1–16; Matthew R. Hauge, "The Creation of Person in Ancient Narrative and the Gospel of Mark," in *Character Studies and the Gospel of Mark*, ed. Christopher W. Skinner and Matthew Ryan Hauge (New York: Bloomsbury, 2014), 57–77.

[16] Bal, *Narratology*, 112.

figures is so strong that we forget the fundamental difference: we even go so far as to identify with the character, to cry, to laugh, and to search for or with it—or even against it, when the character is a villain."[17] In some cases, the reader may even draw analogies between characters in a story and people in the real world beyond the narrative world of the text.[18] The second is the "semiotic"[19] (also called "purist") view in which characters are regarded as *functional*; that is, as indicators or "signs" which are used by the author to establish the structure of the plot. "Those who argue that characters are essentially functional often take their cue from analysis of other ancient literature, observing the tendency in ancient literature for characters to function more generally as types of a larger category of people."[20] From this perspective, the concept of character is understood as "a more or less irrelevant figment of the reader's imagination, inimical to adequate perception of the work in which it figures."[21] This theory of character is held by structuralists such as Daniel Patte,[22] and Robert C. Culley,[23] and Dan Otto Via.[24]

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[17] Bal, *Narratology*, 113.

[18] Meyer H. Abrams, "Character and Characterization," in *Glossary of Literary Terms*, 11th ed. (Boston: Wadsworth Cengage Learning, 2015), 47–50.

[19] The term "semiotic" is derived from the Greek σημειωτικός ("observant of signs"). Semiotics is the study of how "signs" (e.g., words on a page) signify meaning. For more on this, see Halina Sendera, Mohd Yakin and Andreas Totu, "The Semiotic Perspectives of Peirce and Saussure: A Brief Comparative Study," *PSBS* 155 (2014): 4–8.

[20] Jeannine K. Brown, *The Disciples in Narrative Perspective: The Portrayal and Function of the Matthean Disciples*, SBLAB 9 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2002), 49.

[21] William H. Shepherd, *The Narrative Function of the Holy Spirit as a Character in Luke-Acts*. SBL Dissertation Series 147 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1994), 54–55.

[22] Daniel Patte, *Structural Exegesis for New Testament Critics* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press. 1990); Patte, *Ethics of Biblical Interpretation: A Reevaluation* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1995).

[23] Robert C. Culley, *Studies in the Structure of Hebrew Narrative* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976); Culley, *Themes and Variations: A Study of Action in Biblical Narrative.* SBL Semeia Studies (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992).

[24] Dan Otto Via, *The Parables: Their Literary and Existential Dimension* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1967); Via, *Kerygma and Comedy in the New Testament: A Structuralist Approach to*

Neither of these views has proven to be entirely satisfactory for developing a theory of character. The problem is that evidence cited in favor of one view over another does not always stack up as neatly as one would like. For example, those advocating a "semiotic" perspective argue that Greco-Roman literature points to a functional role of character. While this is true in *most* cases, there are some examples where ancient authors depict characters in ways that go beyond what seems necessary for a character's plot function. In their book, *Characterization in Ancient Greek Literature,* Koen De Temmerman and Evert van Emde Boas examine the writings of 32 ancient Greek authors and discover a range of character depictions.[25] Warren Ginsberg has noted that some ancient authors such as Ovid (43 BCE–17 CE) "found different ways to create figures who express a great deal more than their typicality."[26] In his study on Plutarch's *Life of Sertorius,* Timothy Duff shows that both static and developmental models of character are presented side-by-side.[27] While these characters clearly do not resemble the more fully developed "psychological" personalities found in modern literature, they do nonetheless possess character traits that make them appear "life-like."

Hermeneutic (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975); Via, *Self-deception and Wholeness in Paul and Matthew* (1990; repr., Wipf and Stock, 2005).

[25] Koen De Temmerman and Evert van Emde Boas, *Characterization in Ancient Greek Literature.* Studies in Ancient Greek Narrative, vol. 4 (Leiden: Brill, 2018). Temmerman and van Emde Boas's study covers 9 different genres: Epic and Elegiac Poetry, Historiography, Choral Lyric, Drama, Oratory, Philosophy, Biography, Between Philosophy and Rhetoric, and the Novel.

[26] Warren Ginsberg, *The Cast of Character: The Representation of Personality in Ancient and Medieval Literature* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1983), 175. See Ginsberg's comments on Ovid's use of characters on pages 58–80. For more on the concept of character change in ancient philosophy, see Koen De Temmerman and Evert van Emde Boas. *Characterization in Ancient Greek Literature.* Studies in Ancient Greek Narrative, vol. 4 (Leiden: Brill, 2018).

[27] Timothy E. Duff, "Models of Education in Plutarch," *JHS* 128 (2008): 1–26. See also Christopher Gill, "The Question of Character-Development: Plutarch and Tacitus," *CQ* 33, no. 2 (1983): 469–87; Gill, "The Ethos/Pathos Distinction in Rhetorical and Literary Criticism," *CQ* 34, no. 1 (1984): 149–66; "Particulars, Selves and Individuals in Stoic Philosophy," in *Particulars in Greek Philosophy.* ed. R. W. Sharples, 127–45. (Leiden: Brill, 2010); Richard P. Thompson, *Keeping the Church in Its Place: The Church as Narrative Character in Acts* (New York: T&T Clark, 2006), 22–25.

The evidence from ancient Greco-Roman literature supports Chatman's argument that "a viable theory of characterization should preserve openness and treat characters as autonomous beings, not mere plot functions. It should argue that character is reconstructed by the audience from evidence announced or implicit in an original construction and communicated by the discourse, through whatever medium."[28]

As early as 1970, the French literary theorist Roland Barthes criticized the exclusive use of one approach over another (i.e., "mimetic" vs. "semiotic"). He argued that it is "as wrong to suppress character as it is to take it off the page and turn it into a psychological being."[29] One of the first literary scholars to propose a consolidated approach was Seymour Chatman who defined character as "a paradigm of traits, . . . a vertical assemblage intersecting the syntagmatic chain of events that comprise the plot."[30] He defines *trait* as "a narrative adjective . . . labeling a personal quality of a character, as it persists over part or whole of the story."[31] As such, characters do not appear simply as signs to structure the plot, but rather, possess personal qualities that prompt the reader to recall "highly coded psychological information."[32] Similarly, Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan argued that while characters in a narrative "are nodes in the verbal design; in the story they are—by definition—non (or pre-) verbal abstractions," these constructs are nonetheless "partly modeled on the reader's conception of people and in this they are

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[28] Seymour Chatman, *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film* (1978; repr., Ithica, NY: Cornell University Press, 1980), 119.

[29] Roland Barthes, *S/Z*, trans. Richard Miller (New York: Hill & Wang, 1974), 184. Originally published in French by *Essais* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1970).

[30] Chatman, *Story and Discourse*, 127.

[31] Chatman, *Story and Discourse*, 125.

[32] Chatman, *Story and Discourse*, 127.

person-like."[33] Fred W. Burnett defines character as both "literary indications" and as having an "effect on the reading process"[34] Meyer H. Abrams defines "characters" as "the persons represented in a dramatic or narrative work, who are interpreted by the reader as possessing particular moral, intellectual, and emotional qualities by inferences from what the persons say and their distinctive ways of saying it—the dialogue—and from what they do—the action."[35] Kingsbury speaks of characters in Matthew both in terms of "persons" whom the author "brings to life," as well as serving various functions in the plot.[36] Many other notable biblical scholars have adopted a theory of character that combines aspects from both the "mimetic" and "semiotic" views.[37] It seems much could be missed if one were to view the characters in Matthew's story *only* as having a functional role in the plot or *only* as "life-like persons." A more comprehensive understanding requires a theory that incorporates aspects from both perspectives.

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[33] Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction* (London: Methuen, 1983), 33. Two decades earlier, Martin Price, having observed a "pendulum shift in the view of character" over the previous hundred years, asked whether it might be possible to see characters "at once as persons and as parts of the design" ("The Other Self: Thoughts About Character in the Novel," in *Imagined Worlds: Essays on Some English Novels and Novelists in Honour of J. Butt*, ed. Maynard Mack and Ian Gregor [London: Methuen & Co., 1968], 290).

[34] Fred W. Burnett, "Characterization and Reader Construction of Characters in the Gospel." *Semeia* 63 (1993): 5.

[35] Abrams, "Character and Characterization," 48.

[36] Kingsbury, *Matthew as Story*, 9–27.

[37] See, for example, Robert C. Tannehill, "The Disciples in Mark: The Function of a Narrative Role," *JR* 57 (1977): 386–405; Kelly R. Iverson, *Gentiles in the Gospel of Mark: 'Even the Dogs Under the Table Eat the Children's Crumbs'* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2007); David Gowler, *Host, Guest, Enemy, and Friend: Portraits of the Pharisees in Luke and Acts* (1991; repr., Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2008); Elizabeth Struthers Malbon, "Characters in Mark's Story: Changing Perspectives on the Narrative Process," in *Mark as Story: Retrospect and Prospect*, ed. Kelly R. Iverson and Christopher W. Skinner, SBLRBS 65 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2011), 45–69; David M. Rhoads, Joanna Dewey, and Donald Michie, *Mark as Story: An Introduction to the Narrative of a Gospel*, 3rd ed. (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Press, 2012).

Character classification. Until the 1990s, most literary critics used the categories "flat" and "round" to classify characters. These terms were coined by the English fiction writer Edward M. Forster in 1927.[38] Foster describes "flat" characters as "constructed round a single idea or quality."[39] By contrast, "round" characters are more complex with many different characteristics. They change and develop as the story unfolds, and are even "capable of surprising in a convincing way"[40] In 1993, Burnett challenged Foster's two-category classification as being overly simplistic and suggested that biblical characters should instead be classified on a continuum.[41] At one end of the continuum are those whose purpose is solely plot related, in the middle are those who function as types of an entire class, and finally, at the opposite end are those possessing a more complex set of character traits than what is necessary for plot development. The points on Burnett's continuum resemble those which Adele Berlin had earlier labelled *full-fledged* (= round), *type* (= flat), and *agent* (= functionary).[42] The Hebrew literary

[38] See Forster's discussion on his character classification in *Aspects of the Novel* (New York: Harcourt Brace & World, 1927), 103–25.

[39] Forster, *Aspects of the Novel*, 103.

[40] Forster, *Aspects of the Novel*, 118.

[41] Fred W. Burnett, "Characterization," 15–16. Burnett seems to have misunderstood Foster when he says that Foster's classification is too simplistic. Foster uses only two categories, and does not explicitly mention the word "continuum," but the implication is that the category "flat" represents the far end of a continuum. Foster states, "when there is more than one factor in them ["flat" characters], we get the beginning of the curve towards the round" (*Aspects of the Novel*, 104). Perhaps what Burnett needed was further clarification regarding how characters are to be understood once they move away from "flat" and "curve towards the round." Baruch Hochman also criticized Foster's two-category classification as too simplistic and suggests instead eight categories. See Hochman, *Character in Literature* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1985), 86–140. For a summary and critique of Hochman's proposal, see David B. Gowler, *Host, Guest, Enemy and Friend: Portraits of the Pharisees in Luke and Acts* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 1991), 305–17.

[42] Adele Berlin, *Poetics and Interpretation of Biblical Narrative.* Bible and Literature Series 9 (Sheffield: Almond Press, 1983), 23–24. In 2011, Ling Cheng dismisses both Foster's and Berlin's categories as too simplistic. In Ling Cheng's view, Berlin fails to distinguish clearly enough between her character types. See Ling Cheng, *The Characterization of God in Acts: The Indirect Portrayal of an Invisible Character* (Milton Keynes, UK: Paternoster, 2011), 2–12. However, Cheng's criticism seems

scholar Yosef Ewen takes it a step further when he suggests that character be classified along three continua or axes; namely, complexity, development, and penetration into the "inner life."[43] These approaches clearly demonstrate that character and characterization can in some cases appear far too complex (even in ancient literature) to simply divide into two predefined categories like "flat" and "round." What is needed is a theory of character that classifies characters along a continuum or set of continua.

For more than a decade, Cornelius Bennema has been advocating "a comprehensive three-dimensional approach to character in New Testament narrative, consisting of (i) character in text and context; (ii) character analysis and classification; and (iii) character evaluation and significance."[44] Building on the works of Burnett, Berlin, Rimmon-Kenan, and Ewen, Bennema offers some helpful guidelines for character reconstruction. However, there is a fundamental flaw in his proposal that is especially problematic—at least from a narrative critical perspective—which prevents it from being accepted as a "comprehensive" theory of character. Bennema suggests that characters in the New Testament can be reconstructed (i.e., *rounded out*) by filling in "gaps in the narrative" from what is known about "the socio-historical context of the first-century Mediterranean world (rather than our imagination)."[45] But as mentioned previously, there

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unwarranted, given that Berlin presents her character types as points on a continuum. Accordingly, one should not expect Berlin to draw sharp distinctions between them.

[43] Yosef Ewen, "The Theory of Character in Narrative Fiction," *Hasifrut* 3 (1971): 1–30; Ewen, *Character in Narrative* (Tel Aviv: Sifri'at Poa'lim, 1980): 33–44. Ewen's work is only available in Hebrew. The titles are translated by Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan who summarizes Ewen's theory and compares it with Foster's classification of "flat" and "round." See Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction: Contemporary Poetics* (New York: Methuen, 1983), 40–42.

[44] Cornelius Bennema, "Character Reconstruction in the New Testament (1): The Theory," *ExpT* 127, no. 8 (2016): 365–74. See also Bennema, "A Comprehensive Approach to Understanding Character in the Gospel of John," in *Characters and Characterization in the Gospel of John*, ed. Christopher W. Skinner LNTS 461 (New York: Bloomsbury, 2013), 36–58; Bennema, "A Theory of Character in the Fourth Gospel with Reference to Ancient and Modern Literature," *BibInt* 17 (2009): 375–421.

[45] Bennema, "Character Reconstruction," 4.

are gaps also in the historical record that leave many questions unanswered. Often, the only information available about a character is that presented in the narrative itself. Moreover, the practice of filling in gaps in a narrative with information extrinsic to the text in order to *round out* a literary character can in fact skew one's understanding of a characterization. A good example of this is Matthew's depiction of Joseph of Arimathea (Matt 27:57–60). Readers familiar with the other New Testament narratives know that this Joseph was "a prominent member of the Sanhedrin" (cf. Mark 15:43), "a member of the council . . . who was looking forward to the kingdom of God" (cf. Luke 23:50–51). But it seems Matthew purposely omits telling his readers this to avoid grouping this character with the antagonists (the religious leaders) in the story. Matthew characterizes Joseph of Arimathea instead as "a rich man . . . who had also become a disciple of Jesus" (ἄνθρωπος πλούσιος . . . ὃς καὶ αὐτὸς ἐμαθητεύθη τῷ Ἰησοῦ) (Matt 27:57). Narrative critical research requires a theory of character and characterization that focuses on analyzing characters *within* the context of the "story world" in which they exist. It must factor in the relationship between character, action, and plot, as well as the implied author's point of view.

Hellenistic and Hebrew characterization. Most character studies in the New Testament evaluate how the authors were influenced by Hellenistic conventions and techniques of characterization. There are a few, however, that address whether (and to what extent) these authors were also influenced by characterization in the Hebrew Bible.[46] The primary distinction between Hellenistic and Hebrew characterization is that

[46] See, for example, David M. Rhoads, Joanna Dewey, and Donald Michie, *Mark as Story: An Introduction to the Narrative of a Gospel*, 3rd ed. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 2012), 100–4; Geoff Webb, *Mark at the Threshold: Applying Bakhtinian Categories to Markan Characterisation.* Biblical Interpretation Series 95 (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 13; Francois Tolmie, *Jesus' Farwell to the Disciples: John 13:1–17:26 in Narratological Perspective.* Biblical Interpretation Series 12 (Leiden: Brill, 1995): 117–44; Mark W. G. Stibbe, *John as Storyteller: Narrative Criticism and the Fourth Gospel*, SNTSMS 73 (Cambridge: University Press, 1992), 25–27. In his narrative critical study of John's Gospel, Mark Stibbe contends that the author was influenced by patterns of characterization in the Hebrew Bible, and for that

the former generally depicts characters as uncomplicated, static, opaque, and unchanging, while the latter depicts characters as changing and developing over the course of the narrative.[47] Given Matthew's distinctly "Jewish" orientation, it seems reasonable to ask whether the author may also have been influenced by Hebrew patterns of characterization. Including this question as a necessary criterion for this study does not presuppose that Hebrew patterns are present in Matthew, nor does it ignore or diminish the differences between Hellenistic and Hebrew characterization.[48] Rather, it is included because the Gospel of Matthew was written in a historical socio-religious context where both influences were most likely felt.

A method of character analysis and classification. The theory of character used in this narrative-rhetorical study includes the following elements. First, Matthew's characters are reconstructed only from information found in the Gospel itself. While similar accounts in the other synoptic Gospels may be compared in order to determine features unique to Matthew, the character depictions in Mark and Luke will not be used to supplement character depictions in the First Gospel. This study presupposes that what an author chooses *not* to say can be just as important as what he does say—as Matthew's characterization of Joseph of Arimathea illustrates.

Second, this theory takes into account the relationship between character, action, and plot, as well as the implied author's point of view. Each character in the Gospel of Matthew—whether it resembles a "real person" or not—is treated as an

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reason, he says "Rimmon-Kenan and Ewen, because they are Hebrew narrative theorists, are better guides than Foster for interpreting so markedly Jewish a gospel [*sic*]" (24).

[47] See Webb, *Mark at the Threshold*, 9–13.

[48] One of the criticisms launched against Bennema's theory of character is that he "severely flattens out the distinctive elements in Hebraic and Hellenic characterization" (Christopher W. Skinner, "Review of Cornelis Bennema, *A Theory of Character in New Testament Narrative (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2014)*," *JETS* 58 [2015]: 390). See also Skinner, "Review of Cornelis Bennema, *A Theory of Character in New Testament Narrative (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2014)*," *Interpretation* 70, no. 3 (2016): 350.

ineradicable part of the "story world" created by the author. "Part of what it means to understand a person within a story is to make sense of that person's place within the plot."[49] This study accepts that biblical authors present their stories as the retelling of real historical events. But questions about the extent to which Matthew's characters reflect people in the real world are suspended during this study in order to allow the text to speak for itself as a self-contained literary work. The primary concern here is how characters are depicted and how they function *within* the narrative itself.

Third, characters are classified on a continuum. At the extreme lower end of this continuum are the "walk-ons."[50] These characters are merely part of the background or setting of the narrative. They are one-dimensional, defined by a single idea or quality, and solely plot related. At the other extreme higher end are the "open-ended" characters.[51] These literary constructs appear as "real people," possess a more complex set of character traits than what is necessary for plot development (cf. Burnett and Berlin), and are so well developed that one could even imagine them "stepping off the page" and acting in some other context. Such characters transcend "the purpose for which they are created."[52] This continuum, which represents the full range of possibilities, in no way suggests that examples of all of these can be found in Matthew. Most characters tend to land somewhere in between the two extremes. Those closer to the lower end are static, show little development, remain predictable, and represent typical responses. Those

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[49] Joel Williams, "The Characterization of Jesus as Lord in Mark's Gospel, in *Character Studies and the Gospel of Mark,* 117.

[50] The term "walk-on" is used by Chatman to refer to characters that are "mere elements of the setting" (Chatman, *Story and Discourse,* 139). Such characters are not described in detail or individualized.

[51] The term "open-ended" is used by Chatman to refer to characters that are capable of surprising the reader. They allow the reader to anticipate "the possibilities of discovering new and unsuspected traits" (Chatman, *Story and Discourse*, 132).

[52] Powell, *What is Narrative Criticism?*, 52; cf. Chatman, *Story and Discourse*, 116–26.

closer to the higher end are dynamic, unpredictable, open to change, and act in ways one might not expect.

There are three criteria used in this study for locating a character on the basis of the *degree of complexity* on the continuum: (1) the number of character traits assigned, (2) the level of development within the story, and (3) how much is revealed about the character's "inner life" (cf. Rimmon-Kenan and Ewen).[53] These are measured by observing (a) direct or explicit statements by the implied author/narrator about a character's attributes or qualities,[54] and (b) indirect or implicit statements from which one may infer what a character is like. Indirect or implicit statements are normally conveyed by the implied author/narrator through the actions and speech of the character itself or others in the narrative.[55]

Fourth, this study examines the relationship between the mode of a character's existence in the narrative, character classification, and the implied rhetorical effect. An author's choice of which character traits to include (or omit) and how they are presented has rhetorical potential. While characters at the lower end of the continuum may serve only to represent a particular point of view or standpoint in an argument, more complex characters may function also as a rhetorical device to strengthen the author's argument by creating *character-effect* on the reader.[56]

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[53] See Ewen, "The Theory of Character in Narrative Fiction," 1–30; *Character in Narrative*, 33–44; Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction*, 40–42. In this study, these are defined as criteria for determining a character's degree of complexity; not as three separate continua or axes. The theory of character suggested by Ewen and Rimmon-Kenan was deemed too complex and unnecessary. Ewen's three criteria can in fact be grouped under the one heading, *degree of complexity*.

[54] In the Gospel of Matthew, the implied author/narrator is the most authoritative voice in the text. Thus, only statements made by the implied author/narrator count as direct characterization. When characters in the story make statements about other characters, the validity of those statements is to be evaluated accordingly. See Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction*, 59–67.

[55] For more on indirect presentation, see Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction*, 61–66.

[56] Bal, *Narratology*, 112–26.

Character Conflict and Point of View

The frequent occurrence of conflict-stories in the Gospel of Matthew explains well Kingsbury's comment that "the element of conflict is central to the plot."[57] David B. Howell suggests that "the correlatives acceptance/rejection give a more precise statement of this plot element than Kingsbury's category of conflict."[58] What makes this statement "more precise" is that it signifies the underlying cause and effect of the conflict. Matthew's characters are at odds with one another due to their different faith-responses to Jesus. The author has them appear on stage to demonstrate for the reader what it looks like to be "for" or "against" Jesus by speaking and acting in accordance with the standpoint they represent. They are "the actors in [the] story, the ones who carry out various activities that comprise the plot."[59]

Matthew's implied author/narrator "speaks in the third-person as one outside the action."[60] Even so, he makes it clear from the outset that he is not presenting the story as a neutral observer. He speaks from the standpoint of one who has already taken sides in the conflict recounted in the narrative—as his opening statements referring to Jesus as "the Christ/Messiah" (ὁ χριστός, 1:1, 16, 17, 18) indicate. As the story unfolds, the reader soon learns that Matthew's Gospel is really "an elaborate argument for the standpoint that Jesus is the Son of God, the Messiah."[61] This narrative-rhetorical study examines how the

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[57] Kingsbury, *Matthew As Story*, 3. Richard A. Edwards also identifies conflict as a dominant theme in his (reader-response) reading of the First Gospel. See *Matthew's Story of Jesus* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985).

[58] David B. Howell, *Matthew's Inclusive Story: A Study in the Narrative Rhetoric of the First Gospel*, JSNTSup 42 (1990, repr., London: Bloomsbury, 2015), 113.

[59] Powell, *What is Narrative Criticism?*, 51.

[60] Howell, *Matthew's Inclusive Story*, 166.

[61] Mika Hietanen, "The Gospel of Matthew as a Literary Argument," *Argumentation* 25 (2011): 63.

different standpoints in Matthew's argument are represented and how they are to be evaluated in light of the dominant evaluative point of view presented in the narrative.[62]

The implied author/narrator of the First Gospel establishes the basis on which one responds correctly to Jesus using another theme which is also central to the plot; namely, promise and fulfillment (cf. 4:14–16; 8:17; 12:17–21; 13:14–15, 35; 21:4–5; 27:9). "The correlatives promise/fulfillment were used to tie Matthew's story of Jesus to the previous history of Israel and portray Jesus as the fulfillment of Israel's messianic hopes."[63] By beginning with Jesus's genealogy and then citing passages from the Jewish Scriptures that support the promise/fulfillment motif, the implied author/narrator communicates to the reader the dominating evaluative point of view from which value judgments are to be made, which is ultimately God's viewpoint (cf. 3:17; 17:1–13).[64] The opening section of the Gospel "looks back to review God's previous dealings with Israel.

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[62] *Evaluative point of view* "denotes a particular way of looking at things which also involves rendering some judgement on them in terms of the degree to which they are 'good' or 'bad,' 'right' or 'wrong'" (Kingsbury, *Matthew as Story*, 33). Boris Uspensky identifies four planes of point of view: (1) the ideological or evaluative, (2) the phraseological, (3) the spatial and temporal, and (4) the psychological. The "ideological" or "evaluative" plane refers to one's perspective regarding proper standards for judgement. The "phraseological" plane concerns how point of view is revealed through the implied author's/narrator's choice of words and speech patterns to report events, describe characters, introduce direct speech, etc. The "spatial" and "temporal" planes refer to the implied author's/narrator's perspective from which he describes events and characters in relation to space and time. The "psychological" plane refers to the implied author's/narrator's insight into a character's consciousness (or perception). (Uspensky, *A Poetics of Composition: The Structure of the Artistic Text and Typology of a Compositional Form*, trans. Valentina Zavarin and Susan Wittig [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973], 1–100). While all four planes of point of view may be identified in Matthew's Gospel, this study is concerned primarily with the "ideological" or "evaluative" plane. For more on the four planes of point of view, see Susan Sniader Lanser, *The Narrative Act: Point of View in Prose Fiction* (Princeton: University Press, 1981); James L. Resseguie, *The Strange Gospel: Narrative Design and Point of View in John.* Biblical Interpretation Series 56 (Leiden: Brill, 2001).

[63] Howell, Matthew's Inclusive Story, 111.

[64] For more on Matthew's genealogy see Warren Carter, *Matthew and the Margins: A Sociopolitical and Religious Reading* (New York: Maryknoll, 2000), 53–66; Carter, *Matthew: Storyteller, Interpreter, Evangelist*, rev. ed. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2004), 40–42, 81–116; Raymond E. Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah: A Commentary on the Infancy Narratives in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke*, Upd. ed. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1999), 57–95, 587–96.

The author places the coming of the Christ, Jesus, in this context as another stage in God's activity."[65] From this perspective, to follow Jesus means to align oneself with what God is doing, and to reject Jesus is to stand in opposition to God. "If some other point of view should emerge, nonconcurrent with the dominant one (if, for example, some facts should be judged from the point of view of one of the characters), this judgment will in time be reevaluated [*sic*] from the more dominant position, and the evaluating *subject* (the character), together with his system of ideas, will become the *object*, evaluated from the more general viewpoint."[66] Readers are to evaluate their own stance by observing how characters in the story interact with and respond to Jesus. As with any good story—whether based on true events or not—any reader hoping to enter into the "story world" must "adopt a point of view consistent with the narrative."[67] One must decide which characters to emulate and which to avoid. "The evaluative point of view of the narrator and of each character or group of characters is to be judged at any given juncture as being 'true' or 'false' to the degree that it is in alignment with, or diverges from, the evaluative point of view of God."[68] As Powell noted, "The creation of a narrative world in which God's evaluative point of view can be determined and must be accepted as normative is a powerful rhetorical device."[69]

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[65] Warren Carter, *Matthew: Storyteller, Interpreter, Evangelist*, rev. ed. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2004), 107.

[66] Uspensky, *Poetics of Composition*, 9 (emphasis his).

[67] Powell, *What is Narrative Criticism?*, 23.

[68]Jack Dean Kingsbury, "Figure of Jesus in Matthew's Story: A Rejoinder to David Hill," *JSNT* 8, no. 25 (1985): 63.

[69] Powell, *What is Narrative Criticism?*, 25.

Rhetorical Criticism

In addition to the basic principles of narrative criticism, this study employs the principles of rhetorical criticism as outlined in the works of modern literary theorists such as George A. Kennedy,[70] Burton L. Mack,[71] and Sonja K. Foss.[72]

Foss defines rhetorical criticism as "the systematic investigation and explanation of symbolic acts and artifacts for the purpose of understanding rhetorical process."[73] This involves identifying the author's rhetorical situation from clues provided in the text, by describing the choices made by the author such as voice qualities, the arrangement of materials, and what details are included or left out, as well as describing the probable effects of those choices on the reader. "Whereas narrative criticism considers how the formal features of narrative discourse work together to convey meaning, rhetorical criticism focuses on the persuasive effect an author sought to have on readers through his discourse."[74] Kennedy defines the goal of rhetorical criticism as the "discovery of the author's intent and of how that is transmitted through a text to an audience."[75]

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[70] Kennedy, *Classical Rhetoric and Its Christian and Secular Tradition from Ancient to Modern Times* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1980); Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation through Rhetorical Criticism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984).

[71] Mack, *Rhetoric and the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1990).

[72] Foss, *Rhetorical Criticism: Exploration and Practice*, 5th ed. (Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press, 2018). For more on rhetorical devices used in the New Testament, see Duane F. Watson, ed., *Persuasive Artistry: Studies in New Testament Rhetoric in Honor of George A. Kennedy*, JSNTSup 50 (Sheffield, Sheffield Academic Press, 1991); Stanley E. Porter and Thomas H. Olbricht, *Rhetoric and the New Testament: Essays from the 1992 Heidelberg Conference*, JSNTSup 90 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993).

[73] Foss, *Rhetorical Criticism*, 6.

[74] Andy Chambers, *Exemplary Life: A Theology of Church Life in Acts.* (Nashville: B & P Publishing Group, 2012), 26.

[75] Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation*, 12. Kennedy sees Matthew's audience as "an inhabitant of the Greek-speaking world in which rhetoric was the core subject of formal education and in which even those without formal education necessarily developed cultural preconceptions about appropriate discourse" (*New Testament Interpretation*, 5). For an overview and critical review of

Regarding authorial intent, this study does not rule out the "real" author altogether as though he had no say in the text. But of course, the modern reader has no access to the "real" author. Matthew's intended rhetorical effect must, therefore, be deduced by examining clues found in the text itself. In the context of this study, the author's intent is understood as that reflected by the voice of the implied author/narrator—which itself is a creation of the "real" author.[76]

Matthew as a Rhetorical Argument

The Gospel of Matthew seems to have "all the elements of argumentation: standpoints supported by arguments in a context of conflict and persuasion."[77] There are in fact several features in Matthew that lead one to believe that it was written as a "persuasive" text.[78] First, the regular recurrence of conflict-stories where characters "for" and "against" Jesus oppose one another shows that some sort of argument is being presented. Second, the author puts forward a dominant evaluative point of view (presented as God's point of view) from which different standpoints in this argument are to be evaluated. While this does not guarantee the "real" reader will accept the implied author's/narrator's standpoint, it does nevertheless indicate the one being advocated. As

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Kennedy's method, see Steve Walton, "Rhetorical Criticism: An Introduction," *Themelios* 21, no. 2 (1996). For more on Kennedy's influence on biblical scholarship, see C. Clifton Black and Duane F. Watson, eds., *Words Well Spoken: George Kennedy's Rhetoric of the New Testament* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2008).

[76] As Howell noted, "The intention of the author and the historical situation in which the text was produced are thus not a matter of indifference for the biblical literary critic. These must be primarily inferred, however, on the basis of the literary genre and the conventions utilized in the text" (*Matthew's Inclusive Story*, 50).

[77] Hietanen, "Gospel of Matthew as a Literary Argument," 65.

[78] One could argue that Matthew was writing to believers, and therefore, had no case to argue. But given his concern for the gospel mission (28: 18–20), it is unlikely that he "would not have realized the importance of presenting the story in a way that is both trustworthy and compelling" (Hietanen, "Gospel of Matthew as a Literary Argument," 65).

Howell notes, "Perhaps one of the most important means of shaping the audience's response to the story is point of view, because it involves the perspectives by which the narrative is both presented and experienced."[79] Third, Matthew creates *rhetorical effect* on his readers by having characters in the story speak and act in ways consistent with the different standpoints in the argument they represent. For example, some characters affirm the dominant evaluative point of view (e.g., John the Baptist in 3:1–12; 11:2–6; the centurion in 8:5–13; the confessing disciples in 14:33; 16:16), while others stand in opposition to it (e.g., Herod, 2:3–8, 16; the Pharisees and Herodians in 22:15–18; the religious leaders in 9:3). In this way character and characterization functions as a rhetorical device. Howell sums up well how characters function in the argument and how this is transferred onto the reader:

> Matthew opens his Gospel by introducing his protagonist Jesus, the Son of God, whose mission is to save his people from their sins. His coming provokes a crisis as characters in the story are confronted with the choice of accepting or rejecting him and his proclamation of the Kingdom of God. Acceptance or obedience to Jesus' teaching is the proper response according to the evangelist, and the implied reader is challenged to respond correspondingly in the open-ended conclusion to the Gospel.[80]

Characterization as Rhetorical Device

A widely held view among scholars is that ancient rhetoric has since the first century BCE pervasively influenced literary composition.[81] While one cannot know for certain whether the conventions of ancient rhetoric such as those described by Aristotle were known to Matthew, there are recognizable features in the Gospel that parallel those of ancient rhetors.[82] George A. Kennedy states that "of the four Gospels, Matthew's

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[79] Howell, *Matthew's Inclusive Story*, 161.

[80] Howell, *Matthew's Inclusive Story*, 159.

[81] See Koen De Temmerman, "Ancient, 23–51.

[82] See Aristotle, *The Art of Rhetoric*, trans. Hugh C. Lawson-Tancred (London: Penguin Classics, 1991).

makes the widest use of all aspects of rhetoric."[83] The author presents proofs such as documentary evidence, signs, and witnesses, and "arranges his Gospel into distinct parts which perform specific rhetorical functions."[84] One of these rhetorical devices is using character and characterization to present a logical argument either by having a character in the story "speak in enthymemes" thus supporting claims or statements with a reason, or by attributing certain characteristics (known in ancient rhetorical theory as *loci* or τόποι) to a character which support a standpoint in the argument, thus having a character *model* for the reader an action to be imitated or avoided.[85] "As persuader, [Matthew] seeks not just to affect but to affect with a view to establishing consensus in the face of possible demur and opposition."[86] Meir Sternberg notes that the "narratorial evaluation of an agent or an action . . . is the most perceptive form of judgement."[87]

In terms of analyzing Matthew's rhetoric as it relates specifically to his use of character and characterization, the following points are considered: (1) Determine the main point of contention (from the perspective of the implied author/narrator); (2) Identify the standpoints adopted by the parties involved, including their starting points (presuppositions) and conclusions; (3) Determine how various standpoints in the argument are signified by the implied author/narrator (through statements or by

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[83] Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation*, 101.

[84] Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation*, 102.

[85] Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation*, 101–103. See also Benjamin Fiore, *The Function of Personal Example in the Socratic and Pastoral Epistles* (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1986); Kristoffel Demoen, "A Paradigm for the Analysis of Paradigms: The Rhetorical Exemplum in Ancient and Imperial Greek Theory," *Rhetorica* 15, no. 2 (1997): 125–58; Bennett J. Price, "Paradeigma and Exemplum in Ancient Rhetorical Theory" (PhD diss., Berkley: University of California, 1975). For examples of characterization as a rhetorical device in ancient literature see Abraham J. Malherbe, *Moral Exhortation: A Greco-Roman Sourcebook* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1986), 135–38.

[86] Uspensky, *Poetics of Composition*, 482.

[87] Meir Sternberg, *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative: Ideological Literature and the Drama of Reading* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985), 476.

inference); (4) Determine the relationship between character classification and the argumentation structure (i.e., How character and characterization serve the overall purpose of the text; namely, to persuade the reader to adopt the dominant evaluative point of view).[88] While these stages/points are presented here in sequence, they should be viewed as a circular process. "For the detailed analysis of later stages may in fact reveal aspects of the rhetorical problem or a definition of the species or stasis which was not obvious on first approaching a passage."[89]

Socio-rhetorical Criticism

This study also employs the principles of socio-rhetorical criticism outlined by Vernon K. Robbins.[90] Robbins introduced socio-rhetorical criticism as a method for New

[88] In their book, *Fundamentals of Argumentation Theory*, van Eemeren, Grootendorst, Henkemans, et al., highlight five points to be considered when analyzing argumentative discourse: (1) the standpoints at issue in the difference of opinion; (2) the positions adopted by the parties, their starting points and conclusions; (3) the arguments adduced by the parties; (4) the argumentation structure; and (5) the argument schemes used in the arguments. Frans H. van Eemeren, Robert Grootendorst, and Francisca S. Henkemans, et al. *Fundamentals of Argumentation Theory: A Handbook of Historical Backgrounds and Contemporary Developments* (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1996), 288. The method used in this study of Matthew as a rhetorical argument was inspired in part by the contributions made by these authors to argumentation theory.

[89] Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation*, 33.

[90] In his *Exploring the Texture of Texts*, Robbins identifies five textures of texts. They are: (1) *inner texture*—that is, the "features in the language of the text itself" (7); (2) *intertexture*—that is, the relation of the text to other texts, oral, written, cultural, social, and historical, (3) *social and cultural texture*—that is, the ways texts encourage readers "to adopt certain social and cultural locations and orientations rather than others" (72); (4) *ideological texture*—that is, "the biases, opinions, preferences, and stereotypes of a particular writer and a particular reader" (95): and (5) *sacred texture*—that is, "the way in which readers use texts to relate human life to the divine" (20). Robbins uses the metaphor of textures in a tapestry to make the point that a text is best understood when viewed from multiple angles. In his words, "meanings themselves have their meanings by their relation to other meanings" (132). Socio-rhetorical criticism is currently used for New Testament studies most extensively by Philip F. Esler (See "The Social World: Context, Institutions, Movements and Identities," in *Early Judaism and Its Modern Interpreters*, 2nd ed., ed. Matthias Henze and Rodney A. Werline [Atlanta: SBL Press, 2020], 45–68; "Paul's Explanation of Christ-movement Identity in 2 Corinthians 6:14–7:1: A Social Identity Approach," *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 51, no. 22 [2021]: 101–18; *2 Corinthians: A Social Identity Commentary* [London: T&T Clark, 2021]; "The Adoption and Use of the Word ΕΚΚΛΗΣΙΑ in the Early Christ-movement," *Ecclesiology* 17, no. 1 [2021]: 109–30).

Testament studies in 1984.[91] He explains that the socio-rhetorical approach utilizes "rhetorical analysis and interpretation that is based on both oral and literary dynamics within social, cultural, ideological, and religious contexts of interaction during the first century CE to interpret New Testament literature."[92]

Building on social-scientific methodology, socio-rhetorical criticism sees all forms of speech and writing "as social discourse, a means of societal formation"[93] Speech or writing never occurs in a vacuum, but in some temporal, cultural, social setting that is directly related to *why* and *how* one communicates. Hence, any piece of literature or speech act which can properly be labelled "rhetorical" comes into existence in response to some *exigence*—"an imperfection marked by urgency; … a defect, an obstacle, something waiting to be done, a thing which is other than it should be."[94] Exigence is seen not so much as objective social reality as the rhetor's perception of his or her situation. This perception, as it determines the rhetoric itself, can be described as the "rhetorical situation."[95]

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[91] Vernon K. Robbins, *Jesus the Teacher: A Socio-Rhetorical Interpretation of Mark* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984). Robbins provides a basic introduction to socio-rhetorical criticism in *Exploring the Texture of Texts: A Guide to Socio-Rhetorical Interpretations* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1996.). See also his more recent works, "Rhetography: A New Way of Seeing the Familiar Text," in *Words Well Spoken: George Kennedy's Rhetoric of the New Testament*, ed. C. Clifton Black and Duane F. Watson (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2008), 81–105; "Conceptual Blending and Early Christian Imagination," in *Explaining Christian Origins and Early Judaism: Contributions from Cognitive and Social Science*, ed. Petri Luomanen, Ilkka Pyysiäinen, and Risto Uro (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 161–95; *The Invention of Christian Discourse: From Wisdom to Apocalyptic.* Rhetoric of Religious Antiquity Series. vol. 1. (Blandford: Deo Press, 2009); *The Art of Visual Exegesis: Rhetoric, Texts, Images.* Emory Studies in Early Christianity 19 (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2017).

[92] Robbins, *Exploring the Texture of Texts*, 9.

[93] Ernest van Eck, "Socio-rhetorical Interpretation: Theoretical Points of Departure," *HTS* 57 no. 1/2 (2001): 594. This method differs from the historical-critical method in that it focuses on interpreting the social dynamics reflected *in the text*, rather than the historical background in which the text was written.

[94] Lloyd F. Bitzer, "The Rhetorical Situation," *PR* 1 (1968): 6.

[95] "Rhetorical situation" is a term that refers to a rhetor's perception and construction of reality within a given text as he or she attempts to formulate a convincing argument. Literary critics normally distinguish between "rhetorical situation" and *Sitz im Leben* in that the latter generally implies a sense of

In his article "Argumentative Textures in Socio-Rhetorical Interpretation," Robbins draws attention to the fact that "NT literature exhibits a highly creative rhetorical process at work during the first century, which creates multiple modes of argumentation."[96] New Testament authors frequently combine a variety of forms of rhetoric and different literary genres to produce more convincing arguments.

Socio-rhetorical criticism presupposes that texts were written in ancient times as "scripts" to be read aloud or "performed" in front of an audience.[97] It views text and speech as a product of the social dynamics of the author and intended audience and seeks to interpret speech acts and texts accordingly. In Matthew's case, his Gospel would have been *performed* in a public setting as the telling and retelling of the Jesus-story (i.e., read aloud at ἐκκλησία gatherings). It would have served not only as a "manual" for teaching disciples everything Jesus commanded them (28:20), but also as a formal defense and justification for their decision to follow Jesus. Of course, it could serve as well to persuade those who are yet undecided.

For the purpose of this study, socio-rhetorical criticism is used to examine features in Matthew's text that reflect the shared values, convictions, social norms, and

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"objective historical reality." This distinction is made in order to study the text as a self-contained literary work, without having to concern oneself with aligning the argument with the author's *Sitz im Leben*. However, this method does not *require* a disconnect between "the world of the text" (the narrative world) and "the world behind the text" (objective reality). This study presupposes that by analyzing and understanding an author's rhetorical activity, one can discern the (most probable) rhetorical situation—which can in turn help determine the author's real historical situation.

[96] Vernon K. Robbins, "Argumentative Textures in Socio-Rhetorical Interpretation," in *Rhetorical Argumentation in Biblical Texts: Essays from the Lund 2000 Conference*, ed. Anders Eriksson, Thomas H. Olbricht and Walter Übelacker, 27–65. Emory Studies in Early Christianity 8 (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2002). Frans H. van Eemeren and Rob Grootendorst define *argumentation* as "a verbal, social, and rational activity aimed at convincing a reasonable critic of the acceptability of a standpoint by putting forward a constellation of propositions justifying or refuting the proposition expressed in the standpoint" (Van Eemeren and Grootendorst, *A Systematic Theory of Argumentation* [Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 2004], 1).

[97] Ben Witherington III, *What's in the Word: Rethinking the Socio-Rhetorical Character of the New Testament* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2009), 8.

beliefs of the implied author and the implied reader. The aim here is not to recreate a historical community nor to describe how this community was seen by others, but rather to understand how Matthew's rhetorical argument may have been interpreted by his first readers in light of what may be deduced *from the text* about their social setting. When viewed from a socio-rhetorical perspective, does the heated rhetoric in Matthew suggest an anti-Jewish or anti-Semitic slant? Or is there a more plausible explanation?

CHAPTER 3

IMPLIED AUTHOR, IMPLIED READER, AND THE NORMATIVE PROCESS OF READING

The purpose of this chapter is to reconstruct Matthew's "*implied* author" and "*implied* reader" in order to determine the perspective from which Matthew's story appears to have been written, as well as the intended rhetorical effect of the narrative.

Narrative critics regard storytelling as an act of communication involving an author, a text, and a reader. In the case of a historical narrative such as the Gospel of Matthew, one can imagine a real flesh and blood person writing in a particular socio-religious historical setting with the intention of conveying a certain meaning to his target audience. But when narrative critics refer to "author" they distinguish between the "real" (or "empirical") author who once lived in the world behind the text and the "*implied* author" (the author's "second-self"[1]) created in the narrative. The term "implied author" was coined by Wayne C. Booth in 1961[2] to address what he saw as a fallacy in what was then the most popular form of literary criticism, known as *New Criticism*.[3] This approach

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[1] Mieke Bal, *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative*, 4th ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto, 2017), 139.

[2] Wayne C. Booth, *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (Chicago: University Press, 1961), 6, 386. In 1998, Booth explained that while he is credited with coining the term "implied author," he did not actually come up with the idea himself (See Booth, "Why Banning Ethical Criticism Is a Serious Mistake," *Philosophy and Literature* 22 [1998], 366–93). The concept was first proposed by Edward Dowden in 1872 in "George Eliot," *The Contemporary Review* 20 (1872): 403–22. Kathleen Tillotson makes a reference to Dowden's idea, which he called the "second-self," in her 1959 inaugural lecture at Bedford College, London. Tillotson later published her lecture as "The Tale and the Teller," in Geoffrey Tillotson and Kathleen Tillotson, *Mid-Victorian Studies* (London: Athlone Press 1965), 1–23. (Note: Tillotson dates the article to 1877, but it was published in 1872.)

[3] Between the 1950s and 1970s New Criticism was a well-established academic practice in literary departments at American colleges and universities. For more on "New Criticism," see Charles I. Glicksberg, ed., *American Literary Criticism: 1900–1950* (New York: Hendricks House, 1951); Meyer H. Abrams, "The Transformation of English Studies," in *American Academic Culture in Transformation: Fifty*

is similar to biblical narrative criticism in that it focuses on the text itself rather than on matters extrinsic to the text, but differs significantly in the way it views the role of the author and the reader. One of the key interpretative principles of New Criticism is that a literary work must be treated as completely autonomous, to the extent that any concern for authorial intent or possible effect on the reader is excluded entirely.[4] But as Booth rightly concludes, one can hardly claim to understand the meaning and significance of a text when it is so utterly detached from its author and reader(s).[5] He described the state of literary criticism when he wrote *The Rhetoric of Fiction* in 1961 as follows,

> With the author ruled out under the "intentional fallacy" and the audience ruled out under the "affective fallacy," with the world of ideas and beliefs ruled out under the "didactic heresy" and with narrative interest ruled out under the "heresy of plot," some doctrines of autonomy had become so desiccated that only verbal and symbolic interrelationships remained.[6]

Booth was committed to a text-centered approach, but also recognized that narrative texts are essentially rhetorical in nature. In his words, "The author cannot choose to avoid rhetoric; he can choose only the kind of rhetoric he will employ. He cannot choose whether or not to affect his reader's evaluations by his choice of narrative

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Years, Four Disciplines, ed. Thomas Bender and Carl E. Schorske (Princeton: University Press, 1998), 123–49; Tom Kindt and Hans-Harald Müller, *The Implied Author: Concept and Controversy*, trans. Alastair Matthews (Berlin/New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2006), 17–61; Leroy F. Searle, "New criticism," in *The John Hopkins Guide to Literary Theory & Criticism*, 2nd ed. ed. Michael Groden, Martin Kreiswirth, and Imre Szeman (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 2005), 691–98.

[4] For an overview of the debate regarding the role of the author among literary critics during the latter part of the twentieth century, see William Irwin, *The Death and Resurrection of the Author?* (Westport CT: Greenwood Press, 2002). For a more recent discussion on the topic, see Eefje Classen, *Author Representations in Literary Reading* (Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing, 2012), 1–59.

[5] Booth maintained that despite efforts to discard such matters, there is no escaping the author's presence in the narrative. The idea that "the author's voice is never really silenced" (*Rhetoric of Fiction*, 60) is a common theme in all of Booth's writings.

[6] Wayne C. Booth, "'The Rhetoric of Fiction' and the Poetics of Fictions," in *Now Don't Try to Reason with Me: Essays and Ironies for a Credulous Age* (Chicago: University Press, 1970), 162. This chapter is a reprint of a journal article published in 1968 in *NOVEL: A Forum on Fiction* 1, no. 2 (1968): 105–17.

manner; he can only choose whether to do it well or poorly."[7] Accordingly, narratives are to be interpreted from a rhetorical perspective. But how, if storytelling is an act of communication involving an author, a text, and a reader, does one do a text-centered narrative-rhetorical analysis and at the same time take into account such matters as authorial intent and anticipated rhetorical effect?

The challenge facing the interpreter of Matthew is in some ways similar to what all modern literary critics face when interpreting any other work by a historical (i.e., deceased) author who does not state explicitly what he or she intended. One must determine "the possible (*inferred*) intentions" of the "real" author by examining "the actual intentions as *revealed* in the totality of his or her choices" when creating the narrative.[8] In Christopher Skinner's words, "it is preferable to start with what we have rather than what we do not have."[9] Booth illustrates this point using Voltaire's 1759 satirical work *Candide*,

> We cannot finally settle our critical problems by calling Voltaire on the telephone and asking him what he intended with his sentence about rival kings. Our best evidence of the intentions behind any sentence in *Candide* will be the whole of *Candide*, and for some critical purposes it thus makes sense to talk only of the *work's* intentions, not the author's.[10]

The "real" author of Matthew does not identify himself or his "real" readers explicitly, nor does he explain clearly the circumstances in which he wrote. He did, however, leave literary versions of himself and his reader(s) embedded in the text—what narrative critics call the "*implied* author" and "*implied* reader"—from which authorial intent and anticipated rhetorical effect on the reader(s) may be deduced.

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[7] Booth, *The Rhetoric of Fiction*, 149.

[8] Booth, Letter to Tom Kindt and Hans-Harald Müller, 25th of October 2001. As quoted in Tom Kindt and Hans-Harald Müller, *The Implied Author*, 61.

[9] Christopher W. Skinner, *Mark as Story: Retrospect and Prospect*, ed. Kelly R. Iverson and Christopher W. Skinner. Resources for Biblical Study 65 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2011), 3.

[10] Wayne C. Booth, *A Rhetoric of Irony* (Chicago: University Press, 1974), 11 (emphasis his).

Booth defines the "*implied* author" as the one who "chooses, consciously or unconsciously, what we read; we infer him as an ideal, literary, created version of the real man; he is the sum of his own choices."[11] It is the authorial presence the reader experiences in the narrative.[12] "Such authors are "implied" in the sense that they must be recognized or inferred from the text by the reader through the intricate network of literary devices and strategies in the narrative text."[13]

The *implied* author's counterpart in the narrative critic's communication model is the "*implied* reader"—which may also be recognized or inferred from the text. This is "the audience that the composer creates (has in mind to shape) in the course of telling the story—an imaginary audience with all the ideal responses *implied by* the narrative itself."[14] The "*implied* reader" is the "imaginary person who is to be envisaged, in perusing Matthew's story, as responding to the text at every point with whatever emotion, understanding, or knowledge the text ideally calls for, . . . in whom the intention of the text is to be brought out of as always reaching its fulfillment."[15] Bernard C. Lategan explains well the relationship between the "*implied* author" and "*implied* reader" when he writes, "[They] stand in a chiastic relationship with one another: the implied reader is a construct of the real author, and the implied author is a construct of the real reader. The

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[11] Booth, *Rhetoric of Fiction*, 74–75.

[12] Janice C. Anderson, *Matthew's Narrative Web: Over, and Over, and Over Again*, JSNTSup 91 (Sheffield: Academic Press, 1994), 27; David B. Howell, *Matthew's Inclusive Story: A Study in the Narrative Rhetoric of the First Gospel* (1990, repr., Bloomsbury, 2014), 40; D. Francois Tolmie, *Narratology and Biblical Narratives: A Practical Guide* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1999), 13.

[13] Howell, *Matthew's Inclusive Story*, 163. This is what Booth calls "the picture the reader gets" of the "implied version" of the author in his works (*Rhetoric of Fiction*, 73–74).

[14] David Rhoads, Joanna Dewey, and Donald Michie, *Mark as Story: An Introduction to the Narrative of a Gospel*, 3rd ed. (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Press, 2012), 138 (emphasis theirs).

[15] Jack Dean Kingsbury, *Matthew As Story* (1986; repr., Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988), 36.

first is necessary to prepare the expected response to the text, the latter is a text-guided image in order to get a grip on this intended response."[16] From this perspective, authorial intent and anticipated rhetorical effect is to be understood as that which is *reflected in the narrative itself*.

Most secular (i.e., non-biblical) literary critics—especially those studying works of fiction—distinguish between the "implied author" and the "narrator," as well as the "implied reader" and "narratee."[17] The *narrator* "is the voice, or invisible speaker, the reader hears as he or she moves through the story, the one who tells the reader the story."[18] The *narratee* is the one being addressed by the *narrator* as he or she tells the story. "The distinctions between the implied author and the narrator and between the implied reader and narratee were developed in literary criticism for the close analysis of nineteenth- and twentieth-century novels."[19] One of the reasons such distinctions were deemed necessary is that a narrator in a work of fiction may prove to be "unreliable."

A narrator is judged unreliable when he "does not espouse the same system of ideas, values, or beliefs which sustains and informs the story,"[20] but considered reliable

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[16] Bernard C. Lategan, "Reception, Rediscription, Reality," in *Text and Reality: Aspects of Reference in Biblical Texts*, ed Bernard C. Lategan and Willem S. Vorster (1985; repr., Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990), 73. For more on the relationship between real authors and the literary versions of themselves they create in their writings, see Patrick Cruttwell, "Makers and Persons," *The Hudson Review* 12, no. 4 (1959): 487–507.

[17] Kingsbury, *Matthew as Story*, 36; cf. Booth, *Rhetoric of Fiction*, 70–76; Seymour Chatman, *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film* (Ithaca, NY: Cornel University Press, 1978), 147–51; David Rhoads, "Narrative Criticism in the Gospel of Mark," *JAAR* 50 (1982): 420–22.

[18] Kingsbury, *Matthew as Story*, 30.

[19] Elizabeth Struthers Malbon, "Narrative Criticism: How Does the Story Mean?" in *Mark and Method: New Approaches in Biblical Studies*, ed. Janice C. Anderson and Stephen D. Moore. 2nd ed. (1992; repr., Minneapolis: Fortress, 2008), 28.

[20] Kingsbury, *Matthew as Story*, 30.

when he "speaks for or acts in accordance with the norms of the work."[21] Chatman explains,

> What makes a narrator unreliable is that his values diverge strikingly from that of the implied author's; that is, the rest of the narrative—"the norm of the work"—conflicts with the narrator's presentation, and we become suspicious of his sincerity or competence to tell the "true version." The unreliable narrator is at virtual odds with the implied author; otherwise his unreliability could not emerge.[22]

Narrative critics generally agree that in the case of biblical narratives the distinctions between *narrator* and implied author and *narratee* and implied reader are unnecessary, since the *narrator* serves as a reliable voice of the implied author, and the *narratee* is "but a stand-in for the implied reader."[23] This study follows scholarly consensus on this matter. "The Matthean implied author is reliable since not only does he promote the normative viewpoint of Jesus, the protagonist of the narrative, but his point of view of telling the story is consistent with Jesus' teachings and corresponding actions."[24]

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[21] Booth, *Rhetoric of Fiction*, 158–59.

[22] Chatman, *Story and Discourse*, 149.

[23] Kingsbury, *Matthew as Story*, 36. See also Richard A. Edwards, *Matthew's Story of Jesus* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), 10; Anderson, *Matthew's Narrative Web*, 37–38; R. Alan Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel: A Study in Literary Design* (1983; repr., Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987), 205–27; Timothy B. Cargal, "'His Blood Be upon Us and upon Our Children': A Matthean Double Entendre?" *NTS* 37 (1991): 103; Jean Louis Ska, *"Our Fathers Have Told Us": Introduction to the Analysis of Biblical Narratives. SubBi* 13 (1990; repr., Roma: Editrice Pontifico Istituto Biblico, 2000), 39–43; David D. Kupp, *Matthew's Emmanuel: Divine Presence and God's People in the First Gospel*, SNTSMS 90 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 28–33; Robert C. Tannehill, *The Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts: A Literary Interpretation*, vols. 1 & 2 (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Press, 1990), 1:7, 2:9–25; David Rhoads, "Narrative Criticism of the New Testament," in *Method and Meaning: Essays on New Testament Interpretation in Honor of Harold W. Attridge*, ed. Andrew B. McGowan and Kent Harold Richards (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2011), 109–10.

[24] Inhee C. Berg, *Irony and the Matthean Passion Narrative* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Press, 2014), 11–12.

Matthew's Implied Author

Though not a character in the story, Matthew's implied author exhibits features and characteristics that create the impression of the "person" telling the story. The "implied author" represents "the set of attitudes and beliefs implied by the *totality* of a text."[25] "Since the narrator is, in effect, the voice of the implied author, any characteristics attributed to the voice help to create, along with the other narrative elements and their arrangement, the persona of the implied author."[26]

Matthew's implied author speaks in the third person, usually as one standing above and beyond the narrative guiding the implied reader through the sequence of events that make up the plot.[27] The implied author's standard storytelling technique is to have characters appear on stage to provide through their actions and speeches whatever information the implied reader needs to know. There are times, however, when he interrupts the narrative flow to speak directly, either to underscore an important point (e.g., "let the reader understand," 24:15) or provide some additional information (1:23; 27:8, 33, 46).[28] Two such narrative intrusions (asides) offer clues regarding the implied author's temporal perspective; that is, the timespan of the narrative in relation to his own time period. The references "to this day" in 27:8 (ἕως τῆς σήμερον) and 28:15 (μέχρι τῆς σήμερον) indicate he is telling the story retrospectively, and from some distance

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[25] Marion Wynne-Davies, ed. *The Bloomsbury Dictionary of English Literature* (London: Bloomsbury, 1997), 337 (emphasis mine).

[26] Anderson, *Matthew's Narrative Web*, 47.

[27] According to Robert Scholes, James Phelan and Robert Kellogg, "the reason for [the] employment of third-person narrative in historical works may be that the reliability of the *histor* seemed to the ancients clearly greater than that of the eye-witness. A document aspiring to achieve truth of fact had a better chance of being appreciated as factual if it did not seem too personal" (Scholes, Phelan and Kellogg, *The Nature of Narrative*, rev. and exp. ed. [1966; repr., New York: Oxford University Press, 2006], 243 [emphasis theirs]).

[28] "The technical term for this is 'breaking frame,' and it changes the narrator's voice from that of a storyteller to that of a commentator on the story" (Jerome T. Walsh, *Style and Structure in Biblical Hebrew Narrative* [Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2001], 125).

chronologically. The narrative itself extends from the time of the discovery of Mary's pregnancy (1:18) to the closing scene where Jesus meets with his disciples just after the resurrection (28:16–20),[29] but the author himself is located temporally sometime between the resurrection and the Parousia (24:14; 28:20).

The dominant evaluative point of view presented in the narrative from which value judgments are to be made was discussed previously in chapter 2. The implied author tells the story from the perspective of one who has already taken sides in the conflict in which the characters are involved, thereby showing he is not a neutral observer. He is *well-disposed* toward the one he identifies as the "Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham" (1:1). In his view, to follow Jesus is to align oneself with what God is doing and to reject Jesus is to stand in opposition to God. The implied author shows he is a *reliable* narrator as he advocates this dominant evaluative point of view consistently throughout the narrative—often by citing what he sees as empirical evidence to back up his claims (i.e., the fulfillment of what was promised in the Jewish scriptures).[30] On two occasions, he quotes God himself speaking directly from heaven confirming the evaluative point of view (3:17; 17:5).

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[29] Regarding "Narrative time" (or "discourse time"), this is the period covered by Matthew's narrative which extends from the first narrated event in 1:18 to the last in 28:16–20. For Matthew, however, there seems to be a larger period in view. The genealogy in 1:1-17 extends the period back to Abraham and the final scene anticipates a future that will last until the end of the age. For more on narrative time, see Paul Ricoeur, "Narrative Time," *Critical Inquiry* 7, no. 1 (1980): 169-90.

[30] Lars Hartman argues that Matthew quotes the Hebrew Bible because he "wants to reinforce his opinion with the authority of somebody else" (Hartman, "Scriptural Exegesis in the Gospel of St Matthew and the Problem of Communication," in *Évangile selon Matthieu: rédaction et théologie*, ed. M. Didier, BETL 29 [Leuven: Peeters Publishers, 1972], 134). Howell suggests "This effect would be intensified if the authority is considered to be none other than the Word of God itself" (Howell, *Matthew's Inclusive Story*, 168n4). For more on the use of OT scripture in the Passion narrative, see William F. Cook, *Jesus's Final Week: From Triumphal Entry to Empty Tomb* (Nashville: B & H Academic, 2022).

Matthew's implied author shows a distinctly "Jewish" orientation.[31] All the major characters in the story are Jewish. The implied author's theology and worldview are grounded in the Jewish scriptures. He knows the Hebrew Bible and/or the Greek translation of it (LXX). He presents the story of Jesus in terms of promise and fulfillment, thus drawing attention to God's continued faithfulness to Israel. The implied author is concerned with the proper interpretation of the Torah, particularly regarding *halakhic* issues, such as purity and dietary laws (15:1–20) and Sabbath observance (12:1–13). The Torah—properly interpreted—is the standard by which all human motives and actions are to be judged. The commandments of men (ἐντάλματα ἀνθρώπων) are inconsequential (μάτην, "in vain," 15:9; cf. Isa 29:13). "Righteousness" is expressed in actions that come from a pure heart (e.g., 3:10; 5:17–20; 7:17–19, 22–27; 15:1–14; 25:31–46). One must follow what the religious leaders who "sit in Moses' seat" say (23:2), but the actions of those who practice hypocrisy must not be imitated. One does not enter the kingdom of God on account of his or her position or ethnicity; one must have faith and repentance that results in "right" action (3:7–10; 4:17; 11:20–24; 12:34; 21:31b–32, 43–45; 23:33).[32]

Matthew's implied author is competent in *koine* Greek and familiar with Hebrew and/or Aramaic terms.[33] He translates several expressions for the implied reader

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[31] In the context of this study, "Jewish," and "Judaism" is understood to mean the monotheistic and ethnic religion of the people of Israel comprising the collective religious, cultural, and legal traditions in all its diverse forms during the first century CE, which is not to be confused with rabbinic or other forms of Judaism that developed in later centuries. See Lawrence H. Schiffman, Jon Bloomberg and Samuel Kapustin, eds., *Understanding Second Temple and Rabbinic Judaism* [Jersey, NJ: KTAV, 2003], 3–14.

[32] The implied author recounts John the Baptist's explicit statement about how lineage alone will not save one from "the coming wrath" (3:7–10). Conversely, "God can raise up children for Abraham" from stones (and perhaps even Gentiles?) if he so chooses. The issue of ethnicity in Matthew's Gospel will be discussed in more detail in chapter 6. For a discussion on the concept of righteousness in the Jewish Scriptures and how that relates to the concept of discipleship in Matthew, see Paul R. McCuistion, "Covenant, Christology, and Kingdom as Context in Matthew's Use of *Plēró*," (PhD Diss., North-West University, Potchefstroom, 2013): 153–76.

[33] For more on the relationship between Matthew's citations of the Jewish Scriptures and his knowledge of the Hebrew Bible and LXX, see Davies and Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint Matthew*. ICC (1988; repr., Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2004), 32–57.

(1:23; 27:33; 27:46), but leaves others untranslated (e.g., ῥακά [5:22]; Καναναῖος [10:4 cf. ζηλωτής, Luke 6:15]; ὡσαννά [21:9]; μαμωνᾶς [6:24]). Though not conclusive evidence, this does suggest the implied author envisions writing to a mixed audience, or at the very least an audience who is also familiar with certain Hebrew and/or Aramaic terms.

Matthew's implied author is both *omniscient* and *omnipresent*—there is nothing he does not know, and he is able to be anywhere at any time in relation the story world he has created. He "is free to move at will in time and place, to shift from character to character, and to report (or conceal) their speech, doings, and states of consciousness"[34] Sometimes he discloses privileged information not available to the characters in the story, such as inward thoughts, feelings, and motives (21:15, 25–27, 45–46; 22:18; 26:8), or information that is kept secret from most characters until after the resurrection (17:9). Even when the characters are alone, the implied author is there to report on their words and actions. For example, he is there when Jesus is alone being tempted by Satan (4:1–11), when Jesus is praying alone at Gethsemane (26: 39, 42, 44), he is on the mount of transfiguration when Peter, James and John "privately" (κατ' ἰδίαν) observe Jesus's meeting with Moses and Elijah (17:1–8), and there when Peter is alone weeping bitterly after his denial (26:75).

Matthew's Implied Reader

Matthew's "implied reader"—like the "implied author"—is not a character in the story, but a "textually constructed reader presupposed by the narrative" who "reflects the intended response the author envisions for the text."[35] Wolfgang Iser, who coined the

[34] Meyer H. Abrams, *Glossary of Literary Terms*, 11th ed. (Boston: Wadsworth Cengage Learning, 2015), 302.

[35] Jeannine K. Brown, *Scripture as Communication: Introducing Biblical Hermeneutics* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 40. In 2012, Eefje Classen published the results of a series of studies she conducted that illustrate well how readers intuitively construct a mental representation of the author when reading a text. See Classen, *Representations in Literary Reading*, 211–39.

term in the early-1970s in his discussion on reader-response theory,[36] defines "implied reader" as "both the prestructuring of the potential meaning by the text" and "the reader's actualization of this potential through the reading process."[37] That is, the concept is to be understood equally as the narrative composition which guides the reader's response (i.e., the ideal response proposed by the text), and the construct of the real reader as he or she responds to the text (i.e., an imaginary ideal reader reconstructed from the text who responds in ways consistent with the author's expectations). "While actual readers may respond in all sorts of ways to a text, the implied reader responds only as the author intends."[38] In this communication model, the most successful reading is the one in which the implied author and implied reader "can find complete agreement."[39]

As Burton L. Mack points out, "from the beginning it was taken for granted that the writings produced by early Christians were to be read as rhetorical compositions."[40] The rhetorical nature of Matthew's narrative claiming that Jesus is

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[36] Wolfgang Iser coined the German term "*der implizite Leser"* in 1972 in his *Der implizite Leser: Kommunikationsformen des Romans von Bunyan bis Beckett* (München: Erscheinungsjahr: 1972). It was translated as "the implied reader" in his 1974 English edition, *The Implied Reader: Patterns of Communication in Prose Fiction from Bunyan to Beckett* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press 1974). Iser provides a theoretical framework for the idea of "implied reader" in *The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980). For a critical review and response to Isler, see Zoltán Schwáb, "Mind the Gap: The Impact of Wolfgang Iser's Reader-Response Criticism on Biblical Studies—A Critical Assessment," *Literature and Theology* 17, no. 2 (2003): 170–81. While Iser is credited with coining the term "implied reader," the concept first appears in Rebecca Price Parkin's article "Alexander Pope's Use of Implied Dramatic Speaker," *College English* 11, no. 3 (1949): 137. Parkin prefers the term "implied audience." Mikko Pisilä suggest that "Since books, not to mention literacy, were rare in antiquity, copies of the Gospel of Matthew were usually communally owned and read aloud. Thus, the term *authorial audience* would be a more appropriate term than *implied reader*" ("Vicarious Dissonance and the Narrative of the Gospel of Matthew," *Approaching Religion* 8, No. 2 (2018): 7, emphasis his).

[37] Iser, *The Implied Reader*, xii.

[38] Brown, *Scripture as Communication*, 40.

[39] Booth, *The Rhetoric of Fiction*, 138; cf. Powell, "Narrative Criticism," in *Hearing the New Testament*, 241.

[40] Burton L. Mack, *Rhetoric and the New Testament.* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1990), 10.

Israel's Messiah is evident in the way the implied author projects what he expects of his target audience. There are certain features in the text which create the impression of the type of "person" the author envisions reading (or hearing) and responding appropriately. Not surprisingly, many of these features correspond to those of the implied author. For example, both share the same temporal perspective. That is, the implied reader is also located temporally sometime between the resurrection and the Parousia (24:14; 28:20; cf. 27:8; 28:15). From this post-resurrection vantage point, the implied reader reads (or hears) the story of the earthly life and ministry of Jesus and his disciples retrospectively, knowing from the beginning what the outcome will be.

The implied reader accompanies the reliable, omniscient and omnipresent implied author as he leads the way through the sequence of events that make up the plot. This vantage point affords the implied reader access to privileged information not available to the characters in the story. Such information serves to underpin the dominant evaluative point of view. For example, the implied reader is informed about divine direction people receive through dreams (Joseph, 1:20–21; 2:13; 2:19–20, 22; the magi, 2:12; Pilate's wife, 27:19), "the voice from heaven" declaring Jesus as his Son, in whom he is "well pleased" (3:17), and "the voice from the cloud" directing Peter, James and John (and by implication, the implied reader) to "listen to him" (17:5). He or she is made aware of some characters' inward thoughts, feelings, and motives (21:15, 25–27, 45–46; 22:18; 26:8), and thereby is able to make an informed decision about which response to Jesus aligns best with the dominant evaluative point of view. "Although the implied reader has the freedom and ability to 'draw near' or 'distance' himself from any given character(s), he is best described as one privileged and guided by the text for a specific achievement: understanding of the story."[41]

[41] Berg, *Irony and the Matthean Passion Narrative*, 14.

The implied reader shares the implied author's "Jewish" orientation, including his view of the Jewish scriptures as authoritative for faith and practice. Accordingly, the implied reader is expected to accept as proof the frequent quotations cited in support of Matthew's promise and fulfillment motif.[42] The implied author makes explicit reference to OT prophecies 11 times using the term πληρόω ("fulfill") —"so that it would be fulfilled" (ἵνα πληρωθῇ, 1:22; 2:15; 4:14; 12:17; 21:4;); "is fulfilled" (ἀναπληροῦται, 13:14); "so was fulfilled" (ὅπως πληρωθῇ, 2:23; 8:17; 13:35); "then was fulfilled" (τότε ἐπληρώθη, 2:17; 27:9). These references highlight the importance of understanding what happens to the Messiah in terms of the Jewish scriptures being "fulfilled," which is underscored by Jesus himself in 26:54–56 with the statement "that the writings of the prophets might be fulfilled" (ἵνα πληρωθῶσιν αἱ γραφαὶ τῶν προφητῶν). The story is to be understood as God's continued faithfulness to Israel.[43] The implied author's concern for

[42] R. T. France rightly points out that Matthew's promise and fulfillment motif is grounded in the Jewish Scriptures, not in popular messianic expectations. Regarding first-century Jewish messianic expectations, the concept of salvation *from sins* (1:21) "is a clear break from" what most Jews expected at the time (France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, NICCNT [Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2007], 53). The popular Jewish expectation was that the Messiah would throw off foreign oppression and bring about the restoration of the Davidic kingdom—understood in terms of a military and political victory. Even Messianic expectations that included concern for the spiritual condition of God's people were "intertwined with political restoration" (e.g., Pss Sol 17:21–46; cf. Isa 53:4–12; Jer 31:31–34; Eze 36:25–31). Matthew shows from the Jewish Scriptures that the Messiah's mission is first and foremost to "save his people from their sins" (1:21). Jesus the Messiah begins his ministry with a call to repentance (3:2, 6; 4:17), and has "authority on earth to forgive sins" (9:6). He came "not to call the righteous, but sinners" (9:13). His death is a "ransom for many (20:28). His blood is "poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins" (26:28). The implied author expects the implied reader to share his perspective on this matter. "Although a first-century would-be messiah [*sic*] could be expected to gather support and head to Jerusalem to claim his throne in the face of Roman occupation, for Jesus to announce his death as 'a ransom for many' (20:28) would have confounded royal messianic expectations" (Jeannine K. Brown, *Matthew.* Teach the Text Commentary Series, ed. Mark L. Strauss and John H. Walton [Grand Rapids: Baker Publishing, 2015], 9).

[43] Scholars who interpret the First Gospel from an *intra muros* perspective argue that Matthew's ἐκκλησία of Jesus-followers consists of a mixed group of Jews and Gentiles (e.g., Anthony J. Saldarini, *Matthew's Jewish-Christian Community* [Chicago: University Press, 1994]; J. Andrew Overman, *Matthew's Gospel and Formative Judaism: The Social World of the Matthean Community* [Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Press, 1990]). While this scenario seems to be *the most plausible* explanation once the historical socio-religious context is taken into account, the text itself does not actually state this. One may infer from the text that Matthew's ἐκκλησία is a mixed group—assuming the disciples were successful in winning Gentile converts, but this is not part of the story. The story ends with Jesus's command to "make disciples of all nations/people" (28:19–20), but at this point in the story the disciples—who are all Jewish—

the proper interpretation of the Torah (e.g., 12:1–13; 15:1–20) would make little sense if the implied reader did not also share such concerns.[44] He or she needs no explanation regarding the Jewish feasts/festivals mentioned in 26:5 (cf. Luk 22:1), 26:17 (cf. Luk 14:12) and 27:15, or what is meant by the "double-drachma tax" (τελεῖ τὰ δίδραχμα, 17:24; cf. Exo 30:13–16), nor does he or she require definitions/translations of some Hebrew or Aramaic terms such as ῥακά (5:22), Κανανᾶιος (10:4), ὡσαννά (21:9), and μαμωνᾶς (6:24). The type of "person" the author envisions reading (or hearing) his story is one who also accepts his account of supernatural events and miracles as proof of the dominant evaluative point of view.

The implied reader is not a neutral observer or at least would not remain neutral after reading (or hearing) the story. If Matthew's rhetorical argument is received as intended, the implied reader aligns himself or herself with the dominant evaluative point of view. "In narrative-critical terms, the text calls for any real human of any era to become its implied reader, to be formed and guided by the text through the

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had not yet begun to carry out the Great Commission. If Matthew's historical narrative is accepted and believed as a reliable account of what happened, then the conflict between Jesus and the Jewish leaders is to be understood from a Jewish worldview perspective. For a discussion and critique of the various proposals put forward regarding the Matthean community's self-definition, see Douglas R. A. Hare, "How Jewish is the Gospel of Matthew?" *CBQ* 62 (2000): 267–70. The role of Gentiles in Matthew's story will be discussed in more detail in chapter 6. As William F. Cook points out, however, there are "many implicit references [in Matthew's Gospel] to a *future* Gentile mission (Matthew 4:12-17; 12:18, 21; 21:43; 24:14; 25:32; 26:13)" (Cook, *Journey through the New Testament: Understanding the Purpose, Themes, and Practical Implications of Each New Testament Book of the Bible*, Church Answers Resources [Carol Stream, Ill: Tyndale House Publishers, 2022], 8 (emphasis mine).

[44] For more on the much-debated topic of Torah observance as it relates to the Matthean community, see Francois P. Viljoen, "Matthew and the Torah in Jewish Society," *In die Skriflig* 49, no.2 (2015): 1–6; Viljoen, "The Torah in Matthew: Still Valid, Yet to be Interpreted Alternatively," *In die Skriflig* 50, no.3 (2016): 1–10; Hare, "How Jewish is the Gospel of Matthew?", 262–73. Hare contends, "There is no basis in the relevant texts [cited by scholars] for the assumption that Matthean Christians were more assiduous or less assiduous in matters of purity, tithing, and Sabbath observance than other non-Pharisaic Jews" (273). Nevertheless, the sections of Matthew's narrative devoted to the proper interpretation of the Torah (e.g., Matt 5:17–48; 12:1014; 15:1–9; 22:34–40) demonstrate well that he and his readers were concerned about such matters. The challenge for the modern reader, however, is that the author is unclear about what that means exactly for his ἐκκλησία of Jesus-followers.

communication process, and be summoned to experience its purposes which reach fulfillment."[45]

The Normative Process of Reading

Certain assumptions can be made regarding the normative process of reading, as it relates specifically to the Gospel of Matthew.[46] First, the author expects his story to be read (or heard) sequentially from beginning to end, and that readers (or hearers) would interpret each pericope not in isolation but in light of the story as a whole. "The reader looks for connections and links between the gaps [in the narrative] to create a coherent interpretation. Gaps can be filled by the reader's memory, expectations or the building up of associations that serve as contexts in reading through the text."[47] One may assume, therefore, that "readers desire consistency and make connections necessary to resolve apparent tensions within a text in favor of the most consistent interpretation."[48] A good example of tension in Matthew's narrative is the account of Jesus's prediction of his impending suffering and death in 16:21–23. The disciples—Peter in particular—do not easily accept Jesus's words. They seem unprepared for what is about to happen. But the implied reader is privy to information not yet available to the disciples at this point in the story.[49] He or she "knows" the disciples should have responded to Jesus in accordance

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[45] Berg, *Irony in the Matthean Passion Narrative*, 13.

[46] For more on the normative process of reading in general, see Powell, "Narrative Criticism," in *Hearing the New Testament: Strategies for Interpretation*, ed. Joel B. Green, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2010), 242–44.

[47] Francois P. Viljoen, "Reading Matthew as a Historical Narrative," *In die Skriflig* 52, no. 1 (2018): 7.

[48] Powell, "Narrative Criticism," 243.

[49] Howell notes that "the implied reader has the benefit of the narrator's commentary throughout the Gospel . . . and is told Jesus' identity from the beginning. In this way the implied reader knows more than every character in the story" (*Matthew's Inclusive Story*, 250).

with the evaluative point of view. The implied reader is better prepared than the disciples to accept Jesus' statement as true because the implied author had already provided "his reader with a particular divine perspective as the norm of the story that Jesus will save his people from their sins (1:21)."[50] When the antagonists in the story take measures to bring about Jesus's death as predicted, the implied reader does not suppose they are successful in their opposition to God. The evaluative point of view allows him or her to see the irony as the antagonists bring about what God was planning all along, despite their opposition. "Anticipation or foreshadowing prepares the implied reader for events to come. Retrospection reviews what has already occurred. Both allow the implied author to guide the memory and perceptions of the implied reader."[51] Second, one may assume the implied reader expected a credible and reliable storyteller—especially since Matthew's story is in all probability told in the context of strong opposition. The implied author's presentation of external evidence, such as quotations from the Jewish scriptures, "appears to furnish reason to make what is said seem probable and to allow his audience to feel some intellectual security in his account."[52] Third, the implied reader is expected to know certain things such as Jewish customs (cf. 15:2 cf. Mark 7:3–4), what a "Canaanite woman" is (γυνὴ Χαναναία, 15:22; cf. Mark 7:26), and the meaning of terms like ῥακά (5:22) and κορβάν (27:6; Mark 7:13). James L. Resseguie suggests that such a reader is one who is "thoroughly familiar with the repertoire of literary, historical, social, linguistic, and cultural assumptions of the authorial audience—that is, the audience that the author has in mind when he or she writes the work."[53] Fourth, the narrative is

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[50] Berg, *Irony and the Matthean Passion Narrative*, 1.

[51] Anderson, *Matthew's Narrative Web*, 143.

[52] George A. Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation through Rhetorical Criticism.* Studies in Religion (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984), 102.

[53] Resseguie, *Narrative Criticism of the New Testament: An Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 32.

intended to be interpreted from the perspective of the implied reader—that is, the one for whom the text is designed.[54] As with any good story—whether fiction or historical narrative—any reader who hopes to enter the "story world" must "adopt a point of view consistent with the narrative."[55] Simply put, "Normative reading involves an implicit contract by which the reader agrees to accept the dynamics of the story world that are established by the implied author."[56] As Mika Hietanen states,

> For the analyst to achieve an interpretation that is true to the story, he or she needs to be able to relate to the characters, the settings, the conflict, etc. from a perspective close to that of Matthew's. Without a proper historical perspective, the story runs the risk of being appropriated in whatever time and culture from which it is being analysed [*sic*], which would not be reading the text on its own terms.[57]

"The actual responses of real readers are unpredictable, but there may be clues within the narrative that indicate an anticipated response from the [idealized] implied reader."[58] For those interpreting Matthew who were not part of the "original" or intended audience, "the crucial question is often whether a particular reading violates or ignores textual instructions or whether it is a legitimate actualization."[59]

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[54] Given Matthew's distinctly "Jewish" orientation, it seems unlikely that the heated rhetoric would have been interpreted by the implied reader as "anti-Jewish." The implied author is clearly opposed to those within Judaism who reject the claim about Jesus being Israel's Messiah, but this does not make him "anti-Jewish."

[55] Powell, *What is Narrative Criticism?* Guides to Biblical Scholarship, New Testament Series. (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Press, 1990), 23.

[56] Powell, "Narrative Criticism," 243.

[57] Mika Hietanen, "The Gospel of Matthew as a Literary Argument," Argumentation 25 (2011): 83.

[58] Powell, *What is Narrative Criticism?*, 19; cf. Chatman, *Story and Discourse*, 150.

[59]Janice Capel Anderson, "Matthew: Gender and Reading," in *A Feminist Companion to Matthew,* ed. Amy-Jill Levine (New York: Bloomsbury, 2001), 45.

CHAPTER 4

MATTHEW'S MAIN CHARACTERS: STANDPOINTS IN A TWO-SIDED RHETORICAL ARGUMENT

The primary means by which storytellers encourage their audiences to engage with a story is to create characters that readers or hearers can identify with or distance themselves from. Some characters can arouse an audience's empathy or sympathy, while others their antipathy and aversion. But rarely, if ever, do readers or hearers remain indifferent to the characters in a well-told story. An author may occasionally include more information about a character than what seems necessary, but at the very least the degree of complexity assigned to a character will match that character's narrative role or plot function.[1] Sometimes just one or two character traits will suffice; at other times a more complex set of traits is required to create the sort of *character-effect*[2] one can use to elicit the desired response from the implied reader. "The notion that various biblical authors use the characters in the story to communicate their point of view to the readers, and in so doing recommend some characters to be emulated and others to be avoided, is an important reason to study character."[3]

The purpose of this chapter is to examine how Matthew's implied author presents his main characters and determine what these characterizations reveal about his

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[1] In Matthew's case, it is unlikely the author included more information about a character than he deemed necessary. Given the high probability that the text was used by Matthew's ἐκκλησία of Jesus-followers for didactic purposes, the characteristics attributed to Jesus, the disciples, and others in the narrative would most likely have been regarded as traits to be imitated or avoided.

[2] For more on *character-effect*, see Mieke Bal, *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative*, 4th ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto, 2017), 112–16.

[3] Cornelis Bennema, *A Theory of Character in New Testament Narrative* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Press, 2014), 1.

special interests and perspective. By observing Matthew's use of character and characterization, one may discern the *most probable* intended effect on the implied reader.[4]

The following is not meant to be a detailed analysis of the whole of Matthew. While the overall structure of the narrative is considered,[5] the primary focus is on those passages concerning the main characters and the relationships among them; namely, the protagonist (Jesus), the antagonists (religious leaders), the disciples, and the crowds/people.[6]

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[4] "Unlike audience criticism in which specific historical groups are the object of inquiry, narrative criticism is interested in reconstructing the effect the narrative is intended to have on its [implied] readers in terms of their value judgments, beliefs, and perceptions" (Richard N. Soulen and R. Kendall Soulen, *Handbook of Biblical Criticism*, 4th ed. [Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2011], 131).

[5] Nearly all Matthean scholars share W. D. Davies' view that Matthew's Gospel "reveals not only a meticulous concern, numerically and otherwise, in the arrangement of its details, but also an architectonic grandeur in its totality" (Davies, *Setting of the Sermon on the Mount* [Cambridge: University Press, 1966], 14). R. T. France says Matthew "impresses by the care and literary artistry involved in its composition" (France, *The Gospel According to Matthew: An Introduction and Commentary.* Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, vol. 1 [1985; repr., Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1990], 21). Narrative critics agree that Matthew's narrative is so tightly interwoven that each part of the story can only be interpreted adequately in light of the whole. It would seem the literary structure of a text so carefully constructed would be easily discernable, but such is not the case. Even though most agree on the importance of understanding the structure of Matthew, there is yet no consensus regarding the nature of this structure. A survey of scholarly debates shows that several structures may be discerned from the text. Apparently, the results depend to some degree on the interpreter's presuppositions concerning the author's *Sitz im Leben*, on his or her perspective on what provides the fundamental indicators of structure, and on the level of analysis undertaken. Such debates are profitable in that they demonstrate well the complexity of Matthew's Gospel. The aim here is not to resolve this issue but to demonstrate that within Matthew's narrative—regardless of one's understanding of the overall structure—there is a discernable two-sided argument where characters in the story represent divergent standpoints and responses to the author's claim that God's plan of salvation for Israel, which now also encompasses all the nations/Gentiles, is realized in and through Jesus the Messiah. For a helpful concise overview of the main issues regarding the structure of Matthew, see Charles L. Quarles, *A Theology of Matthew: Jesus Revealed as Deliverer, King, and Incarnate Creator* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2013), 11–15.

[6] The concept of character is not limited to individuals. Groups of individuals can also function in a narrative as a single "prototypical" character (see below). See also Mark Allan Powell, *What is Narrative Criticism?* Guides to Biblical Scholarship, New Testament Series (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Press, 1990), 51–52; Jack Dean Kingsbury, *Matthew as Story* (1986; repr., Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988), 9. Another notable group ("character") in Matthew's story consists of the Gentiles (the non-Jewish characters, ἔθνη). Their role in the story and how they relate to the author's two-sided argument is the topic of chapter 6.

Showing and Telling

Matthew's implied author uses two common storytelling techniques for portraying the characters in his story; namely, *showing* and *telling*.[7] As Meyer H. Abrams explains,

> In *showing* (also called "the dramatic method"), the author simply presents the characters talking and acting, and leaves it entirely up to the reader to infer the motives and dispositions that lie behind what they say and do. . . . In *telling*, the author intervenes authoritatively in order to describe, and often to evaluate, the motives and dispositional qualities of the characters.[8]

At certain points in the narrative, Matthew's implied author uses *telling* to convey important information about a character in a clear and concise manner. For example, when he characterizes Joseph as "righteous" (δίκαιος, 1:19), he *tells* the reader explicitly what he is like without elaborating further. But when he characterizes Joseph as "obedient" he does so by *showing* how that character acts in response to divine direction when he takes Mary as his wife (1:18–24), and when he escapes to Egypt with his family (2:13–14, 19–21). *Telling* includes both explicit commentary such as when the implied author interrupts the narrative flow to identify OT scripture as having been fulfilled by Jesus (e.g., 1:22–23; 2:15, 18, 23; 4:14–16; 8:17; 12:17–21; 13:35; 21:4–5; 27:9–10), and implicit commentary such as when he chooses the term προσκυνέω ("worship") to describe how some characters in the story respond to Jesus (e.g., 2:2, 11; 8:2; 9:18; 14:33; 15:25; 20:20; 28:9, 17).[9]

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[7] See Wayne C. Booth, *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (Chicago: University Press, 1961), 3–20; cf. Powell, *What is Narrative Criticism?*, 52–53; David Rhoads, Joanna Dewey, and Donald Michie, *Mark as Story: An Introduction to the Narrative of a Gospel*, 3rd ed. (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Press, 2012), 101.

[8] Meyer H. Abrams, *Glossary of Literary Terms*, 11th ed. (Boston: Wadsworth Cengage Learning, 2015), 47 (emphasis his).

[9] Προσκυνέω can be used either to convey the meaning "do obeisance" before a human authority figure (Matt 8:2) or the kind of worship that is to be given exclusively to God (Matt 4:10). This term occurs 13 times in Matthew, but only twice in Mark (5:6; 15:19), and only three times in Luke (4:7, 8; 24:52). Mark's "worshipers" of Jesus are unreliable characters; a demon possessed Garasene man (5:6) and Roman soldiers who mocked him (15:19). The first two occurrences in Luke (4:7, 8) is a parallel of Matthew 4:10. In his account of the demon possessed Garasene man (Luke 8:28 // Mark 5:6), Luke has

While *telling* is important, the implied author's preferred method of characterization is to *show* the reader what characters are like by having them speak and act, or by having others in the story say something about them or react to them in some way. Of course, the validity of what characters say about themselves, or what others say or do in relation to them is determined by the reliability of the one doing the speaking and/or (re)acting. A character in the story—like the narrator—is deemed "reliable" when he or she "speaks for or acts in accordance with the norms of the work."[10] The implied reader who adopts the dominant evaluative point of view knows, for instance, that what God the Father says about Jesus is valid (3:17; 17:5). Conversely, any dissenting opinion (or dissent) expressed by those who do not "espouse the same system of ideas, values, or beliefs which sustains and informs the story"[11] is to be considered invalid (e.g., 9:34; 1:24; 27:63).

προσπίπτω ("prostrate") instead of Mark's προσκυνέω ("worship"). In 24:52, Luke records the disciples worshipping Jesus after the resurrection. Here, and possibly in 14:33 and 28:9, the kind of religious devotion one would give to God seems to be implied (It should be noted, however, the phrase προσκυνήσαντες αὐτόν is lacking in Codex Bezae, as well as some Latin and Syriac manuscripts of the NT – i.e., a "Western non-interpolation"). In nine of the thirteen occurrences of προσκυνέω in Matthew, the action is directed toward Jesus. Five of these may be classified as "epiphanic worship" (2:2, 9; 14:33; 28:9, 17). Mark Allen Powell defines epiphanic worship as "*a participation in divine revelation that clarifies and expresses the worshiper's perception of the one who is worshipped*" (Powell, *God with Us: A Pastoral Theology of Matthew's Gospel* [Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995], 42 [emphasis his]). While Matthew's use of προσκυνέω may not be cited as conclusive evidence that Jesus is venerated as deity in Matthew, it does at the very least indicate an elevated view of Jesus. Of particular interest are those passages in Matthew where the author introduces the element of "worship" by altering the text of Mark—assuming he used Mark as a source (Matt 14:33 // Mark 6:51–52; Matt 8:2 // Mark 1:40; Matt 9:18 // Mark 5:22 ; Matt 15:25 // Mark 7:25). For more on this topic see Hak Choi Kim, "The Worship of Jesus in Matthew's Gospel," *Biblica* 93, no. 2 (2012): 227–41; Powell, "A Typology of Worship in the Gospel of Matthew," *JSNT* 17, no. 57 (1995): 3–17; Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel: God Crucified and Other Studies on the New Testament's Christology of Divine Identity* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2008); James D. G. Dunn, *Did the First Christians Worship Jesus?* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2010).

[10] Booth, *Rhetoric of Fiction*, 158–59.

[11] Kingsbury, *Matthew as Story*, 30.

The character Jesus is presented as the exemplar *par excellence* of what it means to be "in complete accord with God's system of values."[12] The primary role of the other characters is to model for the implied reader what it looks like to be "for" or "against" Jesus (12:30). "The decisions they are called upon to make when confronted with different alternatives, and the results of these decisions, provide undisputable evidence of the narrative's ethical dimension."[13]

Matthew's Protagonist (Jesus)

Matthew's whole narrative revolves around Jesus, the protagonist or principal character in the story.[14] The words and actions of all the other characters are either directed toward him or said and done in relation to him. Matthew's characterization of Jesus is achieved by means of the implied author's own testimony about him, by recounting events where Jesus speaks and acts on his own behalf, and by describing how others in the story speak and act in response to him. The author informs the implied reader *what Jesus is like* by ascribing to him an array of character traits.

Seymour Chatman defines a "character trait" as a "relatively stable or abiding personal quality."[15] He explains that a trait is "a narrative adjective out of the vernacular

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[12] Kingsbury, *Matthew as Story*, 10.

[13] Shimon Bar-Efrat, *Narrative Art in the Bible*, trans. Dorothea Shefer-Vanson (1989; repr., New York: Bloomsbury, 2004), 47.

[14] Ancient Greek playwrights use the term πρωταγωνιστής to refer to the "chief actor" on stage, the one who plays the lead role (H. G. Liddell, R. Scott, and H. S. Jones, "πρωταγωνιστής," *A Greek-English Lexicon: with a Revised Supplement*, 9th ed. [1940; repr., Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999]). Aristotle states that "it was Aeschylus who first raised the number of the actors from one to two . . . and gave the dialogue to the leading role" (καὶ τό τε τῶν ὑποκριτῶν πλῆθος ἐξ ἑνὸς εἰς δύο πρῶτος Αἰσχύλος ἤγαγε . . . καὶ τὸν λόγον πρωταγωνιστεῖν παρεσκεύασεν, *Poetics*, 1449a.15). For more on the role of the protagonist in ancient Greek literature, see Mark Damen, "Actor and Character in Greek Tragedy," *Theatre Journal* 41, no. 3 (1989): 316–40; Koen De Temmerman and Evert van Emde Boas, *Characterization in Ancient Greek Literature*, Studies in Ancient Greek Narrative, vol. 4, ed. Koen De Temmerman and Evert van Emde Boas (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 1–23.

[15] Chatman, *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film* (1978; repr., Ithica, NY: Cornell University Press, 1990), 126.

labeling a personal quality of a character, as it persists over part or whole of the story."[16] A literary character consists of a set of characteristics that form a pattern or "paradigm of traits" which an author uses to convey what a character is like.[17] Chatman noted how an implied reader "relies upon [culturally coded] knowledge of the trait-code in the real world"[18] and brings to the text prior knowledge of what such labels signify.[19] For example, when an author says a character is "compassionate" the reader *knows* how such a person normally behaves in his or her "real world" cultural context. The reader, therefore, brings to the text certain presuppositions about how a "compassionate" character in a story would think, feel, speak and act.

In addition to using character traits, the author of Matthew characterizes Jesus by reporting on various titles attributed to and used by him. These titles are important because they convey to the reader *who Jesus is* and how he fits into God's plan of salvation for humankind. What is said about character traits in terms of being "culturally coded" can, of course, also be said about titles. As with "trait-codes," so too the reader of Matthew would have brought to the text prior knowledge of what these titles meant in his or her "real world" first-century Jewish socio-religious setting. In the case of Matthew's implied reader, the immediate context most likely would have been the ἐκκλησία of Jesus-followers[20] to which he or she belonged.

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[16] Chatman, *Story and Discourse*, 125.

[17] Chatman, *Story and Discourse*, 126–27.

[18] Chatman, *Story and Discourse*, 125. According to Chatman, a "trait-code" is a culturally coded set of traits relied on by the implied reader to make sense of a character's behavior. For more on this, see Georges Van Den Abbeele, "Russian Formalism and Narratology," in *Edinburgh Companion to Critical Theory*, ed. Stuart Sim (Edinburgh: University Press, 2022), 391–92.

[19] Chatman, *Story and Discourse*, 127–31.

[20] Many characters in Matthew's Gospel "followed" (ἀκολουθέω) Jesus for various reasons, identifying outwardly to some degree with the Jesus-movement, but not all who "followed" Jesus did so because were convinced he was Israel's Messiah (e.g., the crowds in Matt 7:21–23; 8:18–23). For the purpose of this study, the term "Jesus-follower" denotes someone who believed in and had a personal

As the following discussion demonstrates, the titles attributed to and used by Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew were interpreted in various ways in Second Temple Judaism. Therefore, it is not surprising that attempts to understand the author's use of these titles by examining how they were used in the broader Jewish background have proven to be less helpful than anticipated (as attested by the endless scholarly debates on the subject). It is reasonable to assume the author of Matthew would have been aware of how these titles were interpreted differently by some of his Jewish contemporaries. But for the implied reader reading Matthew as a well-crafted, internally coherent, finished product, the author has provided the literary context in which *his* use of these titles may be understood. Namely, the story about Jesus, a person whose followers came to recognize as the "Messiah," "Son of David," "Son of God," "Son of Man," etc., after having spent time with him. As Craig Evans pointed out, the early Jesus-followers were so firmly convinced "of the decisiveness of his ministry, death, and resurrection, [they] began applying to Jesus every title, category, and attribute that had to do with messianism and related ideas of agents of salvation."[21]

Christological Titles Attributed to Jesus

Space considerations here preclude a full discussion on all the titles attributed to or used by Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew.[22] However, the following observations on

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allegiance to Jesus as Israel's Messiah. For a helpful discussion on terminology, see Anders Runesson, "Inventing Christian Identity: Paul, Ignatius, and Theodosius I," in *Exploring Early Christian Identity*, ed. B. Holmberg, WUNT 226 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 59–92.

[21] Craig A. Evans, "Messianic Hopes and Messianic Figures in Late Antiquity," *JGRChJ* 3 (2006): 25.

[22] The interpretation and significance of these titles has long been the topic of scholarly debate. For a brief historical survey, see Graham Stanton, "The Origin and Purpose of Matthew's Gospel: Matthean Scholarship from 1945–1980," in *Band 25/3. Teilband Religion (Vorkonstantinisches Christentum: Leben und Umwelt Jesu; Neues Testament; Kanonische Schriften und Apokryphen [Forts.])*, ed. Wolfgang Haase (Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter, 2016), 1889–1951, esp. 1922–25; Dale C. Allison, Jr., *Studies in Matthew: Interpretation Past and Present* (2005; repr., Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2016), 158–60. For a more detailed discussion on how the titles ascribed to Jesus relate to the major theological themes in Matthew,

just four of these will demonstrate well how the implied author uses titles to characterize Jesus to fully represent God's evaluative point of view. This is followed by a discussion on the character traits used by the author to inform the implied reader what Jesus is like.

"Christ" (ὁ χριστός). The meaning of the term "Christ" may at first glance seem obvious and uncontroversial to the twenty-first century Christian reader. One could even imagine there having been a well-defined commonly shared Jewish messianic expectation when Jesus arrived on the scene and wonder how it was possible for anyone to have failed to recognize him as the long-awaited Messiah.[23] But as a growing number of historical-critical studies on Second Temple period messianism show, there was in fact a wide range of Jewish messianic beliefs and expectations at the time.[24] Taking into

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see Quarles, *A Theology of Matthew*; Matthias Konradt, *Israel, Church, and the Gentiles in the Gospel of Matthew: Studies in Early Christianity*, ed. Wayne Coppins and Simon Gathercole, trans. by Kathleen Ess (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2014), 17–49.

[23] Some nineteenth and early twentieth-century scholars such as Emil Schürer and George F. Moore presupposed there was a uniform system of messianic expectation in ancient Judaism. See Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ*, 5 vols. rev. and ed. Michael Black, Geza Vermes, and Fergus Millar (1891; repr., New York: Bloomsbury, 2000); Moore, *Judaism in the First Centuries of the Christian Era*, 3 vols. (1927; repr., Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1997). However, later studies—particularly those on the Dead Sea Scrolls—show much evidence to the contrary. By the late 1980s, the idea of "a common Jewish messianic hope during the time of Jesus" was no longer deemed plausible (James H. Charlesworth, "From Messianology to Christology: Problems and Prospects," in *The Messiah: Developments in Earliest Judaism and Christianity*, ed. James H. Charlesworth [Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Press, 1992], 5). William S. Green criticizes Mowinckel and Schürer for attempting to "construct a uniform and pervasive messianic expectation where one simply does not exist" (Green, "Introduction: Messiah in Judaism: Rethinking the Question," in *Judaisms and Their Messiahs at the Turn of the Christian Era*, ed. Jacob Neusner, William S. Green, and Ernest S. Frerichs [New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987], 2). He goes on to say, "It is no longer possible to justify the standard, homogenous reading of the varied Jewish writings or to assume that different Jewish groups, even within Palestine, shared a single outlook, social experience or religious expectation simply because they were Jews" ("Introduction," 7). For more on this, see James D. G. Dunn, *The Partings of the Ways: Between Christianity and Judaism and Their Significance for the Character of Christianity* (Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1991), 18–36; E. P. Sanders, *Judaism: Practice and Belief 63 BCE–66 CE* (Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1992); Burton L. Mack, *A Myth of Innocence: Mark and Christian Origins* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988).; John J. Collins, "Early Judaism in Modern Scholarship," in *The Eerdmans Dictionary of Early Judaism*, ed. John J. Collins and Daniel Harlow (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2010), 1–23.

[24] The amount of literature on this important topic is vast, requiring a selective approach for the purpose of this study. Some notable studies include, Joseph Klausner, *The Messianic Idea in Israel,*

consideration this broader religio-historical context, one might have expected some sort of definition from the author of Matthew about what the term meant when referring to Jesus as "Christ" (1:1, 16) and "*the* Christ" (1:17; 2:4; 16:16, 20; 22:42, etc.). But instead, he appears to presuppose the implied reader is already familiar with it.[25] The

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trans. W. F. Stinespring (New York: Macmillan, 1955); Jacob Neusner, William Scott Green, and Ernest S. Frerichs, eds., *Judaisms and Their Messiahs at the Turn of the Christian Era* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987); James H. Charlesworth, ed. *The Messiah*; John J. Collins, *The Scepter and the Star: The Messiahs of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Other Ancient Literature.* Anchor Bible Reference Library (New York: Doubleday, 1995); Craig A. Evans and Peter W. Flint, eds., *Eschatology, Messianism and the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1997); John Day, ed., *King and Messiah in Israel and the Ancient Near East* (Sheffield: Academic Press, 1998); William Horbury, *Jewish Messianism and the Cult of Christ* (London: SCM Press, 1998); Gerbern Oekema, *The Anointed and His People* (Sheffield: Academic Press, 1998); Richard S. Hess and M. Daniel Carroll R., eds., *Israel's Messiah in the Bible and the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic Press, 2003); Sigmund Mowinckel, *He That Cometh: The Messiah Concept in the Old Testament and Later Judaism*, trans. G. W. Anderson, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2005); Joseph Fitzmyer, *The One Who Is to Come* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2007); Adela Yarbro Collins and John J. Collins, *King and Messiah as Son of God: Divine, Human, and Angelic Messianic Figures in Biblical and Related Literature* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2008); Shirley Lucass, *The Concept of the Messiah in the Scriptures of Judaism and Christianity* (London: Bloomsbury, 2011); Daniel Boyarin, *The Jewish Gospels: The Story of the Jewish Christ* (New York: The New Press, 2012); Juan M. B. Gutierrez, *Messianic Expectations: From the Second Temple Era through the Early Centuries of the Common Era* (Herausgeber, Germany: Independently Published, 2018).

[25] The origin and development of messianic beliefs within Judaism before and after the time of Jesus continues to be a topic of great interest and debate among scholars. Most are concerned with determining what messianic expectations are reflected in the OT and other Jewish writings from the Second Temple period, and to what extent these expectations correspond to NT claims about Jesus. An underlying assumption seems to be that the validity of such claims depends on whether there is a demonstrable correlation between the early Christians' understanding of Jesus and some preexisting commonly shared coherent Jewish messianic expectation. But none of the NT claims about Jesus seem to match completely any specific pre-Christian group's expectations known from the Second Temple period (See William Horbury, *Jewish Messianism*, 25; Reza Aslan, *Zealot: The Life and Times of Jesus of Nazareth* [New York: Random House, 2013], 27–28.).

One of the challenges for anyone attempting to understand first-century Jewish "Palestinian" messianism, which most likely would have been the religio-historical context in which the earliest Christians made messianic claims about Jesus, is how to interpret the available sources. Studies on the Dead Sea scrolls show there was a wide range of messianic beliefs within the Qumran community, which may reflect a wider Jewish context, but these sources predate the Jesus-followers by more than a century and a half. Jewish authors such as Philo of Alexandria and Flavius Josephus—writing to an educated Hellenistic audience—rarely discuss messianism. A few times Josephus recounts the failures of would-be Jewish rebel leaders against Rome, but he does not explicitly call them "Messiahs." For more on this, see Marinus de Jonge, "The Use of the Word 'Anointed' in the Time of Jesus," *NovT* 8 (1966): 132–48; David Hill, "Jesus and Josephus' Messianic Prophets," in *Text and Interpretation: Studies in the New Testament Presented to Matthew Black*, ed. Ernest Best and Robert Mclachlan Wilson (Cambridge: University Press, 1979), 143–54; Richard A. Horsley, "Popular Messianic Movements around the Time of Jesus," *CBQ* 46 (1984): 47–95.

reason he does not define the term explicitly is probably because, by the time he wrote his Gospel, "Christ" had already gained wide acceptance among early Christians as a christological title for Jesus (i.e., "Jesus the Messiah")[26] and, it seems, had been in use for some time as a proper name for Jesus—as attested by Paul's use of the term in his letters written some decades earlier.[27]

James H. Charlesworth points out that early Jewish literature "cannot be mined to produce anything like a checklist of what the Messiah will do" (Charlesworth, "From Messianology to Christology," 34–35). Nevertheless, NT writers do in fact attempt to demonstrate that Jesus conforms, at least in some significant ways, to a set of messianic expectations. The characters in Matthew's narrative are clearly presented as having certain messianic expectations. For example, after a visit from the magi Herod asked the Jewish leaders where "the Christ was to be born," to which they respond, "in Bethlehem in Judea," confirming this with a quotation Mic 2:5 (Matt 2:4–6). When John the Baptist heard what Christ was doing, he sent his disciples to Jesus asking, "Are you the one who was to come, or should we look for another?" (Matt 11:2–3). Jesus's reply to John attests to his messianic self-awareness (Matt 11:5 // Luke 7:22). That is, he lists actions that in at least one Jewish tradition are associated with the coming Messiah (cf. 4Q521). During his trial before the Sanhedrin, the high priests asked Jesus, "Are you the Christ, the Son of God?" (Matt 26:63). To which Jesus responds, "You have said so" (Matt 26:64). This, of course, does not mean *necessarily* or even suggest there had to be a preexisting commonly shared coherent Jewish messianic expectation. But it does show there were messianic expectations at the time, and that the early followers of Jesus were able to see him as having fulfilled these expectations. N. T. Wright has argued convincingly that there are discernible lines of continuity—a "double similarity"—between first-century Jewish messianism and early Christian claims about Jesus (See Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God.* Christian Origins and the Question of God, vol. 2 [Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Press, 1996], chap. 4). Wright defines "double similarity" as "when something can be seen to be credible (though perhaps deeply subversive) within first-century Judaism, *and* credible as the implied starting-point (though not the exact replica) of something in later Christianity" (132 [emphasis his]).

[26] Mark's use of χριστός in 8:29 (par. Matt 16:16 // Luke 9:20) and 14:61 (par. Matt 26:63 // Luke 22:67) would make little sense if the reader did not understand the term as a christological title ("the Messiah"). For a thorough discussion on the use of χριστός in the Gospels and Acts, see Michael F. Bird, *Jesus is the Christ: The Messianic Testimony of the Gospels* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2012). See also Mark L. Strauss, *The Davidic Messiah in Luke–Acts: The Promise and Its Fulfillment in Lukan Christology* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1995). Bird and Strauss show that the term was commonly used by NT writers as a messianic christological title, which most likely reflected widespread use among the earliest followers of Jesus.

[27] The question of whether Paul uses χριστός as a title ("the Messiah"), or as a proper name ("Christ"), or both (or perhaps neither), is the subject of scholarly debate. Werner Kramer notes "It is uncertain to what extent *Christos* has the meaning Messiah in Paul's writings, and to what extent it is simply the proper name of a particular person or of him who died and rose again for our salvation" (Kramer, *Christ, Lord, Son of God* [1966; repr., London: SCM Press, 2012], 203 [emphasis his]). The debate centers on whether Paul's use of χριστός conveys a particular messianic Christology. On one side of the debate are scholars, such as Andrew Chester, who contend that "Paul uses χριστός . . . almost entirely as a proper name (often in combination with Ἰησοῦς), not a title as such. . . . [and] to this extent reference to 'Messiah' drops out" (Chester, *Messiah and Exaltation: Jewish Messianic and Visionary Traditions and New Testament Christology.* WUNT 207 [Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007], 382–83). Many others hold this

The Gospel of Matthew is presented as a reliable account of how the disciples came to recognize Jesus as "the Christ" (Messiah) after having spent time with him during his life, death, and resurrection. It was not something the disciples deduced after having done a careful search of Second Temple Jewish literature nor by consulting some

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position, including Paula Fredriksen (*From Jesus to Christ: The Origins of the New Testament Images of Christ* [New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000]), Douglas Moo ("The Christology of the Early Pauline Letters," in *Contours of Christology,* ed. Richard N. Longnecker [Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2005], 169–92), and Magnus Zetterholm ("Paul and the Missing Messiah," in *The Messiah in Early Judaism and Christianity,* ed. Magnus Zetterholm [Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Press, 2007], 33–55). Nils A. Dahl suggests "Paul's letters represent a striking advanced stage in the evolution that transformed *Christos* from a messianic designation to Jesus' second proper name" (*Jesus the Christ: The Historical Origins of Christological Doctrine,* ed. Donald H. Juel [Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Press, 1991], 18 [emphasis his]). Martin Hengel argues that in Paul the term χριστός functions as a "cognomen" (*Between Jesus and Paul: Studies in the Earliest History of Christianity* [London: SCM Press, 1983], 65–77). Hengel says Paul's use of χριστός is "more of a riddle than a 'key' to a better understanding of Pauline Christology" (*Between Jesus and Paul*, 66).

Representing a more nuanced approach (a middle position) is Udo Schnelle, who argues that "For Paul, Χριστὸς Ἰησοῦς is a titular name, both title and name . . . When combined with Ἰησοῦς, Χριστός is thus to be understood as a cognomen (surname) that also always has the overtones of its original titular significance" (Schnelle, *Apostle Paul: His Life and Theology*, trans. M. Eugene Boring [Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005], 439).

Those contending for the position that Paul's used χριστός primarily as a messianic christological title include scholars such N. T. Wright (*The Resurrection of the Son of God.* Christian Origins and the Question of God, vol. 3 [Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Press, 2003], 554–57; *The Climax of the Covenant: Christ and the Law in Pauline Theology* [Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1991], chap. 3), Stephen A. Cummins ("Divine Life and Corporate Christology: God, Messiah Jesus, and the Covenant Community in Paul," in *The Messiah in the Old and New Testaments*, ed. Stanley E. Porter [Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2007], 190–209), Richard B. Hays (*The Conversion of the Imagination: Paul as Interpreter of Israel's Scripture* [Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2005], 101–18), and J. Ross Wagner (*Heralds of the Good News: Isaiah and Paul "in Concert" in the Letter to the Romans*, NovTSup 101 [Lieden, Netherlands: Brill, 2002]).

Another view, put forward by Matthew V. Novenson, is that Paul used χριστός neither as a name nor as a title, but rather as a honorific term such as that used of kings during the Hellenistic period (*Christ Among the Messiahs: Christ Language in Paul and Messiah Language in Ancient Judaism* [Oxford: University Press, 2012]). Scholars who agree with Novenson include Larry Hurtado ("Paul's Messianic Jesus: A Variant-Form of Ancient Jewish Messianism," in *Paul the Jew: Rereading the Apostle as a Figure of Second Temple Judaism*, ed. Gabriele Boccaccini and Carlos A. Segovia [Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2016], 107–31) and Paul Foster (*Colossians.* Black's New Testament Commentaries, ed. Morna D. Hooker [New York: Bloomsbury, 2016]). Novenson points out, "Paul does all that we normally expect any ancient Jewish or Christian text to do to count as a messiah text and that in no case does he ever disclaim the category of messiahship" (*Christ Among the Messiahs*, 138; cf. Novenson, "Can the Messiahship of Jesus Be Read off Paul's Grammar? Nils Dahl's Criteria 50 Years Later," *NTS* 56, no. 3 (2010): 396-412).

It is beyond the scope of this study to engage in the debate regarding Paul's use of χριστός. The relevant point here is that the frequent occurrence of χριστός in Paul's letters (*ca.* 269 times in the undisputed letters; *ca.* 359 times in the entire Pauline corpus), clearly shows it was already a well-known term among the followers of Jesus before the Gospel of Matthew was written.

well-defined commonly shared set of Jewish messianic expectations of what the Messiah will do.[28] According to Matthew, the disciples' faith in Jesus was the result of their encounter with the person himself. "This early, widespread recognition of Jesus by his followers as Israel's Messiah can most plausibly be explained as owing its origin to Jesus and his disciples, not to a post-Easter faith superimposed upon an otherwise non-messianic dominical tradition."[29] In Matthew's narrative, Jesus's identity is not immediately obvious to the other characters, and even his closest followers were only

[28] The only indication of anything resembling a "list" is Matthew 11:5 (= Luke 7:22), where some disciples of John the Baptist are sent to Jesus to inquire whether he is the "coming one" or if they should "look for another" (11:2–5). Jesus responds to their question by listing six "signs" that apparently confirm his identity: (1) "the blind receive sight" (τυφλοὶ ἀναβλέπουσιν –which seems to be a reference to LXX Isa 61:1, as there is no counterpart to τυφλοὶ ἀναβλέπουσιν in the MT, the Qumran MSS of Isaiah, or the Targums of Isaiah), (2) "the lame walk," (3) "the lepers are cleansed," (4) "the deaf hear," (5) "the dead are raised," and (6) "the poor have good news preached to them." Apparently, no other explanation was needed because Jesus was doing the very things expected of the Messiah (cf. 11:4). This list of "signs" for recognizing the Messiah—which presumably is part of "Q" = Matt 11:5//Luke 7:22)—seems to belong to a very early tradition shared by the followers of John the Baptist and the early Christian community (See Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke I-IX*. The Anchor Yale Bible Commentaries, vol. 28A (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1985], 662–65).

A document from Qumran that is particularly helpful for understanding some of the interpretative tradition(s) behind Matthew's Gospel is 4Q521 (4QMessianic Apocalypse). In 4Q521 (Frags. 2 col. II, lines 8 and 12–13) there are two lists of "signs of the Messiah" that combine elements from Isa 61:1, Deut 32:39, Ps 146:7–8, and Isa 35:5 (The first item in line 12 (ירפא חללים "heal the wounded") seems to echo Isa 61:1. But it is the form probably found in the *Vorlage* of LXX Isa 61:1, not the form found in MT. That these "lists" in 4Q521 are similar to the "list" in Matthew 11:5 is immediately apparent. But what is especially significant about 4Q521 is that it contains a statement about "raising the dead" as one of the expectations of the messianic age. It reads, "[for] he will heal the badly wounded and will make the dead live, he will proclaim good news to the poor" (כי] ירפא חללים ומתים יחיה ענוים יבשר], *Frags.* 2, col. II, line 12). The last phrase is a quote from Isa 61:1, but there is nothing in the Hebrew Bible regarding a messianic figure raising the dead. Actually, 4Q521 is the only known example besides Q (= Matt 11:5//Luke 7:22) where "raising of the dead" is said to be a "sign" of the Messiah—although resurrection of the dead is associated with Israel's "restoration" in Isa 26:19 and Dan 12:1–3. "Through this Dead Sea Scroll fragment, coupled with the early Q source of the Gospels, we are taken back to a very early common tradition within Palestinian Judaism regarding the 'signs of the Messiah'" (James D. Tabor and Michael Wise, "4Q521 'On Resurrection' and the Synoptic Gospel Tradition: A Preliminary Study," *JSP* 5, no. 10 [April 1992]: 162). For further discussions on the text of 4Q521 see Tabor and Wise, "4Q521 'On Resurrection', 161–63; Tabor and Wise, "The Messiah at Qumran," *BARev* 18, no. 6 (1992): 125–44; Edward P. Meadors contends that one of Matthew's primary sources ("Q") presents Jesus with several messianic features. See Meadors, "The 'Messianic' Implications of the Q Material," *JBL* 118, no. 2 (1999): 253–77.

[29] Evans, "Messianic Hopes," 22. Evans provides a convincing argument. See also Jonge, "Use of the Word 'Anointed,' 132–48; Horsley, "Popular Messianic Movements," 3–27.

able to recognize him as "the Christ" (Messiah) by divine revelation (ὅτι σὰρξ καὶ αἷμα οὐκ ἀπεκάλυψέν σοι ἀλλ' ὁ πατήρ μου ὁ ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς,16:13–17). Similarly, people were only able to understand Jesus's teaching (τὰ μυστήρια τῆς βασιλείας) because the ability to do so was *granted* (δέδοται) to them (13:11–17).[30] From Matthew's perspective, people only come to know Jesus as Israel's Messiah ("the Christ") by divine revelation. The author appears to interpret the Jewish scriptures retrospectively—from a post-Easter perspective—showing that the events concerning Jesus had been foretold all along (even if not fully understood beforehand or interpreted messianically in Second Temple Judaism). The author's interpretive principle of "promise and fulfillment" is not something superimposed upon the Jesus story, but rather, confirmation that the events reported on were "according to the Scriptures" (cf. 1 Cor 15:3–5). The author further advances his argument by showing what had happened through Jesus the "Messiah" was all part of God's plan to bring humankind back into a right relationship with himself.

The title *Christ* (χριστός = מְשִׁיחָא) "summarily characterizes Jesus as God's Anointed, the King and Shepherd of Israel (2:2, 4, 4)."[31] But, of course, using this title alone would not in and of itself convey everything the earliest followers of Jesus came to realize about him. The term had a range of meaning in the OT (as well as in other Jewish writings) and could be used in a variety of ways.[32] For example, in Isaiah 45:1—the only

[30] In Matthew 11:27, Jesus states explicitly that no one can know the Father unless it is revealed to him or her by the Son (i.e., Jesus himself). "No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him" (NET).

[31] Kingsbury, *Matthew as Story*, 44.

[32] For example, the term could refer to an anointed prophet or earthly king—such as those mentioned in the Hebrew Bible—or an eschatological agent of God. In some contexts, the reference is to a messianic age (a time of restoration), without any mention of a personal agent called "Messiah." Some suggest that certain groups (i.e., at Qumran) expected two Messiahs—although this view has been challenged by Craig Evans (see "Diarchic Messianism in the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Messianism of Jesus of Nazareth," in *The Dead Sea Scrolls Fifty Years After Their Discovery*, ed. Lawrence Schiffman, Emmanuel Tov, and James C. VanderKam [Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 2000], 558–67). For more on the expectation of two Messiahs, see Florentine García Martínez, "Messianic Hopes in the Qumran Writings," in *The People of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, ed. Florentine García Martínez and J. Trebolle Barrera

explicit reference to מְשִׁיחָא in Isaiah—even the non-Israelite king Cyrus is addressed by God as his "anointed" (כֹּה־אָמַר יְהוָה לִמְשִׁיחוֹ לְכוֹרֶשׁ) (i.e., in the sense that this king was appointed by him to fulfill a special purpose). Those who knew Jesus, however, recognized him as being much more than a mere human acting in accordance with the will of God. He was in the truest sense, "God with us" (1:23).[33] Matthew's implied author further elaborates on what this means by attributing several other important titles to Jesus.

"Son of David" (ὁ υἱὸς Δαυίδ). The mention of "Son of David" in the opening lines of Matthew's Gospel establishes Jesus's identity as a descendent of David. As the story unfolds, however, it becomes clear that this is not just about Jesus's royal lineage.[34]

(Leiden: Brill, 1995), 159–89; Martínez, "Two Messianic Figures in the Qumran Texts," in *Current Research and Technological Developments on the Dead Sea Scrolls: Conference on the Texts from the Judean Desert, Jerusalem, 30 April 1995*, ed. D. W. Parry and S. D. Ricks, STDJ 20 (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 14–40. Marinus de Jonge notes that "in the OT the term "anointed" is never used of a future savior/ redeemer, and that in later Jewish writings of the period between 200 BCE and 100 CE the term is used only infrequently in connection with agents of divine deliverance expected in the future" (de Jonge, "Messiah," in vol. 4 of *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. David N. Freedman [New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992], 777). For more on Second Temple period messianism, see John J. Collins, *The Scepter and the Star*, 16–20; Sigmund Mowinckel, *He That Cometh*, 3–9; Johann Maier, "What Was Distinctive about Messianic Expectation at Qumran?" in *The Bible and the Dead Sea Scrolls*, ed. James H. Charlesworth (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2006), 71–92.

[33] See the discussion on Matthew's birth narrative in chapter 5.

[34] An extensive study on Davidic dynasty tradition in early Jewish literature has been undertaken recently by H. Daniel Zacharias, *Matthew's Presentation of the Son of David: Davidic Tradition and Typology in the Gospel of Matthew* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2017). See also Young S. Chae, *Jesus as the Eschatological Davidic Shepherd: Studies in the Old Testament, Second Temple Judaism, and in the Gospel of Matthew*," (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006); Yuzuru Miura, *David in Luke-Acts: His Portrayal in the Light of Early Judaism* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007); Joel Willitts, "Matthew's Messianic Shepherd-King: In Search of 'the Lost Sheep of the House of Israel,'" *HTS* 63, no. 1 (2007): 365–82; Sarah Harris, *The Davidic Shepherd King in the Lukan Narrative* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016). Mark Strauss has devoted a large portion of a monograph to this subject as well, see Strauss, *The Davidic Messiah in Luke-Acts: The Promise and its Fulfilment in Lukan Christology* (Sheffield: Academic Press, 1995), 35–74, 87–128.

The earliest tradition regarding a messianic "Son of David" goes back to 2 Samuel 7:12–16, the so-called "Davidic covenant."[35] Through the prophet Nathan God promised David that his kingdom would last forever and one of his descendants would sit on the throne. Later traditions refer to a future ideal Davidic king who after the exile would usher in a new era when Israel will again enjoy the blessings of the covenant.[36] During the Second Temple period, belief in a coming messianic Davidic king had taken on a highly eschatologically orientation.[37] By the first century CE, "the traditional notion of the expectation of a militant messiah who, like David of old, would lead Israel to a military victory over her enemies, especially the Romans, seems well established."[38] Many believed a coming Davidic-Messianic figure would throw off foreign oppression by military force and reestablish a political (i.e., earthly) kingdom.[39] But this is clearly

[35] Note that while Matthew frequently alludes to the Davidic covenant (e.g., Matt 15:24 is reminiscent of Eze 34:23–24), he never quotes 2 Sam 7:12–16 nor makes explicit reference to it. However, in Matt 22:42, the Pharisees (who represent the antagonists in the narrative) correctly acknowledge that the title "Son of David" is to be understood as a reference to the Messiah—although they do not recognize Jesus as such. "Jesus' further remarks do not call into question the correctness of their answer but, rather, problematize its incompleteness. Jesus is indeed Son of David, but he is also more" (Konradt, *Israel, Church, and the Gentiles*, 30).

[36] The Jewish Scriptures contain many explicit promises concerning a Davidic messianic figure including: Isa 9:1–7; 11:1–5; 16:5; Jer 23:5–8; 30:8–9, 21–22, 31–34; 33:14–26; Ezek 34:23–24; 36:26–27; 37:24–25; Hos 3:4–5; Amos 9:11–15; Zech 3:8; 6:12; 9:9–13; 10:4–12; Mic 5:2. Ps 2 and 36 also allude to the Davidic covenant.

[37] Several Dead Sea Scrolls interpret the Davidic covenant in terms of eschatological messianic expectations such as 4Q174 3.2; 1QpHab 9.6; 4Q162 2.1; 4Q161 7.iii.15–29; 4Q163 23.ii.10; 4Q285 5.i.3; 1QSa 1.1; 5:22, 25, 26. See also *Psalms of Solomon* 17. For more on this, see Annti Laato, *A Star is Rising: The Historical Development of the Old Testament Royal Ideology and the Rise of the Jewish Messianic Expectations.* USF International Studies in Formative Christianity and Judaism 5 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1997); Richard S. Hess and M. D. Carroll R., ed., *Israel's Messiah in the Bible and the Dead Sea Scrolls* (2003; repr., Wipf & Stock, 2011).

[38] Craig Evans, "David in the Dead Sea Scrolls," in *The Scrolls and the Scriptures: Qumran Fifty Years After*, ed. Stanley E. Porter and Craig A. Evans. The Library of Second Temple Studies, 26 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 195.

[39] Kenneth E. Pomykala traces the development of the Davidic dynasty tradition in the OT, LXX, Dead Sea scrolls (e.g., 4Q252, 4Q491^{a}, 4QFlor, 4QpIsa^{a}), Pss Sol 17, 4 Ezra, and Josephus. After showing how texts such as 2 Sam 7:11–16 and Ps 89 "were interpreted differently according to the intentions of various authors," Pomykala concludes that there was no "continuous, widespread, or dominant

not how Jesus sees his mission.[40] In Matthew's narrative, "the designation of Jesus as υἱὸς Δαυίδ appears rather to be a concentrated expression of the essential Matthean focus on the merciful care God brings through Jesus to his people standing in need of salvation."[41] The title "Son of David" nearly always[42] occurs in the First Gospel in contexts where Jesus restores sight to the blind and/or casts out demons.[43] In each instance, the author also includes in the immediate or near context a scene where there is some conflict

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expectation for a Davidic Messiah" (Pomykala, *The Davidic Dynasty Tradition in Early Judaism: Its History and Significance for Messianism.* SBL Early Judaism and Its Literature 7 [Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995], 270). This does not suggest there was no such tradition, only that it was not widely held during the Second Temple period.

[40] Another tradition held by at least some of Jesus's contemporaries, which seems more in line with Jesus's own self-awareness (as depicted in Matthew), is the Davidic Messiah figure as a prophet, as described in some of the Targums. For example, *Targum* Ps 45:3 reads, "*Your beauty, O King Messiah,* surpasses that of the sons of men. *The spirit of prophecy* [רוח נבואה] *has been bestowed* upon your lips; therefore, *the Lord* has blessed you forever" (with emphasis showing departures from the MT text, as quoted in Craig Evans, *Jesus and His Contemporaries: Comparative Studies* [1995; repr., Leiden: Brill, 2001], 450). Other examples include *Targum* 2 Sam 23:1–4, *Targum* Isa 11:2. Evans suggests that parallels to Jesus's pronouncements and activities may best be located in the careers of certain "oracular" prophetic messianic figures of the time (see *Jesus and His Contemporaries*, 442–44). According to Matthew, Jesus comes proclaiming "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near" (4:17) as the anointed Son of David, "whose anointing is prophetic and which not only authorizes Jesus to proclaim the presence of the kingdom but to demonstrate its presence through acts of healing, especially exorcisms" (Evans, *Jesus and His Contemporaries*, 451).

[41] Konradt, *Israel, Church, and the Gentiles*, 48–49.

[42] The two exceptions are the genealogy and the triumphal entry scene in Matt 21:9.

[43] In Matthew 9:27, Jesus is addressed as "Son of David" by two blind men who asked to be healed, and "their eyes were opened" (Matt 9:30). After being healed they go out and spread Jesus's fame "throughout that entire region" (Matt 9:31). In the following episode the Pharisees witness Jesus healing a man who was demon-possessed and mute but attribute his power to cast out demons to "the prince of demons" (Matt 9:34). In Matthew 12:23, the crowds ask, after seeing Jesus's heal a blind and mute demon possessed man, "Can this be the Son of David?" (*μήτι οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ υἱὸς Δαυίδ*). The Pharisees react again by attributing Jesus's power to cast out demons to "the prince of demons" (Matt 12:24). In Matthew 20:30–31, two blind men use "Son of David" twice to address Jesus when they ask that their "eyes be opened" (Matt 20:33). During his triumphal entry into Jerusalem, the crowds shout, "Hosanna to the Son of David" (Matt 21:9). This is followed by the children crying out, "Hosanna to the Son of David," in response to having seen Jesus heal the blind and the lame in the Temple courts (Matt 21:14). Isaiah prophesied about a king who's coming would usher in a time when "the eyes of those who see will no longer be closed, and the ears of those who hear will listen" (Isa 32:3). Isaiah's prophecy is probably the background to Jesus's expression to listen and heed carefully (*ὁ ἔχων ὦτα ἀκουέτω*, Matt 11:15; 13:9; 13:43; cf. Mark 4:9, 23; Luke 8:8; 14:35).

between Jesus and the religious leaders that seems to highlight the antagonists' blindness and failure to provide proper care for God's people, which Jesus himself provides.[44]

In the Jewish Scriptures, the divinely appointed king of the Davidic covenant is presented as a faithful shepherd of Israel. In 2 Samuel 7, Nathan's oracle is prefaced by a reference to the "*leaders* of Israel" (שִׁבְטֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל)[45] who are "commanded to shepherd" (צִוִּיתִי לִרְעוֹת) God's people (2 Sam 7:7). Later, in Jeremiah's prophecy concerning the coming "righteous branch, a descendant of David" (Jer 23:5; cf. 33:14–15), the promise comes after the denunciation of "the shepherds" (הָרֹעִים = leaders) of Israel who "were supposed to watch over [God's] people like shepherds watch over their sheep. But they are causing [God's] people to be destroyed and scattered" (Jer 23:1 NET). God also promised that in their place he will set up *faithful* shepherds who will shepherd his people (Jer 23:4; cf. 3:15, רֹעִים כִּלְבָבִי, "shepherds after my own heart"). Through the prophet Ezekiel God says, "I will save my flock" (וְהוֹשַׁעְתִּי לְצֹאנִי) and "set one shepherd over them . . . my servant David. He will feed them and be their shepherd" (Ezek 34:22–23; cf. 37:24). As in Jeremiah's prophecy, the promise comes after a rebuke "against the

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[44] For example, in Matthew 9:27–34, the two blind men who were healed go out and spread Jesus's fame "throughout that entire region" (Matt 9:31). By contrast, in the following episode the Pharisees witness Jesus healing a man who was demon-possessed and mute but attribute his power to cast out demons to "the prince of demons" (Matt 9:34). In Matthew 15:14, Jesus explicitly calls the Pharisees "blind guides [of the blind]" (τυφλοί εἰσιν ὁδηγοὶ [τυφλῶν]. On the textual variant, see Nestle-Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece* 28 (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschat, 2012), and Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, 4th rev. ed. (London: United Bible Societies, 2012). In the following episode (Matt 15:22–28), a Canaanite woman addresses Jesus as "Son of David" when she pleads for mercy on behalf of her daughter. Jesus responds, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel." But after seeing her "great faith," Jesus heals the woman's daughter of demon possession (15:28). The juxtaposition of the title "Son of David," spoken by this Gentile woman, and Jesus's statement regarding his mission not only "programmatically formulates Jesus's ministry as directed to Israel" (Konradt, *Israel, Church, and the Gentiles*, 33), it also highlights this non-Israelite woman's ability to "see" what the "blind guides" (i.e., the Jewish religious leaders) could not.

[45] In 2 Samuel 7:7, שֵׁבֶט ("rod," "staff," "sceptre") probably means "ruler" or "leader." The parallel passage in 1 Chronicles 17:6 reads "*judges* of Israel" (שֹׁפְטֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל). For a thematic survey of the shepherd metaphor in the Hebrew Bible, see Wayne Baxter, *Israel's Only Shepherd: Matthew's Shepherd Motif and His Social Setting* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2014), 44–54.

shepherds of Israel" (עַל־רוֹעֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל) who "have not strengthened the weak, healed the sick, bandaged the injured, brought back the strays, or sought the lost" (Ezek 34:4 NET). It is this aspect of the "Son of David" tradition—that is, caring for God's people as a shepherd—the author of Matthew clearly has in view regarding Jesus's ministry to Israel.[46] "While Jesus is a 'king' of Davidic lineage, to whom honour is due and in whom God's power is manifest, he is, for Matthew, much more than a national or political messiah."[47] The author characterizes Jesus as God's agent—the promised Davidic-Messianic *Shepherd-King* of Israel—who has compassion on his people "because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd" (9:36 NIV; cf. Jer 23:5; Ezek 34:5–6; Zech 10:2–3a). As such, Jesus does what the religious leaders had failed to do; namely, care for the "sheep" (people) of Israel.[48]

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[46] This does not negate that Jesus is the divinely appointed king of the Davidic covenant, for Jesus himself clearly states he will one day rule "at the renewal of all things" (Matt 19:28). But at this point in salvation history, the emphasis is on Jesus's present care for God's people. Four times in Matthew Jesus is called "king of the Jews" (by the magi in 2:2, by the Roman governor in 27:11, by those mocking him in 27:29, and as a written charge (αἰτία) against him on the cross in 27:37). That Jesus is the coming king is made clear by the quotation in Matthew 21:4 (cf. Isa 62:11; Zec 9:9) and Jesus's words in Matthew 19:28 and Matthew 25:31–46. But throwing off foreign oppression by military force and setting up a new political (i.e., earthly) kingdom is clearly not part of his mission. The kingdom Jesus and his disciples (cf. Matt 10:6–8) announce is unlike any other. It refers both to the present internal reign of God "over those who have submitted to the authority of the Messiah" (Quarles, *A Theology of Matthew*, 86–87), and to a future external messianic kingdom on earth that will be established at the Parousia (cf. Matt 7:22; 25:34; 26:29). "The consummate point of kingdom of heaven in Matthew is to emphasize that God's kingdom is not like earthly kingdoms, it stands over against them, and will eschatologically replace them on earth" (Jonathan T. Pennington, *Heaven and Earth in the Gospel of Matthew* [Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007], 321).

[47] Michael Knowles, *Jeremiah in Matthew's Gospel: The Rejected Prophet Motif in Matthean Redaction* (1993; repr., New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015), 237.

[48] The religious leaders are described in Jeremiah' s prophecy (Jer 23:1–2; cf. 10:21) as lacking care for God's people, like those depicted in Matthew's narrative. There are numerous parallels between Matthew's shepherding imagery and Ezekiel 34. The phrase "sheep without a shepherd" is most likely an allusion to Ezekiel 34. There, Israel's shepherds are portrayed as plundering the flock, and as a result, God's sheep were "scattered without a shepherd, and became food for all the wild animals" (34:5). Clearly, negative criticism toward Jewish religious leaders or statements about replacing unfaithful leaders with faithful ones cannot be used legitimately as a reason for accusing an author of being anti-Jewish or anti-Semitic. For more on the parallels between the sheep/shepherd imagery in Matthew and Ezekiel, see Wayne S. Baxter, "Healing and the 'Son of David': Matthew's Warrant," *NovT* 48, no. 1 (2006), 36–50.

"Son of God" (ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ). The author of Matthew also characterizes Jesus as the "Son of God."[49] On two occasions—at Jesus's baptism (3:17) and at the transfiguration (17:5)—God the Father himself speaks from heaven to announce Jesus is his own Son.[50] After seeing Jesus walk on the lake, the disciples worship him saying "Truly you are the Son of God" (14:33). At one point Jesus asks his disciples plainly, "Who do you say that I am?" Peter responds, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matt 16:16).[51] At the crucifixion the soldiers exclaim, "Truly this was the Son of God!" (Matt 27:54).[52] During his trial before the high priest Caiaphas (Matt 26:62–66), Jesus is charged with blasphemy and condemned to death because he claimed to be "the Son of God" (as well as "Messiah" and "Son of Man").[53] Even the devil and two demon-possessed men recognize Jesus as "Son of God" (4:3, 6, 8:29). In addition to reporting on what others say, Matthew includes two (or possibly three, 24:36)[54] other passages showing Jesus understood himself to be God's Son (11:27; 21:37).

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[49] ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ, Matt 4:3, 6; 8:29; 14:33; 26:63; ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ ζῶντος, 16:16; cf. ὁ υἱός μου ὁ ἀγαπητός, 3:17; 17:5; θεοῦ υἱός, 27:54; τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ πατρὸς καὶ τοῦ υἱοῦ καὶ τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος, 28:19.

[50] "This voice of God confirms three other voices that attested to the identity of Jesus: firstly, the angel that appeared in a dream to Joseph (Mt 1:20–21); secondly, the Scriptures, as Matthew frequently mentions the fulfilment of Scriptures in the person and conduct of Jesus (e.g., Mt 1:22, 2:15); and thirdly, John calling out in the wilderness, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near' (Mt 3:1–12)" (Keener, *Gospel of Matthew*, 134).

[51] Matthew adds ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ ζῶντος (16:16) to Mark's σὺ εἶ ὁ χριστός (8:29).

[52] For a discussion on the translation of the anarthrous θεοῦ υἱός (considering both grammatical and contextual issues), see Raymond E. Brown, *The Death of the Messiah: From Gethsemane to the Grave: A Commentary on the Passion Narratives in the Four Gospels*, vol. 2 (New York: Doubleday, 1994), 1146–51. Brown rightly concludes that Matthew (and Mark) clearly conveys nothing less than the "full christological sense," regardless of what the phrase may have meant to the Roman soldiers.

[53] The high priest's response (i.e., tearing his clothes) indicates he understood Jesus as answering in the affirmative (cf. Mark 14:62 where Jesus answers ἐγώ εἰμι). Jesus underscores the point by alluding to Ps 110:1 and Dan 7:13 (see discussion on "Son of Man" below).

[54] There is a textual variant in Matthew 24:36. For a brief discussion, see NET Bible notes on Matthew 24:36, in *The NET Bible, Full Notes Edition* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2019).

In Matthew's narrative, the designation "Son of God" in reference to Jesus is both *functional* and *ontological*—in terms of his unique relationship with the Father.[55] While not stated as clearly as in some other NT writings (e.g., John 1:1, 14; 5:18; 14:9–10; 10:30; 16:28; Col 1:15, 19; 2:9; Phil 2:5–11; Heb 1:3), there are several features in Matthew which indicate Jesus's identity as "the Son of God" is to be understood in an *ontological* sense.[56] Firstly, after establishing Jesus's Davidic lineage, the author goes on to explain that Jesus was not the biological son of Joseph, the "husband of Mary" (1:16), "son of David" (1:20), but was in fact conceived (γεννηθέν) through the Holy Spirit (Matt 1:18, 20) and born of a *virgin* (Matt 1:23).[57] The most plausible explanation for including this account of the miraculous circumstances surrounding Jesus's birth is that the author is guiding the implied reader to understand "Son of God" in an *ontological* sense.[58]

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[55] In the context of this study, the term *functional* refers to how Jesus fulfills his role as "Son of God" through his words, actions and experiences. That is, how the "Son" functions as an agent sent by God the Father to carry out his will and make him known to the world (cf. Matt 11:27). The term *ontological* refers to Jesus's nature of being/existence. That is, Jesus as "Son" of God in terms of his divinity. This study does not assume the author of Matthew has the doctrine of the Trinity mind—a doctrine which embodies the faith and teaching of the early Church but was not fully formulated and canonized as official dogma until the Council of Nicea in 325 CE. Nevertheless, the Gospel of Matthew, as do other NT writings, shows evidence of the earliest followers of Jesus having recognized Jesus as God manifested in the flesh (perhaps without having fully worked out exactly what that entails).

[56] For example, the author identifies Jesus with Yahweh when he quotes from Isa 40:3 in Matt 3:3, and again when he quotes from Mal 3:1 in Matt 11:10.

[57] cf. Isa 7:14. The Hebrew word עַלְמָה does not *necessarily* mean the "young woman" referred to is a virgin, but neither is it ruled out. "Since *bᵉtûlâ* is used many times in the OT as a specific word for "virgin," it seems reasonable to consider that the feminine form of this word [עַלְמָה] is not a technical word for a virgin but represents a young woman, one of whose characteristics is virginity" (Allan A. MacRae, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, ed. R. Laird Harris, Gleason Archer, and Bruce K. Waltke [1980; repr., Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2003], 672). The LXX translators seem to have understood Isaiah to mean "virgin" when they rendered עַלְמָה as παρθένος in Isa 7:14. In non-biblical Greek, whenever παρθένος is used to refer to a "young maiden," or "unmarried girl," it clearly implies she is a virgin (See, for example, P Ryl II. 125.28 [28–29 CE]; *Kaibel* 565.3 [not later than second century CE]; P Fay 102.30 [*ca.* 105 CE]; *Syll*^{3} 736 [91 BCE]). Allan T. Loder, "παρθένος," in *Vocabulary of the Greek New Testament: Student Edition (VGNTS)* (theWord Bible Software, 2021). The author of Matthew clarifies what he means by παρθένος when he explains Joseph "did not have sexual relations with her until she gave birth" (1:25).

[58] It seems unlikely the author would have included the account of Jesus's virgin birth if he only wanted to convey the idea of "Son of God" in a *functional* sense. There is absolutely no reason Jesus could not have had a human father and still be called "Son of God" unless, of course, something more than

Secondly, the charge of blasphemy on the part of the Jewish leaders (Matt 26:63–66 // Mark 14:61–63) suggests Jesus was claiming much more than being "the Son of God" in a *functional* sense. In Second Temple Judaism, claiming to be "Messiah," or "Son of God," or "Son of Man," in a *functional* sense would not have elicited such strong reaction or provoked a charge of blasphemy worthy of death. That the Messiah would be called God's "son" was clearly part of Jewish messianic expectation, as seen in some OT passages (2 Sam 7:14 // 1 Chr 17:13; Ps 2:7)[59] and other Jewish writings from the Second

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a mere *functional* sense is in view. As Vermes, Meier, and Brown point out, it would have been far more "convenient" to simply omit the details about Mary's premature pregnancy, unless there was a very good reason for including it (See Géza Vermes, *Jesus the Jew: A Historian's Reading of the Gospels* [Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1973], 211–13; John P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus: Volume One: The Roots of the Problem and the Person* [New York: Doubleday, 1991], 220–30; Raymond E. Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah; A Commentary on the Infancy Narratives in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke* [New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1999], 517–42.). The virgin conception appears to present a problem that required some explanation. That is, if Jesus is not Joseph's biological son, in what sense is he the Davidic Messiah? The author traces Jesus's ancestry to king David, but then explains he is not actually a biological descendent of David. The implication is Joseph adopted Jesus, thus giving him Davidic status. For more on Joseph's adoption of Jesus, see Herman C. Waetjen, "The Genealogy as the Key to the Gospel According to Matthew," *JBL* 95, no. 2 (1976): 205–30; Jack Dean Kingsbury, "The Title 'Son of God' in Matthew's Gospel," *JBL* 95 (1976): 597–98; Kingsbury, "The Birth Narrative of Matthew," in *The Gospel of Matthew in Current Study: Studies in Memory of William G. Thompson, S.J.*, ed. D. E. Aune (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2001), 154–65; Francis W. Beare, *The Gospel According to Matthew: Translation, Introduction and Commentary* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1981), 61; Davies and Allison, *Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, 1:219–20; Earl Richard, *Jesus: One and Many: The Christological Concept of New Testament Authors* (Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1988), 146; Paul W. Barnett, *Behind the Scenes of the New Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1990), 19; Rudolf Schnackenburg, *Jesus in the Gospels: A Biblical Christology*, trans. O. C. Dean, Jr (1995; repr., Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005), 103.; Donald Senior, *Matthew*, Abingdon New Testament Commentaries (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998), 38; Warren Carter, *Matthew and the Margins: A Sociopolitical and Religious Reading* [2000; repr., Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2013], 65; James M. Boice, *The Gospel of Matthew: Volume 1: The King and his Kingdom* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2001), 17. In 2016, Yigal Levi wrote an article in which he argues that no custom or law of adoption existed in ancient Judaism ("Jesus, 'Son of God' and 'Son of David': The 'Adoption' of Jesus into the Davidic Line," *JSNT* 28, no. 4 [2006]: 415–42). However, Caleb T. Friedeman recently published a critique of Levin's study and has presented credible evidence to show that early Jews did in fact have a concept and practice of adoption (See Friedeman, "Jesus' Davidic Lineage and the Case for Jewish Adoption," *NTS* 66, no. 2 [2020]: 249–67).

[59] In MT Ps 89:27 (בְּכוֹר) = LXX 89:28 (πρωτότοκος), the Davidic king is called God's "firstborn."

Temple period (e.g., 4Q174,[60] 4Q246[61]). But traditionally this was understood as a human figure anointed by God to fulfill a special task.[62] The religious leaders in Matthew had earlier accused Jesus of blaspheming because he forgave sins, presumably because only God has the authority to forgive sins (Matt 9:2–8; cf. Mark 2:7; Luke 5:21).[63] "To the Jewish leadership he has claimed a level of equality with God that is seen as blasphemous . . . making it apparent that more than a pure human and earthly messianic claim is present."[64]

Thirdly, references to "my Father" on the lips of Jesus—when understood in light of the two previous points—signify Jesus's special relationship to God (Matt 7:21; 10:32–33; 11:27; 12:50; 16:17; 18:10, 19; 20:23; 26:29, 39, 42, 53). He is much more than a functional agent sent by the Father; he is unique and qualified to reveal the Father in a way no one else can (Matt 11:27). Richard Bauckham argues that Jesus's universal lordship (e.g., 11:27; 28:18) signifies his inclusion in the "unique divine identity."[65] In

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[60] 4Q174 (= 4Q*Florilegium* col. 1, 11–12a) אני אהיה לוא לאב והוא יהיה לי לבן הואה צמח דויד העומד עם דורש התורה אשר [יקים]בצי[ון בא]חרית הימים, "'I will be a father to him and he will be a son to me.' This (refers to the) 'branch of David,' who will arise with the Interpreter of the law who [will rise up] in Zi[on in] the [l]ast days." (Florentine García Martínez, and Eibert J. C. Tigchelaar, eds., *The Dead Sea Scrolls Study Edition* [Leiden: Brill, 1997], 1:352). For a detailed study of 4Q174 (= 4QFlor), see George J. Brooke, *Exegesis at Qumran: 4QFlorilegium in Its Jewish Context* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1985).

[61] 4Q246 (= 4Q*Aramaic Apocalypse* col. 2, 1) ברה די אל יתאמר ובר עליון יקרונה, "He will be called son of God, and they will call him son of the Most High" (Martínez and Tigchelaar, *Dead Sea Scrolls*, 1:495).

[62] For more on "son of God" in the Dead Sea Scrolls, see Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Dead Sea Scrolls and Christian Origins* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2000), 41–72.

[63] See Daniel Johansson, "'Who Can Forgive Sins but God Alone?' Human and Angelic Agents, and Divine Forgiveness in Early Judaism," *JSNT* 33, no. 4 (2011): 351–74.

[64] Darrell L. Bock, "What Did Jesus Do that Got Him into Trouble? Jesus in the Continuum of Early Judaism–Early Christianity," In *Jesus in Continuum*, ed. Tom Holmén, WUNT 289 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012), 171–210, esp. 202, 205.

[65] Bauckham, *God Crucified: Monotheism and Christology in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1998), viii.

Matthew's narrative, Jesus's identity as "the Son of God" is *functional* in the sense that he fulfills his mission as a faithful son sent by God to carry out the Father's will and make him known to the world. As the *model son* in whom God is well pleased (Matt 3:17), Jesus acts in perfect obedience as he represents God's evaluative point of view. While Jesus's unwavering allegiance to the Father is evident throughout the narrative, it is perhaps highlighted best in those passages where Jesus's calling as God's Son is most put to the test. Space considerations here permits only a limited discussion, but the baptism and testing/temptation (πειρασθῆναι[66]) scenes serve well to illustrate the point.[67]

The first time Jesus is identified in the narrative as God's son is in Matthew 2:15. Here the author draws a parallel between the story of Jesus and the story of Israel by quoting from Hos 11:1 ("Out of Egypt I called my son"). For the implied reader familiar with the OT text, however, this parallel is certainly a contrastive one. In Hosea, the context has to do with the impending judgement on Israel for its unfaithfulness and disobedience.[68] Like Israel, Jesus too is "called out of Egypt" to a life of obedience. But unlike Israel, Jesus remains faithful where the nation had not. This is articulated clearly in Matthew's accounts of Jesus's baptism and testing/temptation in the wilderness.

By the time the implied reader reaches the baptism scene, the idea that Jesus recapitulates the story of Israel as God's son is already taking shape. The author prepares the reader beforehand by providing several statements regarding Jesus's mandate. The

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[66] Πειράζω ("to put to the test") can mean tested or tempted, depending on the context. See "πειράζω" in Walter Bauer, Frederick W. Danker, William F. Arndt, and F. Wilbur Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature [BDAG],* 3rd ed. (Chicago: University Press, 2001).

[67] These scenes are deemed to be in a "privileged position" in a narrative because they set the stage for subsequent accounts of Jesus's public ministry. On the concept of "privileged position," see Peter J. Rabinowitz, *Before Reading: Narrative Conventions and the Politics of Interpretation* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1987), 58–64.

[68] "When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son. But the more they were called, the more they went away from me." (Hos 11:1–2a NIV)

most direct statement is in Matthew 1:21, where the angel announces an explanation of Jesus's name to Joseph, "he will save his people from their sins." "From this we can discern the lack or need that Jesus as the main character is to address. It has to do with Israel and its need of a leader (i.e., Messiah, Shepherd) to deliver the nation from the consequences of its sin."[69] A less direct but equally important statement is the quote from Micah 5:2, 4 in Matthew 2:6 (on the lips of the religious leaders[70]), indicating that "the Christ" (ὁ χριστός) born in Bethlehem is the "ruler who will shepherd [God's] people Israel." Another quote hinting at Jesus's mandate is in Matthew 2:18, taken from Jeremiah 31:15, which appears at first glance to serve only as commentary on the level of suffering endured due to Herod's slaughter of the boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity. However, the broader context of Matthew's narrative (as well as that of Jeremiah's prophecy) suggests the author has another reason for including it. In Jeremiah, the passage appears in a context having to do with God's promises regarding the return of the "remnant of Israel" after the exile (31:8–17). In Jeremiah 31:16, the verse immediately following the one quoted by Matthew, those who had suffered loss during the exile are exhorted to "restrain your voice from weeping and your eyes from tears" (31:16). The tragedies associated with the exile, says the prophet, will be followed by restoration and new hope for those among God's people who repent (cf. 31:9). The time is coming when God will watch over his flock "like a shepherd" (Jer 31:10), make a new covenant with his people (31:31), and remember their sins no more (31:34). Matthew's baptism scene opens with the ministry of John the Baptist who addresses the people's need for repentance. The account also highlights Israel's lack of proper leadership (3:7–10). John

[69] Terence L. Donaldson, "The Vindicated Son: A Narrative Approach to Matthean Christology," in *Contours of Christology in the New Testament*, ed. Richard N. Longenecker (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2005), 116.

[70] This statement is deemed reliable because it is a quotation from Scripture, even though it is cited by unreliable characters.

announces good news for those who repent (1:2; cf. 4:17), but impending judgement on those who do not (3:10, 12; cf. 7:19; 13:30; 25:41). In Matthew's narrative, the period of restoration and new hope, as well as judgement, like that foretold long ago by the prophets is inaugurated with Jesus's arrival.

The second time Jesus is identified in the narrative explicitly as God's son is in Matthew 3:17, when Jesus comes to John for baptism and accepts "the mandate that has already been laid out for him."[71] In response to Jesus's act of obedience, the Holy Spirit descends on him like a dove, and a voice from heaven declares, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased" (οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ υἱός μου ὁ ἀγαπητός, ἐν ᾧ εὐδόκησα, cf. Ps 2:7; Isa 41:8; 42:1). In the scene following, Jesus is led into the wilderness by the Spirit to be tested/tempted by the devil "forty days and forty nights."[72]

During the temptation/testing scene Satan never calls into question Jesus's identity as "the Son of God," but rather, operates on the assumption that "if" (or "since" cf. 3:17) Jesus is God's Son, certain things should follow. Specifically, the Devil assumes "Son of God" means (1) possessing and claiming the right to use miraculous powers to conveniently address self-need and avoid hardship (changing stones into bread); (2) claiming the right to divine protection, even to the point of deliberately creating a situation where God would be obliged to act. Or as Craig S. Keener puts it, "to act as if

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[71] Donaldson, "Vindicated Son," 116.

[72] Matthew has ἡμέρας τεσσεράκοντα καὶ νύκτας τεσσεράκοντα ("forty days and forty nights"), where the parallel passages in Mark 1:13 and Luke 4:2 have τεσσεράκοντα ἡμέρας ("forty days"). The mention of "forty days and forty nights" in Matthew 4:2 may call to mind the period when Moses went without food on Mount Sinai (Exod 24:18; 34:28), or perhaps the "forty days and forty nights" (אַרְבָּעִים יוֹם וְאַרְבָּעִים לָיְלָה) Elijah spent in the wilderness after being fed by the angel of the Lord (1 Kgs 19:8). But it seems more likely the author expects the implied reader to recall Israel's wilderness experience after being called out of Egypt (cf. Matt 2:15). As France observes, "It was in the wilderness after the escape from Egypt that Israel began its existence as the people of God, and it will be some of those wilderness experiences which will be brought back to our attention in 4:1–11 as Jesus goes through his own wilderness testing" (France, *Gospel of Matthew*. NICNT. ed. Joel B. Green [Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2007], 100).

God is there to serve his Son, rather than the reverse";[73] and (3) claiming the right to rule over "all the kingdoms of the world" on one's own terms, rather than following the mandate the Father has set out for him. This temptation is "an offer of the right end by the wrong means—if indeed even the end is right, when it is expressed in terms of paramount glory in contrast with the obedient and self-sacrificing role which Jesus will be called to fulfill as God's chosen servant."[74] As the *model son* Jesus chooses unwavering obedience to the Father's will. This is clearly seen again at Gethsemane where even in the face of impending suffering, being "anguished" (λυπέω), "distressed" (ἀδημονέω), and "deeply grieved" (περίλυπος), he prays to the Father "your will be done" (Matt 26:36–56).

Most references to "son of God" in the Jewish Scriptures are not to an individual but to the people of Israel as a whole.[75] It is used in contexts recalling the father-son covenant relationship between God and Israel, which of course required obedience on the part of God's "son" (e.g., Exod 4:22–23; Deut 1:31; 8:5; 14:1; 32:6; Isa 43:6; 63:8, 16; 64:8; Jer 3:4, 14, 19, 22; 31:9, 20; Hos 11:1–4; Mal 1:6; 2:10; 3:17).[76] But unfortunately, the story of Israel is generally one of rebellion and disobedience, which eventually led to the exile. Jesus is portrayed in Matthew's narrative as Israel's corporate representative, *the one man* in whom Israel's obligations as "son of God" are fully

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[73] Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-rhetorical Commentary* (1999; repr., Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2020), 141.

[74] France, *Gospel of Matthew*, 135.

[75] Morna D. Hooker, *The Gospel According to St. Mark*, Blacks New Testament Commentaries, vol. 2 [1981; repr., New York: Bloomsbury, 2001], 47; Max Botner, "'Whoever Does the Will of God' (Mark 3:35): Mark's Christ as the Model Son," in *Son of God: Divine Sonship in Jewish and Christian Antiquity*, ed. Garrick V. Allen, Kai Akagi, Paul Sloan and Madhavi Nevader (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2021), 106–17.

[76] For more on this, see Goran Medved, "Fatherhood of God in the Old Testament," *KEJT* 10 No. 2 (2016): 203–14; Marie Noonan Sabin, *Reopening the Word: Reading Mark as Theology in the Context of Early Judaism* (2002; repr., Oxford: University Press, 2011), 125–23.

realized.[77] In the baptism scene, "Spirit and divine sonship are drawn together as the divine voice addresses the man from Nazareth as the messianic Son through whom God's promise to restore Israel will come to fruition."[78] In the temptation scene, as elsewhere throughout the narrative, the author makes it clear that "sonship" (in the *functional* sense) is to be understood in terms of *obedience*.[79] Thus, the implied reader comes to recognize Jesus, "the Son of God," as both divine and as "the prototype of a pious person who perfectly does the will of God."[80]

"The Son of Man" (ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου). The title "*the* Son of Man" occurs thirty times in the Gospel of Matthew (always with the definite article),[81] and only on the lips of Jesus. No other character in the story refers to him this way, nor does anyone take exception to Jesus using this title for himself—not even the antagonists.[82] It seems the

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[77] Hooker, *Gospel According to St. Mark*, 47. See also Jeannine K. Brown, *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels: A Compendium of Contemporary Biblical Scholarship*, ed. Joel B. Green, Jeannine K. Brown, and Nicholas Perrin. 2nd ed. (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 2020), 580–81.

[78] Botner, "Whoever Does the Will of God," 113.

[79] On the topic of obedience, later in the narrative Jesus tells his followers plainly, "only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven" will enter the kingdom of heaven (7:21), and "whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother" (Matt 12:50). John the Baptist had already made the point that "sonship" is not guaranteed on the basis of one's ancestry or blood ties. He criticized the Jewish leaders for apparently relying on their Abrahamic ancestry alone as their basis for right standing before God, without producing fruit in keeping with repentance (Matt 3:8–10). This is in stark contrast to the people "from Jerusalem and all Judea and the whole region of the Jordan" (3:5) who repent as they anticipate the arrival of the one coming after John. See Botner, "Whoever Does the Will of God," 106–17. Botner's thesis, which he argues convincingly, is Mark 3:31–35 (// Matt 12:46–50) conveys the idea that "God's children are those who do their Father's will by looking to God's Son and by living by the power of God's Spirit." For more on this, see also Stephen C. Barton, *Discipleship and Family Ties in Mark and Matthew*, SBLMS 80 (Cambridge: University Press, 1994), 23–124; Stephen P. Aheare-Knoll, "'Who Are My Mother and My Brothers?': Family Relations and Family Language in the Gospel of Mark," *JR* 81 (2001): 1–25.

[80] Howell, *Matthew's Inclusive Story*, 252.

[81] Matt 8:20; 9:6; 10:23; 11:19; 12:8, 32, 40; 13:37, 41; 16:13, 27, 28; 17:9, 12, 22; 19:28; 20:18, 28; 24:27, 30 (2x), 37, 39, 44; 25:31; 26:2, 24 (2x), 45, 64.

[82] The negative response from the Jewish leaders in Matthew 26:62–66—that is, charging Jesus with blasphemy worthy of death—may have been due to Jesus's allusion to Ps 110:1 (cf. Matt 22:42–

title itself did not appear to Jesus's hearers to have made any specific claim. Nor, it seems, did it have for Jesus's contemporaries the same political and military connotations associated with other titles such as "Messiah" or "Son of David."[83]

As with other titles attributed to Jesus in the NT, the title "the Son of Man" continues to be a topic of much scholarly debate.[84] Until the mid-twentieth century, the general consensus among scholars was that the expression "the Son of Man" was a well-known "fixed" title in ancient Judaism for a messianic "heavenly redeemer figure whose

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45), along with his use of several other titles to identify himself ("Messiah," "Son of God"). Seyoon Kim suggests "Jesus may have used the self-designation ['the Son of Man'] with the dual purpose of revealing his identity discreetly to those who had ears to hear and hiding it from those who had no ears to hear." Thus, "Jesus intended to reveal himself to be the divine figure who was the inclusive representative (or the head) of the eschatological people of God" (Kim, *"The 'Son of Man'" as the Son of God*, WUNT 30 [1983; repr., Wipf & Stock, 2011], 35–36).

[83] For more on this, see Adela Yarbro Collins, "The Origin of the Designation of Jesus as 'Son of Man'," *HTR* 80, no. 4 (1987): 391–407; Bruce Chilton, "בר אנשא: Human and Heavenly," in *Approaches to Ancient Judaism: New Series, Volume Four: Religious and Theological Studies*, ed. Jacob Neusner, SFSHJ 81 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1993), 97–114; Maurice Casey, "The Use of the Term בר אנשא in the Aramaic Translations of the Hebrew Bible," *JSNT* 16, no. 54 (1994): 87–118.

[84] During the latter part of nineteenth century, some began to challenge the assumption that "*the* Son of Man" was a well-known "fixed" title in ancient Judaism (e.g., Nathaniel Schmidt, "Was בר נשא a Messianic Title?," *JBL* 15, no. 1/2 (1896): 36–53; Hans Lietzmann, *Der Menschensohn: Ein Beitrag Zur Neutestamentlichen Theologie* (Leipzig: J. C. B. Mohr, 1896), 40–50; Gustaf Dalman, *The Words of Jesus: Considered in the Light of Post-biblical Jewish Writings and the Aramaic Language*, trans. D. M. Kay (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1902), 241–49; Julius Wellhausen, "Des Menschen Sohn," in *Skizze und Vorarbeiten*, vol. 6 (Berlin: Druck und Verlag von Georg Reimer, 1899), 187–215). Nevertheless, it continued to be the most widely held view among Christian scholars until the mid-twentieth century. Among the more influential arguments opposed to the idea are those put forward by Norman Perrin (e.g., "The Son of Man in Ancient Judaism and Primitive Christianity: A Suggestion," *BR* 11 [1966]: 17–28; "The Creative Use of the Son of Man Traditions by Mark," *USQR* 23, no. 4 [1968]: 357–65). Perrin argued that the assumption there was a well-known, readily recognizable "fixed" title for a messianic heavenly figure in ancient Judaism cannot be supported by the available evidence. The decades following Perrin saw much heated scholarly debate on the issue from various standpoints, which continues to this day. The amount of literature on the subject is vast. Even as early as 1959, A. J. B. Higgins could speak of the "bewildering mass of material" on the subject (Higgins, "Son of Man-*Forschung* since 'The teaching of Jesus,'" in *New Testament Essays: Studies in Memory of Thomas Walter Manson*, ed. A. B. J. Higgins [Manchester: University Press, 1959], 119). Matthew Black later commented, "The Son of man problem is one of the most perplexing and challenging in the whole field of Biblical theology" (Black, "The Son of Man Problem in Recent Research and Debate," *BJRL* 45, no. 2 [1963]: 305). The "problem" has to do with identifying the origin of the title. For a helpful historical overview of the debate, see Delbert Burkett, *The Son of Man Debate: A History and Evaluation*, SNTSMS 7 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

coming to earth as judge would be a feature of the drama of the End time."[85] It was widely assumed that since "the Son of Man" appears so frequently as a fixed title in the NT, it must also have been used as a fixed title in the Jewish background. On this assumption, biblical scholars began to look for examples in Second Temple Jewish writings as confirmation.[86] The problem, however, is that while an eschatological heavenly messianic figure resembling the one described in Daniel 7 as "like a son of man" was known in some Jewish traditions, there is no known text from the period where this heavenly figure is explicitly called "*the* Son of Man."[87] But if the title is not attested in Second Temple Jewish literature, from where did it come?

Most modern scholars now agree the expression "*the* Son of Man" (with the definite article) was first used either by the followers of Jesus[88] or by Jesus himself as a

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[85] Norman Perrin, *A Modern Pilgrimage in New Testament Christology* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1974), 24.

[86] This became a major topic of interest especially among scholars from the *religionsgeschichtliche Schule* (school of the history of religions) during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The underlying presupposition seems to be that all religious ideas must have been borrowed from some other earlier source or sources. Accordingly, for a NT claim to be deemed valid, one must first be able to identify the concept in an earlier source or sources—as though the NT could not possibly contain any new ideas (or further divine revelation). While having a concept appear in an earlier source may be helpful and perhaps would satisfy certain criteria set out by the *religionsgeschichtliche Schule*, such criteria is not necessary for determining whether a NT claim is valid.

[87] One possible exception is 1 Enoch 37–71, known as the *Similitudes of Enoch*. Unfortunately, the date of this section of 1 Enoch is uncertain. It could be as early as the second century BCE or as late as the latter part of the third century CE. Moreover, "the study of the *Similitudes of Enoch* has been made very difficult by the fact that it has survived only in Ge'ez, and in a very corrupt textual tradition at that" (Maurice Casey, *The Solution to the 'Son of Man' Problem*, LNTS 343, 2nd ed. [London: T & T Clark, 2009], 114). The problem of dating this text calls into question the validity of using it as a source for Jewish religious thought during the Second Temple period. See Leslie W. Walck, *The Son of Man in the Parables of Enoch and in Matthew* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2011); Adam Winn, "Identifying the Enochic Son of Man as God's Word and Wisdom," *JSP* 28, no. 4 (2019): 290–318. Another Jewish text often cited by scholars as an example of where the title "the Son of Man" is used outside the NT is 4 Ezra. The issue here, however, is that the title "*the* Son of Man" does not actually appear in the text. It refers only to "the man." See Peter Schäfer, "The Son of Man-Messiah in the Fourth Book of Ezra," in *Two Gods in Heaven: Jewish Concepts of God in Antiquity* (Princeton: University Press, 2020), 54–58. See also John J. Collins, "The Son of Man in First-Century Judaism," *NTS* 38, no. 3 (1992): 448–66.

[88] This is the position held by Norman Perrin (See "Son of Man in Ancient Judaism," 17–28; "Creative Use of the Son of Man Traditions," 357–65; "Mark XIV. 62: The End Product of a Christian

unique kind of self-designation.[89] The author of Matthew—as do the other Gospel writers—reports Jesus himself as having used it. Perhaps it is Jesus's unparalleled use of this expression as a title that best explains why his hearers did not immediately interpret it as making any specific claim or make the connection between him and the eschatological heavenly figure in Daniel 7. But, of course, Jesus does. He speaks of himself explicitly as "*the* Son of Man" in contexts where he alludes to Daniel's prophecy (Matt 13:37–43; 16:27–28; 19:28; 24:30; 25:31; 26:64; cf. Dan 7:13–14; 12:3).

Regardless of one's view on how Daniel's prophecy may have been interpreted during the Second Temple period,[90] it should be fairly non-controversial to assert that on a basic level it concerned the vindication of the "holy ones of the Most High" (MT קַדִּישֵׁי עֶלְיוֹנִין = LXX ἅγιοι Ὑψίστου) after a time of being "oppressed" (בְּלָא[91]).The Aramaic

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Pesher Tradition?" *NTS* 12 (1966): 150–55; "The Son of Man in the Synoptic Tradition," *BR* 13 (1968): 3–25). Perrin's argument that the term "the Son of Man" was first used by Jesus's followers, but not by Jesus himself, is made on the presumption that the early Christians put words in Jesus's mouth as they superimposed their post-resurrection tradition upon the Jesus-story. For a similar view, see Carl S. Patton, "Did Jesus Call Himself the Son of Man?" *JR* 2, no. 5 (1922): 501–11; A. Yarboro Collins, "The Origin of the Designation of Jesus as 'Son of Man,'" in *Cosmology and Eschatology in Jewish and Christian Apocalypticism* (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 139–58. But given the Gospel writers were writing what they claimed to be a reliable account of recent events for a target audience that most likely included some members who had living memory of the events reported on, the idea that Jesus used this term himself as a unique kind of self-designation seems most plausible.

[89] For an overview of the history of the interpretation of Daniel 7, see Maurice Casey, "The interpretation of Daniel VII in Jewish and Patristic Literature and in the New Testament: An Approach to the Son of Man Problem," (PhD. diss., University of Durham, 1976); Casey, *Son of Man: The Interpretation and Influence of Daniel 7* (London: SPCK, 1979); Casey, *The Solution to the 'Son of Man' Problem.* For a more general overview of the history of interpretation of 'Son of Man,' see Delbert Burkett, *The Son of Man Debate: A History and Evaluation*, SNTSMS 107 (Cambridge: University Press, 1999); Mogens Müller, *The Expression Son of Man and the Development of Christology: A History of Interpretation* (2007; repr., New York: Routledge, 2014); Benjamin E. Reynolds, ed., *The Son of Man Problem: Critical Readings* (London & New York: T & T Clark, 2018).

[90] For an overview of interpretations of Daniel in early Jewish literature, see James M. Hamilton, Jr., *With the Clouds of Heaven: The Book of Daniel in Biblical Theology*, NSBT 32 (Downers Grove, Ill: IVP Academic, 2014), 155-78.

[91] The word בְּלָא is a *hapax legomenon* in biblical Aramaic. Most interpret it as equivalent in meaning to the Hebrew term בָּלָה = "to wear away," "wear out" (See MacRae, "בָּלָה," in *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*; Sokoloff, "בָּלָה," in *A Dictionary of Jewish Babylonian Aramaic of the Talmudic and Geonic Periods: Publications of The Comprehensive Aramaic Lexicon Project* (Baltimore:

phrase כְּבַר אֱנָשׁ in Daniel 7:13 means "one like a son of man" (= LXX ὡς υἱὸς ἀνθρώπου), signifying that the figure Daniel sees in his vision is a *human* being. At the same time, however, the reader is to understand that this is no ordinary human being. Not only is he given "dominion and glory and kingship" (MT שָׁלְטָן וְיקָר וּמַלְכוּ = LXX ἐξουσία καὶ τιμὴ βασιλική, "authority, honor, and sovereignty"), but also all peoples, nations, and language groups "worship" him (כל עַמְמַיָּא אֻמַיָּא וְלִשָׁנַיָּא לֶהֱ יִפְלְחוּן).[92] The "one like a son of man' (כְּבַר אֱנָשׁ) may, as Casey and Wright argue, have been interpreted by some as representing the people of Israel, rather than some eschatological heavenly messianic figure.[93] If so, Jesus's use of the term "leaves open the possibility of interpreting his sayings to mean that he identified himself, and his ministry, as the fulfillment of [Israel's] national hope."[94] Of course, it is equally possible that Daniel's prophecy regarding a "Son of Man" figure had also taken on messianic overtones in some first-century contexts.[95] In any case, for Matthew's implied reader Jesus's self-identification as "*the* Son of Man" signifies his role as the coming eschatological judge who will rule over a

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Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003); James A. Swanson, "בְּלָה," in *Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains: Aramaic (Old Testament)* [Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997], Logos Bible Software). The LXX translates Dan 7:25 as τοὺς ἁγίους τοῦ ὑψίστου κατατρίψει ("he will oppress the holy ones of the Most High"). In certain contexts, κατατρέχω means "to overrun," "oppress," "lay waste" (See Loder, "κατατρέχω," in *VGNTS*).

[92] The Aramaic verb פְּלַח, which can mean "pay homage," "serve," or "worship." In the Hebrew Bible it is found only in contexts related to religious devotion to God or to gods/idols (Dan 3:12, 14, 17–18, 28; 6:16, 20; 7:14, 27; Ezra 7:24). See Gleason L. Archer, R. Laird Harris, and Bruce K. Waltke, "2940 פְּלַח," in *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, 1980); Michael Sokoloff, "פלח," in *A Dictionary of Jewish Babylonian Aramaic*; Holger Gzella, ed. "פלח," in vol. 16 of *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, trans. Mark E. Biddle (1973, repr., Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2018).

[93] Casey, *The Solution to the 'Son of Man' Problem*, 112–15; N. T. Wright, "Jesus, Israel and the Cross," in *SBL 1985 Seminar Papers*, ed. K. H. Richards (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1985), 82–86.

[94] Wright, "Jesus, Israel and the Cross," 84.

[95] See Collins, "The Son of Man in First-Century Judaism," 448–66. Collins argues there were certain common assumptions within first-century Judaism concerning Dan 7:13, but also admits it is difficult to ascertain how widespread these assumptions were.

universal and eternal kingdom (See Matt 13:37–43; 16:27; 19:28; 24:30–51; 25:31–46; 26:64) and, as such, identifies him as "the one in whom Israel is to find her redemption."[96]

Character Traits Ascribed to Jesus

The various titles attributed to and used by Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew provide "a convenient point of entry into both the question of Matthew's Christology itself and the way one can most responsibly and profitably deal with the issues involved."[97] However, the author's characterization of Jesus cannot be explained fully by examining only the titles attributed to or used by Jesus. There are many events and speeches in Matthew which seem significant that are not associated with any specific title. For example, while the title "Son of David" is *nearly* always mentioned in relation to Jesus's acts of healing, restoration of sight to the blind, and exorcism, there are other accounts where Jesus's healing ministry is associated with a different title such as "Lord" or "Son of Man" (e.g., Matt 8:6–13; 9:6), or no title at all (e.g., Matt 8:1–5). In Matthew 8:16–17, the author alludes to Isaiah's suffering servant by quoting Isa 53:4, but no title is mentioned. Christological titles, therefore, provide only a partial picture.[98]

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[96] Casey, *The Solution to the 'Son of Man' Problem*, 112–15; Wright, "Jesus, Israel and the Cross," 82–86.

[97] Donaldson, "Vindicated Son", 103.

[98] In his *Matthew: Structure, Christology, Kingdom*, published in 1975, Kingsbury discusses how the author of Matthew establishes Jesus's identity using christological titles. While recognizing there is much scholarly debate regarding the meaning and significance of christological titles in the Gospel of Matthew, Kingsbury contends "Son of God" is central to Jesus's identity, "the most fundamental christological category in Matthew's Gospel" (83). But Hans Frei sees it differently. He maintains that Jesus's identity "is focused in the circumstances of the action and not in back of them. He is what he does and undergoes" ("Theological Reflections on the Accounts of Jesus' Death and Resurrection," in *Theology and Narrative: Selected Essays*, ed. G. Hunsinger and W. C. Placher [Oxford: University Press, 1993], 73). Frei argues that a person's identity "is first of all given in the development of a consistent set of intentions embodied in corporeal and social activity within the public world in which one functions" (63). "To know a person's identity" he says, "involves the total coincidence, nay unity, of abstract defining virtues or qualities with the specific way they are being held together in and by an individual and enacted by him" (62). In other words, the christological titles in Matthew give the reader only a partial understanding of who

The Gospel of Matthew serves as both "devotional and instructional literature for believers as well as the literary foundation for carrying out the Great Commission (Matt 28:16–20) to non-believers."[99] The narrative is presented as a trustworthy and compelling argument that God's plan of salvation for Israel, and indeed for all people, is realized in and through Jesus the Messiah. The author builds a more convincing argument by including along with christological titles an array of character traits which inform the reader *what Jesus is like*.

In Matthew's *rhetorically shaped* narrative, christological titles establish Jesus's identity as God's appointed agent who represents the dominant evaluative point of view espoused by the narrative. They inform the implied reader *who Jesus is* and how he fits into God's plan of salvation. Jesus "stands forth in Matthew's story as the supreme representative of God's system of values who understands himself to be God's unique Son and the decisive figure in the history of salvation."[100] The purpose of Jesus's ministry to Israel is to bring about the reversal of the misfortunes of God's people due to their sins (Matt 1:21), and to address their need for proper leadership and care (9:35–36; 23:1–36; cf. Ezek 34:12–24). "The nation must choose between the way of Jesus and all other possible alternatives, and on its choice depended its hope for a national future."[101]

One overarching characteristic of Matthew's protagonist is that he is a person of integrity who always speaks and acts in ways entirely consistent with *who he is*. Unlike the other characters in the story, Jesus is shown to be the perfect representative of

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Jesus is, and therefore, must be understood in light of what is said about Jesus's actions and words throughout the entire narrative.

[99] Mika Hietanen, "The Gospel of Matthew as a Literary Argument," *Argumentation* 25 (2011): 65.

[100] Kingsbury, *Matthew as Story*, 13.

[101] George B. Caird, "Jesus and the Jewish Nation," in *The Historical Jesus in Recent Research*, ed. James D. G. Dunn, and Scot McKnight (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2005), 287.

God's evaluative point of view, without exception. Throughout the narrative Jesus demonstrates God's love and care for his people. Everything he says and does during his earthly ministry is said and done in relation to his mission "to the lost sheep of Israel" (15:24).[102] Even on those rare occasions when he responds to the needs of Gentiles, Jesus comments on how his ministry to them relates to his mission to Israel (8:10–12; 15:24–28). When the author tells the reader Jesus is "compassionate," or shows him speaking and acting with compassion, it is in the context of providing care for the shepherdless, harassed, and helpless sheep of Israel (Matt 9:36; 14:14; 15:32; 20:34).

Jesus is confident about the nature and extent of his mission (15:24; 16:21; 28:18–20), which he carries out fully in accordance with his Father's will as an obedient son (3:15; 4:1–11; 26:39, 42, 44). He teaches that obedience to the law is important, but values showing mercy as even more important (9:12–13; 12:7; cf. Hos 6:6; Mic 6:8. See also Matt 23:23). This he demonstrates most clearly by his healing ministry and by his willingness to associate with the outcasts of society (Matt 8:2–3; 20:29–34).[103] He has the power to save (1:21; 26:26–28), to heal (4:24; 8:8–17; 9:21–22; 12:15), and even raise the dead (9:18, 23–25). He is self-giving (8:20; 20:25–28), and reassuring (14:27; 18:20; 19:28–29; 28:20). Early in the narrative Jesus is presented as representing God's presence with his people (1:23; cf. 28:20). As the story unfolds, the implied reader learns that Jesus, like God the Father, is well-disposed toward his people and concerned for their well-being (4:23–24; 8:2–3; 9:11–13, 35–36; 20:29–34). The author portrays Jesus as a person most people loved being around because he cared for them and met their needs

[102] Sheep imagery is frequently used in the OT in reference to God's covenant people (e.g., Judg 11:19; 2 Chr 18:16; Isa 53:6; Jer 23:1–6; Ezek 34:5). In some contexts, sheep and shepherd are used figuratively for the people of Israel and their leaders (e.g., Num 27:17; 1 Kgs 22:17; Zech 11:7; Ps 49:14).

[103] For example, by touching a person with leprosy (Matt 8:3), or a woman with a hemorrhage (Matt 9:20–22), Jesus would have become ceremonially unclean (cf. Lev 5:3; 15:25–27). See also Jesus's teaching regarding David and his companions who ate the consecrated bread (Matt 12:3–8; cf. 1 Sam 21:1–6). For more on this last example, see France, *Gospel of Matthew*, 458–63.

(4:25; 8:1; 9:10; 12:15; 15:30; 19:13–14). The only characters in the story who did not like being around him were the antagonists who perceive him as a fraud, and a threat to their religious traditions and privileged position (See, for example, Matt 9:34; 12:2–8, 24; 15:1–2; 21:15; 27:18, 63–64).

Jesus is characterized in Matthew as "authoritative" (7:29; 9:6, 8; 11:27; 21:23–27; 28:18). Jesus himself explicitly states that he, "*the* Son of Man," has authority on earth to forgive sins (Matt 9:6; cf. Mark 2:10 // Luke 5:24) and is Lord even of the Sabbath (Matt 12:8; cf. Mark 2:28 // Luke 6:5). But for Jesus, authority is not about having a position of honor; it's about serving others, even to the point of laying down his life for "sinners" (cf. 1:21; 26:26–28). Jesus gives himself willingly "as a ransom for many" to save his people from their sins and bring them back into a right relationship with God (Matt 20:28).

When Jerusalem refuses to accept God's care and protection, Jesus is seen speaking for God as he laments over the city, brokenhearted because of the waywardness of his people (Matt 23:37–38; cf. 2 Chr 24:19–21; Isa 1:2–7; Jer 35:15–17). This comes after a scene where Jesus places the blame for Israel's dire situation squarely on the shoulders of the religious leaders (23:13–36). His rebuke of the scribes and Pharisees in Matthew 23 is reminiscent of some OT prophecies in which Israel's shepherds (leaders) are reprimanded for misleading and failing to bestow care on God's sheep (people) (cf. Jer 23:1–2; 22:22; 50:6; Ezek 34:4–10). Jesus is confrontational toward these hypocrites (ὑποκριταί, cf. 6:1–2) because he knows their pretense and abuse of authority for the sake of personal gain (23:5–7) has not only caused God's people to be shepherdless, harassed, and helpless (cf. Matt 9:36), but will also eventually lead to Jerusalem's demise (23:36, 38; 24:1–2).

The author of Matthew reveals some aspects of Jesus's *inner life*, such as when he is "anguished" (λυπεῖσθαι, 26:37) and "distressed" (ἀδημονεῖν, 26:37). He also depicts Jesus as knowing certain things one would not normally expect a person to know such as

there being a four-drachmae coin (στατήρ) in the mouth of a fish (17:27), or a donkey and her colt being at a certain location (21:2), as well as knowing the inner thoughts of others (9:4; 22:18). Jesus has power over nature and demonic forces (4:24; 8:31). He can rebuke the wind and waves and they obey him (8:26). He can even walk on water (14:25–26). Jesus has the power to heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, and cast out demons, and can confer that authority on his disciples (10:8).

The literary character Jesus does not show signs of development over the course of the narrative, but he is nevertheless the most complex. He is presented as God's agent sent into the world to save his people from their sins. He exemplifies what it means to love God with one's whole being (22:37–39) and acts in perfect obedience to the will of the Father. Accordingly, the implied reader who adopts the dominant evaluative point of view espoused by the narrative will have the same attitude as Jesus does toward the other characters in the story.

The Antagonists (Religious Leaders) in Matthew

The antagonists in Matthew's Gospel are represented by the Pharisees (Φαρισαῖοι), Sadducees (Σαδδουκαῖοι), chief priests (ἀρχιερεῖς), scribes (γραμματεῖς), and elders (πρεσβύτεροι). The different names suggest these subgroups could be distinguished from one another, but at no point does the author explain how they differ (cf. Acts 23:6–10),[104] nor does he comment directly on specific roles each may have played in the "real world" of Jewish religion and society at the time.[105] Apparently, such matters have no

[104] The author's parenthetical comment in Matthew 22:23 only says the Sadducees did not believe in the resurrection of the dead. The implication is this is what set them apart from others, but the author does not state this explicitly.

[105] Some information, however, is implied by having members of these groups appear in different settings. For example, the chief priests and the elders seem to be associated with the Sanhedrin and the temple bureaucracy (Matt 26:3, 57, 59; 27:1, 3–6; 28:11–12). The Pharisees seem to be associated more with the synagogue (Matt 23:6, 34; 6:2,5; 10:17; 12:2, 9, 14). The scribes seem to appear in various contexts along with the chief priests, elders, and Pharisees (Matt 2:4; 5:20; 12:38; 15:1; 23:2, 13–29; 26:3,

direct bearing on the plot. Instead, the author draws attention to what they all have in common; namely, they are the religious leaders responsible for shepherding God's people Israel, and they are united in their unyielding opposition to Jesus. In Matthew's "story world," the religious leaders function as a single "character" speaking and acting in ways that demonstrate what is looks like to be "against" Jesus (12:30).[106]

In her 1977 book, *Toward a Speech Act Theory of Literary Discourse,* Mary L. Pratt notes how good storytellers produce "display texts" that contain "displaying assertions" which invite intuitive reactions from the reader.[107] She explains that, "in

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57, 41). For more on the Sanhedrin, see Anthony Saldarini, "Sanhedrin," in vol. 5 of *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 975–80.

[106] As Sjef van Tilborg notes, the author Matthew "prefers a combination-formula. In view of the interchangeability of one group for the other, all the texts must be put together if one wishes to get some idea of what Matthew wishes to make clear to his readers about the representatives of Israel" (Tilborg, *The Jewish Leaders in Matthew* [Leiden: Brill, 1972], 6). Jack Dean Kingsbury also notes, "Because the rhetorical effect of the way in which these several groups are presented is such as to make of them a monolithic front opposed to Jesus, they can, narrative-critically, be treated as a single character" (Kingsbury, "The Developing Conflict Between Jesus and the Jewish Leaders in Matthew's Gospel: A Literary-Critical Study," *CBQ* 49 (1987): 60. See also Warren Carter, *Matthew: Storyteller, Interpreter, Evangelist* [1996; repr., Grand Rapids: Baker Academic Press, 2013], 229–41). Thomas C. Fraatz challenged this view on the basis that the author of Matthew "provides no indication that these groups are acting in concert with one another on a continual basis," and "repeatedly alters the opponents of Jesus as presented in Mark" by inserting "Pharisees," which Fraatz says, "suggests that Matthew sees the Pharisees playing a particular role in the opposition to Jesus" (Fraatz, "Social Conflict Theory and Matthew's Polemic against the Pharisees," [paper presented at the Ancient Borderlands International Graduate Student conference, University of California, April 16–18, 2010], 3–4). But Fraatz's argument is unconvincing. On the first point, it is not necessary that these subgroups act in concert with one another. It is the religious leaders' shared opposition to Jesus that unites them as a single "prototypical" literary character. Furthermore, there is never a point in the story when one subgroup shows any less opposition to Jesus than the others. On the second point, Matthew's emphasis on Pharisees may simply be his way of indicting that this subgroup was more influential among the people. Or perhaps these were the religious leaders the implied reader (and his ἐκκλησία of Jesus-followers) was more familiar with. Anders Runesson suggests that Matthew had close ties with Pharisaic traditions, and that *intra muros* conflict arose after attempts were made by the Jesus-followers to convince their intra-Pharisaic rivals that Jesus was the Messiah. See Runesson, "Rethinking Early Jewish-Christian Relations: Matthean Community History as Pharisaic Intragroup Conflict," *JBL* 127, no. 1 (2008): 92–132.

[107] Mary L. Pratt, *Toward a Speech Act Theory of Literary Discourse* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1977), 136. Pratt's theory of pragmatic literary analysis builds on H. Paul Grice's theory of the "maximally effective exchange of information." In his 1975 article "Logic and Conversation," Grice noted that literary texts exhibit features that are different from "natural discourse" (i.e., conversation). While the purpose of "natural discourse" is to convey information with or without any intention of influencing or directing the actions of others, literary texts (e.g., narratives) are always written to evoke

making an assertion whose relevance is tellability, a speaker is not only reporting but also verbally displaying a state of affairs, inviting his addressee(s) to join him in contemplating it, evaluating it, and responding to it."[108] Matthew's Gospel is not simply a record of historical events; it is a *rhetorically shaped* narrative designed to evoke a certain desired response from the implied reader. The author's "point is to produce in his hearers not only belief but also an imaginative and affective involvement in the state of affairs he is representing and an evaluative stance toward it."[109] The author of Matthew characterizes the antagonists in his story primarily by *showing* what they are like. The only time he *tells* the implied reader anything about them explicitly is when he comments on their lack of authority when teaching (Matt 7:29 // Mark 1:22). By stepping back and allowing the antagonists to speak and act, or have others say or do something in relation to them, the author provides opportunities for the implied reader to become more emotionally invested in the story and respond accordingly (e.g., feeling a sense of antipathy and aversion toward those against Jesus).

Unlike Jesus, a single individual, all the other main characters in Matthew—the antagonists, the disciples, and the crowd(s)/people—are groups of individuals portrayed as if they were single *prototypical* characters. According to Cousland, this

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some sort of response from the reader (see H. Paul Grice, "Logic and Conversation," in *Syntax and Semantics III: Speech Acts*, ed. P. Cole and J. L. Morgan [London: Academic Press, 1975], 41–58). The term "display-text" refers to an author's report on a state of affairs involving characters who demonstrate by their actions the point the author is trying to make, without having to state it explicitly. "Display-texts" could describe a real or an imagined state of affairs. The author of Matthew, who is clearly concerned that his story carries as much historical credibility as possible, claims he is reporting on events that took place in reality. "With regard to the thesis that Jesus is the Son of God it would not be a good strategy to invent purely fictitious proofs. . . . A reader who is not convinced that the stories of Matthew are true is less likely to be convinced of any standpoint that they are intended to support" (Hietanen, "The Gospel of Matthew as a Literary Argument," 82–83).

[108] Pratt, *Toward a Speech Act Theory*, 136. Pratt uses the term "tellability" to refer to the quality of a text that makes it both entertaining and influential.

[109] Pratt, *Toward a Speech Act Theory*, 136.

method of characterization is similar to the concept of "corporate character" found in ancient Greek tragedy.[110] Such characters are constructed by an author by combining the essential features of members within a group that best describe the type of character and perspective represented by that group. Whether the characters portrayed are fictitious or modelled after real people is determined not by an author's use of the literary technique itself, but rather, by the type of literary work in which the characters appear. The author of Matthew presents his narrative as a reliable record of historical events. The implied reader who accepts the author's perspective would, therefore, view the characters in his story as modelled after real people.

Authors frequently model their characters after real people. But when an author creates a literary character—even one modeled after a "real" person—he or she must decide what to include and what to omit when portraying them. Such choices are necessary because it is not possible to tell everything there is to tell about an individual. An author's choices may also be determined largely by what he or she deems necessary for the story plot, and for creating *character effect*. The author of Matthew most likely modeled the antagonists in his story after real people who exhibited similar character traits.[111] But these literary characters should not be interpreted as full descriptions of

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[110] J. R. C. Cousland, "The Choral Crowds in the Tragedy According to St. Matthew," in *Ancient Fiction: The Matrix of Early Christian and Jewish Narrative*, ed. Jo-Ann A. Brant, Charles W. Hedrick and Chris Shea [Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2005], 255–73).

[111] Determining the extent to which these literary characters reflect people in the "real world" is beyond the scope of this study. Such questions are suspended to allow the text to speak for itself as a self-contained literary work. The primary concern here is to understand how the religious leaders are characterized and how they function within Matthew's "story world." But as Mieke Bal points out, "even if we do not wish to study the relations between text and context as a separate object of analysis, we cannot ignore the fact that direct or indirect knowledge of the context of certain characters contributes significantly to their meaning" (Bal, *Narratology*, 107). The challenge, however, for anyone attempting to understand Matthew's historical context is that there is very little evidence outside the NT saying anything about what the religious leaders in Judea and Galilee were like during Jesus's earthly ministry. There are some possible clues from the Dead Sea scrolls about what the Pharisees were like earlier—assuming the phrase "the ones who look for smooth things" (דורשי החלקות) refers to them (See Bartosz Adamczewski, "Are the Dead Sea Scrolls Pharisaic?" in *Sacred Texts and Disparate Interpretations: Qumran Manuscripts Seventy Years Later*, ed. Henryk Drawnel [Leiden: Brill, 2020], 69–92). James VanderKam notes that the Qumran

community viewed the Pharisees as a rival group who mislead others through their speech (See VanderKam, "Pesher Nahum and Josephus," in *When Judaism and Christianity Began: Essays in Memory of Anthony J. Saldarini*, ed. Alan J. Avery-Peck, Daniel Harrington and Jacob Neusner [Leiden: Brill, 2004], 299–311; VanderKam, "The Pharisees and the Dead Sea Scrolls," in *In Quest of the Historical Pharisees*, ed, Jacob Neusner and Bruce Chilton, 225–36 [Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2007]; VanderKam, *The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Bible* [Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2012], 107–17).

The only first-century source outside the NT that even mentions the Pharisees and Sadducees specifically is Josephus, and they figure only marginally in his writings. What Josephus does say about the Pharisees is mostly positive. For example, they enjoyed the support of the masses (*Antiquities* 13.296, 298), held positions of influence (*Antiquities* 18.15, 17), had "the reputation of excelling others in their precision with respect to the ancestral ordinances" (*Life* 191), "valued themselves highly upon the exact skill they had in the law of their fathers, and made men believe they were highly favored by God" (*Antiquities* 17:41; cf. *War* 1.110, 2.1620). However, he also says they were at times hypocritical, slanderous, devious, murderous, and corrupt (*Antiquities* 13:409–12; 17–39, 42–45; *Life* 189–90, 195–96). According to Josephus, the Pharisees usurped political power and "proceeded to kill whomever they wished on false charges" (*War* 1.111–13). Steve Mason suggests this characterized them as "wolves in sheep's clothing" (Mason, "War 1:107–14: The Pharisees and Alexandra Salome," in *Flavius Josephus on the Pharisees: A Composition-Critical Study* [1991; repr., Leiden: Brill, 2001], 111). Josephus also says the Sadducees too were heavily involved in political and religious life, but they did not have the support of the masses (*Antiquities* 13.298). He characterizes them as a contentious, disharmonious group (*War* 2.166).

Later rabbinic writings echo some of what the NT and Josephus say about the Pharisees, specifically that they were open to the charge of hypocrisy. For example, *bSotah* 22b states, "King Yannai said to his wife: 'fear not the Pharisees nor those who are not Pharisees but the hypocrites who appear as if they are Pharisees because their deeds are like the deeds of Zimri but they request a reward like Phineas.'" That is, the negative description "hypocrites" applies not to *real* Pharisees but to *false* Pharisees who do not behave as they ought. While the rabbis make no clear specific claim to Pharisaic lineage in their writings, most Jewish and Christian scholars agree that the first rabbis were Pharisees. The similarities between Pharisaic and rabbinic *halakhah* seems to support this. The fact that the rabbinic authors "felt a need to defend the Pharisees demonstrates that they were indeed subject to attack by other Jewish groups" (Etka Liebowitz, "Hypocrites or Pious Scholars? The Image of the Pharisees in Second Temple Period Texts and Rabbinic Literature," *Melilah* 11 [2014]: 64). This suggests that even though Pharisees typically were not hypocritical, there were those among them who could be described as "hypocrites." As Liebowitz rightly observes, "we see that Josephus, the NT and rabbinic literature all associate the motif of hypocrisy, the contradiction between outward behavior and pronouncements, with the Pharisees" (Liebowitz, "Hypocrites or Pious Scholars?," 62). For more on parallel accounts in Josephus and rabbinic literature, see Shaye Cohen, "Parallel Traditions in Josephus and Rabbinic Literature," in *Proceedings of the Ninth World Congress of Jewish Studies*, ed. Moshe Goshen-Gottstein (Jerusalem: World Union of Jewish Studies, 1986), 7–14.

While the similarities among the Dead Sea scrolls, the NT, Josephus, and rabbinic literature do not prove conclusively that Matthew's literary characters were modeled after real people, they nevertheless indicate that the description of the religious leaders in his narrative reflects a common tradition regarding how some Pharisees were viewed by others. During the first-century CE, "Judaism" consisted of various sectarian groups, any one of which could have had members who exhibited the kinds of attitudes and behaviors one reads about in Matthew. Some have suggested that Matthew's description of the Jewish leaders is anachronistic (For a summary of the arguments see D. A. Carson, "The Jewish Leaders in Matthew's Gospel: A Reappraisal," *JETS* 25, no. 2 [1982]: 163–67). But as Carson points out, "In order to demonstrate that Matthew's portrait of the Jewish leaders is anachronistic, one must begin with relatively certain pictures of what Jewish leaders were actually like both when Matthew wrote and during the time of Jesus (the period Matthew purports to describe)" (163). While the religious leaders in Matthew's narrative speak and act in ways *atypical* of what is known about Jews in general, the historical evidence suggests the author of Matthew probably modeled his literary characters after people in the "real world."

"real" people. In Matthew's "story world" the religious leaders function as a single *prototypical* character. The author "tends to fuse the leaders into a single 'character,' which presents a united opposition to Jesus and his followers."[112] This character's mode of existence in the narrative is both "mimetic"[113] (also called "realistic") and "semiotic"[114] (also called "purist"). It is "mimetic" in that the individuals representing the antagonist group are depicted as real-life people whom the implied reader can identify with and even feel a sense of antipathy toward. In this way, the author creates a *character-effect* that encourages the implied reader to reject the antagonist's evaluative point of view. This character's mode of existence is "semiotic" in that it serves a specific *function* of the plot; namely, it signifies for the implied reader the antithesis to the argument. While the individuals speaking and acting on behalf of their group appear "life-like," they are in fact part of a prototypical character created by the author by selecting certain character traits which are characteristic of the sort of people who espouse an evaluative point of view diametrically opposed to that of God.[115]

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[112] Stephen G. Wilson, *Related Strangers: Jews and Christians 70–170 C.E.* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Press, 1995), 50.

[113] The term μίμησις was used by Plato to refer to the imitative nature of human activities. See Richard McKeon, "Literary Criticism and the Concept of Imitation in Antiquity," *Modern Philology* 34, no. 1 (1936): 1–35. It was later used by Hellenistic authors to refer to the practice of imitating the masters of rhetoric and literary composition. See D. A. Russell, "De Imitatione," in *Creative Imitation and Latin Literature*, ed. David West and Tony Woodman (Cambridge: University Press, 1979), 1–16; Matthew R. Hauge, "The Creation of Person in Ancient Narrative and the Gospel of Mark," in *Character Studies and the Gospel of Mark*, ed. Christopher W. Skinner and Matthew Ryan Hauge (New York: Bloomsbury, 2014), 57–77.

[114] The term "semiotic" is derived from the Greek σημειωτικός ("observant of signs"). Semiotics is the study of how "signs" (e.g., words on a page) signify meaning. For more on this, see Halina Sendera, Mohd Yakin and Andreas Totu, "The Semiotic Perspectives of Peirce and Saussure: A Brief Comparative Study," *PSBS* 155, no. 6 (2014): 4–8.

[115] A comparison with the other Synoptic Gospels shows the author of Matthew is selective when characterizing the religious leaders in his story. He clearly does not tell everything there was to know about them. For example, he omits Jesus's response to the "wise scribe" found in Mark 12:28 (Matt 22:34–41), the detail about the "ruler" (ἄρχων) whom Jesus helped (Matt 9:18, 23–25) being a "synagogue ruler" (ἀρχισυνάγωγος, Mark 5:22 // ἄρχων τῆς συναγωγῆς, Luke 8:41), and the detail about Joseph of Arimathea being a prominent member of the Sanhedrin (Matt 27:57–60; cf. Mark 15:43 // Luke 23:50–51). He omits

As Kingsbury observed, all the character traits used to characterize the religious leaders in Matthew's Gospel are really manifestations of a single "root trait."[116] They are essentially "evil" (9:4; 12:34, 39, 45; 16:4; 22:18).[117] Of course, the term "evil" (πονηρός) can be defined simply as the opposite or absence of good. Perhaps this is what Jesus had in mind when he called the crowds and disciples "evil" in Matthew 7:11—that is, in hyperbolic contrast to the goodness of God the Father. But "evil" can also be defined to mean morally bad and causing harm. The author of Matthew further clarifies what it looks like for the religious leaders to be "evil" by ascribing to them many other character traits. For example, they are seen to be blasphemous (9:34; 12:24–37), duplicitous (e.g., 22:16; cf. 9:3; 26:66), hypocritical (e.g., 6:2, 5, 16; 15:7–8; 22:18; 23:13–29), devious (22:15; 34; 26:15; 27:1, 20), envious (27:18), deceitful (28:11–15), and murderous (e.g., 12:14; 26:4). Three times they are called a "brood of vipers" (3:7; 12:34; 23:33). Unlike some other characters in the story, they are spiritually blind (15:14; 23:16, 17, 19, 24, 26),[118] even misreading Jesus's authority to cast out demons as demonic (9:34; 12:24). They know how to interpret the signs of good or bad weather, but not the signs of the times (16:2–3). They worship God in vain, "teaching as doctrines the commandments of men" (15:9). They disobey and nullify the word of God for the sake of their tradition (15:3, 6), and neglect the weightier matters of the law (23:23). They are likened to bad trees who produce evil fruit or no fruit at all (3:7–8, 10; 12:33–36; cf.

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or downplays anything that might be said positive about the religious leaders, while highlighting every kind of character trait that would cast them in the worst possible light. For more on the comparison of Matthew's references to the Jewish leaders with the other Synoptic Gospels, see David E. Garland, *The Intention of Matthew 23.* Supplements to Novum Testamentum 52 (Leiden: Brill, 1979), 218–21.

[116] Kingsbury, *Matthew as Story*, 18.

[117] Mark and Luke never use the term "evil" (πονηρός) to describe the religious leaders. In Luke 11:39, however, Jesus does say they are full of "wickedness" (πονηρίας).

[118] The only parable they understand is one about the Landowner (οἰκοδεσπότης) which speaks of their impending doom (21:33–45).

21:43).[119] Jesus says they are "blind guides" (15:14; 23:16, 24) whose form of "righteousness" is not enough to enter the kingdom of heaven (5:20), and warned against the influence of their teaching (16:6–12).[120] These religious leaders condemn the innocent (12:7), mislead people (15:14), place heavy burdens on them (23:4), and prevent people from entering the kingdom (23:13). "Through the use of the epithet 'Hypocrites', the Jewish leaders are characterized as those who are outwardly righteous, but inwardly lawless and wicked."[121]

Clearly, the antagonists in Matthew's narrative are characterized as "evil" not only because they lack what is good, but also because they think, speak, and act in ways that reveal their moral badness and intent on doing harm (9:4; 12:14, 26, 34–35; 22:18; 27:1). This is due to their origin. These religious leaders have not been appointed by God. According to Jesus, they are children "of hell" (23:15); "sons of the evil one" (13:38) who have been planted in the world by the devil (13:24–30, 36–43; cf. 15:13–14).[122] Their destiny is the "eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels" (25:41; cf. 23:33), and all who follow them will share the same fate (15:14). All their character traits correspond to the evaluative point of view they represent. Accordingly, "Matthew's implied reader is expected to come to a deeper understanding of the nature of evil: it

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[119] Whether the false prophets mentioned in 7:15–20 can be identified with the Jewish religious leaders is a matter of scholarly debate. For a discussion on this see Janice Capel Anderson, *Matthew's Narrative Web: Over, and Over, and Over Again*, ed. Stanley E. Porter, JSNTSup 91 (Sheffield: Academic Press, 1994), 107n1.

[120] This warning comes after the scene where the Pharisees and Sadducees ask Jesus for "a sign from heaven" to test him (16:1). "In view of the sharp ideological differences between [these] two groups, the most likely matter on which their "teaching" might have been at one would be in their common rejection of Jesus and what they understood him to stand for. . . . [Their] false "teaching" is clearly revealed in their skeptical demand for yet another "sign," when they have already been given so many" (France, *Gospel of Matthew*, 605.

[121] Anderson, *Matthew's Narrative Web*, 104.

[122] Anderson suggests the author's repetition of the word πειράζω in reference to the religious leaders "tempting" Jesus also links them with Satan (16:1; 19:3; 22:35; cf. 22:18; 4:1, 3). Anderson, *Matthew's Narrative Web*, 117.

tends to be hypocritical, masquerading as good (23:27–28); it involves unwitting self-deception, failing to recognize its own duplicity (15:14; 23:16–22); it prevents what would be good, ignoring motives and outcomes (6:2, 5, 16)."[123]

Tenants in the Vineyard

In the parable of the "Vineyard Owner" in Matthew 21:33–46 (// Mark 12:1–12; Luke 20:9–19), the "tenants" (γεωργοί) represent the religious leaders and the vineyard represents the people of Israel. The background to this parable appears to be the "Song of the Vineyard" in Isaiah 5:1–7.[124] In that passage, the prophet Isaiah identifies "the house of Israel" as "the vineyard of the LORD of hosts" (כֶּרֶם יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת), and "the men of Judah" as "his delightful plant" (נְטַע שַׁעֲשׁוּעָיו)" (v. 7). The "Song" focuses primarily on the suffering of the vineyard owner who pronounces judgement due to the vineyard's failure to produce "*good* grapes" (עֲנָבִים). Isaiah invites the residents of Jerusalem and the people of Judah (and the implied reader) to sympathize with the vineyard owner who, despite his best efforts, saw his vineyard produce only "stinking grapes" (בְּאֻשִׁים).[125] They are called upon to evaluate what he has done on behalf of his vineyard (Isa 5:3–6). John T. Willis,[126] Adrian Gaffy,[127] Gale A. Yee,[128] and Marvin L.

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[123] Mark Allen Powell, *Methods for Matthew* (Cambridge: University Press, 2009), 69.

[124] See Gary V. Smith, *Isaiah 1-39,* New American Commentary, vol. 15a (Nashville: B & H Publishing, 2007), 159-73.

[125] Marvin L. Chaney notes "…exegetes have argued that the ירושלם יושב and יהודה איש of v. 3, and the ישראל בית and יהודה איש of v. 7, though all singular morphologically, are to be understood as collectives referring indiscriminately to the populations of Jerusalem, Judah, and Israel." (Chaney, "Whose Sour Grapes? The Addressees of Isaiah 5:1-7 in the Light of Political Economy," *Semeia* 87 [1999]: 106).

[126] John T. Willis ("The Genre of Isaiah 5:1-7." *JBL* 96, no. 3 [1977]: 337-62

[127] Adrian Gaffy, "The Literary Genre of Isaiah 5,1-7," *Biblica* 60, no. 3 (1979): 400-9.

[128] Gale A. Yee, "A Form-Critical Study of Isaiah 5:1–7 as a Song and a Juridical Parable." *CBQ* 43, no. 1 (1981): 30–40.

Chaney[129] argue that Isaiah 5:1-7 should be interpreted as a "juridical parable."[130] Accordingly, the rhetorical effect on the reader who sympathizes with the vineyard owner is that he or she would feel a sense of self-condemnation once the cause of vineyard owner's suffering is revealed.

Following the "Song of the Vineyard," the prophet announces a series of "woe" (הוֹי) statements[131] against the rich and powerful of society whose greed (v. 8), self-indulgence (vv. 11–12a), lack of perception of what the LORD is doing (v. 12b), arrogance (v. 21), perverting truth and justice (vv. 20, 23), pursuit of iniquity, falsehood, and sin (v. 18), and rejection of "the word of the Holy One of Israel" (v. 24), has resulted in the nation's demise. God's people go into exile (גָּלָה) because they lack knowledge/understanding (דַּעַת) (v. 13). As Chaney points out, the prophet Isaiah was not referring to the people in general in his "woe" statements in Isa 5:8–30, but to the rich and powerful at "the top of the social pyramid in Israel and Judah."[132]

The main parallel between Isaiah's "Song of the Vineyard" and Jesus's parable of the "Vineyard Owner" is that the blame for the people's poor spiritual condition lies squarely with Israel's ruling class (Note that the same characteristics used by the prophet

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[129] Marvin L. Chaney, "Whose Sour Grapes? The Addressees of Isaiah 5:1–7 in the Light of Political Economy." *Semeia* 87 (1999): 105–22.

[130] A *juridical parable* serves as an "intentional decoy which provokes the hearer to condemn himself" (Yee, "Form-Critical Study of Isaiah 5:1–7," 1). This is now the general consensus among scholars regarding the genre of Isaiah 5:1–7.

[131] For more on "woe" statements in the Hebrew Bible, see Richard J. Clifford, "The Use of hôy in the Prophets," *CBQ* 28 (1966): 458–64; Erhard Gerstenberger, "The Woe-Oracles of the Prophets," *JBL* 81, no. 3 (1962): 249–63; James G. Williams, "The Alas-Oracles of the Eighth Century Prophets," *HUCA* 38 (1967): 75–91; Marty E. Stevens, "Woe or Ho: The Lamentable Translation of הוי in Isaiah 55:1," in *Raising Up a Faithful Exegete: Essays in Honor of Richard D. Nelson*, edited by K. L. Noll and Brooks Schramm (Winona Lake, ID: Eisenbrauns, 2010), 275–82 .

[132] Chaney, "Whose Sour Grapes?," 105. Chaney argues that "ירושלם יושב" and "יהודה איש" should be translated in the singular (i.e., "inhabitant of Jerusalem" and "man of Judah") as referring to the ruling class.

Isaiah to describe the elite of his day are used by the author of Matthew to describe the religious leaders in his narrative).[133] However, there are some significant differences. In Isaiah the vineyard fails to produce fruit, in Matthew the tenants refuse to give the landowner the fruit of the vineyard and kill his son to get his inheritance; in Isaiah the vineyard is destroyed, in Matthew the vineyard is taken from the tenants and given to others who will give the landowner "his portion of the harvest" (Matt 21:38); in Isaiah there is nothing but disaster, in Matthew there is still a future hope because "The stone the builders reject has become the cornerstone" (Matt 21:42; cf. Ps 118:3–4). The kingdom of God will be taken from the tenants (= religious leaders) and "given to a people/nation (ἔθνος) who will produce its fruit" (Matt 21:43). The author tells the reader explicitly the religious leaders "realized that [Jesus] was speaking about them" (Matt 21:45). "The new 'nation' of v. 43 may be understood as the people who follow the risen Jesus, just as the 'something greater than the temple' in 12:6 appears to point beyond Jesus himself to a whole new regime focused in him."[134] The current leadership, not Israel, will be replaced by those who accept Jesus, the "cornerstone" (Matt 21:42; cf. Ps 118:22–23). Ἔθνος, therefore, refers to a new "people" made up of all nations, *including* Israel. God has not rejected his "vineyard," but rather, expanded it to include all those who put their faith in Jesus, Israel's Messiah.

In terms of the *degree of complexity*, the antagonist group is more toward the higher end of the continuum for the number of character traits assigned to them. However, they show no character development throughout the story. The religious leaders first appear in league with Herod (2:4–5). The first thing said about them

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[133] Wilhelmus J. C. Weren, "The Use of Isaiah 5, 1–7 in the Parable of the Tenants (Mark 12, 1–12; Matthew 21, 33–46)," *Biblica* 79, no. 1 (1998): 1–26; J. Lyle Story, "Hope in the Midst of Tragedy: (Isa 5:1-7; 27:2-6; Matt 21:33-46 par.)," HBT 31 (2009): 178-95.

[134] R. T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, NICCNT (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2007), 118.

explicitly is that they are a "brood of vipers" (3:7). The last thing is that they conspired to spread lies to cover up what had happened regarding Jesus's resurrection (28:12–15). They are "evil" from start to finish.[135] This prototypical literary character is everything the protagonist in the story (Jesus) is not. It is shown to be the perfect representative of an evaluative point of view opposed to God, without exception. "If Matthew softened his characterization of the leaders, made them less evil than they appear, the force with which this point is made would be weakened."[136]

The Disciples in Matthew

The "disciples" of Jesus[137] are represented in Matthew's narrative by τῶν δώδεκα ("the Twelve").[138] These are the characters in the story who believe in Jesus, are devoted to him, received his teaching, and embrace the pattern for living he set for them.

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[135] For more on this, see Anderson, *Matthew's Narrative Web*, 97–126.

[136] Powell, *What is Narrative Criticism?*, 67.

[137] The term μαθητής ("disciple") occurs 71 (or 72) times in the Gospel of Matthew, thirty of which have no parallel in Mark or Luke. The reading in Matthew 20:17 is uncertain. The occurrences in Matthew 8:25 (TR οἱ μαθηταί) and Matthew 28:9 (TR τοῖς μαθηταῖς) are not supported by the manuscript evidence. See NA[28] textual apparatus. Four times this term refers to the "disciples" of John the Baptist (9:14 [x2]; 11:2; 14:12) and once to the "disciples" of the Pharisees (22:16). Elsewhere in Matthew, οἱ μαθηταί refers to the followers of Jesus.

[138] Georg Strecker argues that the author of Matthew equates the μαθηταί ("disciples") with οἱ δώδεκα ("the Twelve"). He states, "Daß Matthäus den Plural μαθηταί mehrfach mit οἱ δώδεκα verbindet, erläutert nicht nur das Verständnis des letzteren, sondern scheint auch den Begriff des ‚Jüngers' zu bestimmen, ihn nämlich auf den Zwölfer-kreis einzugrenzen" ("The fact that Matthew repeatedly connects the plural μαθηταί with οἱ δώδεκα not only explains his understanding of the latter, but also appears to define the concept of 'disciple,' namely, to limit it to the circle of the Twelve") (*Der Weg der Gerichtigkeit: Untersuchung zur Theologie des Matthäus.* FRLANT 82 [1962; repr., Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1971], 191, translation mine). For a critique of Strecker's view, see Ulrich Luz, *Studies in Matthew*, trans. Rosemary Selle (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2005), 115–23. Luz argues convincingly that the "tendency to identify the circle of disciples with the twelve is already present in the pre-Matthean tradition" (117), not the result of Matthew's redaction of his sources as Strecker suggests. He goes on to say, "So we gain the impression, contrary to Strecker, not that Matthew consciously equates the Twelve with the disciples, but rather that this had by his day already become established and that Matthew is laying no particular stress on it" (117). That is, the author of Matthew merely took for granted that the number of disciples was understood by the implied reader and, therefore, uses the terms μαθηταί and οἱ δώδεκα synonymously.

The implied author *tells* the implied reader about them directly using explicit statements (e.g., 17:6, 13, 23; 19:25; 20:24), and *shows* what they are like by having them speak and act in relation to Jesus and the other characters in the story.[139] As the term μαθητής implies, their relationship with Jesus is that of teacher-student or master-apprentice. Like the antagonists, this group functions in Matthew's narrative as a single prototypical "character." But unlike the antagonists, the disciples (usually) speak and act in ways that demonstrate for the implied reader what it looks like to be "for" Jesus (12:30). The author does not, however, present them simply as *ideal* Jesus-followers to be emulated in every respect. Although they clearly side with Jesus, they possess a mix of character traits—both positive and negative—that characterizes them as *imperfect* models of the kind of discipleship envisaged by Jesus in his teaching. On the one hand, the author encourages the implied reader to identify with the disciples by casting them in a positive light when they speak and act in accordance with the evaluative point of view espoused by the narrative. But on the other hand, he includes some negative characterizations which prompt the reader to distance himself/herself from the disciples. Because the implied reader is well-informed about the events unfolding behind the scenes (e.g., the circumstances of Jesus's birth, the fulfillment of Scripture, the voice from heaven declaring Jesus as God's Son), he or she reads the story from a privileged position of knowing more than the disciples do.[140] The implied reader knows what an *ideal disciple*

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[139] Richard A. Edwards labels those sections in Matthew recounting the interactions between the disciples and other characters in the narrative as "character-shaping sections" (Edwards, *Matthew's Narrative Portrait of Disciples: How the Text-Connoted Reader is Informed* [Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1997], 12). He explains that "a character-shaping section is an incident in which the implied reader is given enough information, most often by means of a response, to be able to attach one or more attributes to the disciples" (Edwards, "Characterization of the Disciples as a Feature of Matthew's Narrative," in *The Four Gospels*, eds., F. Van Segbroeck, et al. [Louvain: Louvain University Press, 1992], 2:1311). These sections are primarily responsible for shaping the reader's understanding of what the disciples are like.

[140] According to Powell, the criteria for determining what the implied reader is "expected to know" include the following: (1) recurrence, (2) thematic coherence, and (3) availability. *Recurrence* is when information is found more than once in the narrative. This is the implied author's way of helping the

should look like.[141] This "discipleship ideal is . . . fleshed out in a focal layer consisting of (1) Jesus' teachings; (2) the disciples' positive characteristics; (3) various exemplary (minor) characters who model some aspect of ideal discipleship; and (4) the model of Jesus himself in his words and actions."[142] According to Terence Donaldson, the reader learns "what it means to be a disciple . . . above all, in joining with [the disciples] as they

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implied reader take notice of and remember information that is important to the story. Powell notes that recurrence does not mean necessarily that information which occurs only once is unimportant. *Recurrence* is only one criterion—to be used along with other criteria—for determining what the implied reader is expected to know. The second criterion, *thematic coherence*, is when the implied reader's knowledge of information yields a reading that seems reasonable within the context of the author's story world. That is, it asks whether such knowledge leads to an interpretation that is consistent with the narrative as a whole. This criterion helps the modern reader avoid imposing on the implied reader expectations which the implied author does not appear to have. The third criterion, *availability*, asks whether the knowledge thought to be assumed by the narrative was actually available to the implied author. That is, can the implied reader reasonably be expected to know certain things, given the historical setting in which the narrative was written. In addition to what is communicated through the narrative, the implied reader is expected to know certain information derived from universal human experience, as well as information related to the spatial, the temporal, and the social setting of the narrative—including knowledge of geography, cultural and social norms, historical facts, symbolic language, etc. For a more thorough explanation of these criteria, see Powell, "Expected and Unexpected Reading of Matthew: What the Reader Knows," *ATJ* 48, no. 2 (1993): 31–52.

[141] Daniel Patte draws attention to the distinction between the "ideal disciple" envisioned in Jesus's teaching and "actual disciples" described in Matthew's narrative (Patte, *The Gospel According to Matthew: A Structural Commentary on Matthew's Faith*. [1987; repr., Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1996], 119, 136n16). In his study, Patte uses Algridas J. Greimas' semiotic theory (See *Sémantique structurale* [Paris, Larousse, 1966]) to do a formal structural analysis of the First Gospel to determine "Matthew's faith." He describes Matthew's faith as a "system of convictions" that gives coherence to the Gospel. The author of Matthew sets forth his convictions using various kinds of "tensions." One of these is the tension between *ideal discipleship*–as taught by Jesus–and the *actual discipleship*–as portrayed by the Twelve who frequently fall short of the *ideal*. In response to Patte, David B. Howell argues "there is no textual basis for distinguishing between two 'types' of disciples" (Howell, *Matthew's Inclusive Story*, 234). But Patte does not suggest there are two "types" of disciples in Matthew. Rather, he refers to the tension between the standard for discipleship set by Jesus and the inability of the Twelve to live up to that standard consistently. Howell maintains that "the 'ideal disciple' should be seen as . . . a version of the implied reader" (234–35). That is, the reader who realizes the standard set by Jesus, or as Wolfgand Iser puts it, who actualizes "this potential through the reading process" (*The Implied Reader: Patterns of Communication in Prose Fiction from Bunyan to Beckett* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press 1974, xii). Jeannine K. Brown observes that the concept of "ideal disciple" is communicated by Matthew "via both Jesus' teaching and the narration of characters who embody some aspect of Matthean discipleship" (Brown, *The Disciples in Narrative Perspective: The Portrayal and Function of the Matthean Disciples.* SBLAB 9 (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 130n45).

[142] Brown, *Disciples in Narrative Perspective*, 145.

listen to Jesus' teaching."[143] When the disciples fall short of the *ideal,* the negative characterization "works as a foil in the narrative, challenging the reader to follow Jesus more faithfully than [they] do."[144]

In terms of the *degree of complexity*, the disciple group is more toward the higher end of the continuum not only for of the number of character traits assigned to them but also because of the variety, including some character traits which conflict. On a positive note, the disciples are called by Jesus (4:15–20, 21–22; 8:22; 9:9) and "leave everything" to follow him (19:27), granted "authority to drive out unclean spirits and to heal every disease and every sickness" (10:1), and will eventually become the new "shepherds of Israel" (23:24, cf. 10:16–17; 19:28).[145] Their mission is inextricably linked with Jesus's mission (10:5–6, cf. 15:24),[146] and they become vulnerable to attack because of it (10:16–42; 12:1–2;15:2, 24–25). The disciples recognize Jesus as Israel's "Messiah, the Son of the living God" (16:16). They do the will of their Father in heaven (12:49–50) and are encouraged to think of themselves as "sons of God" (5:16, 45, 48; 6:1–32; 7:11; 10:20, 29; 18:14; 23:9). They are privy to certain one-time supernatural revelations (8:23–27; 14:22–33; 17:1–8; 21:18–22). Matthew characterizes them as faithful, loving,

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[143] Terence L. Donaldson, "Guiding Readers–Making Disciples: Discipleship in Matthew's Narrative Strategy," in *Patterns of Discipleship in the New Testament*, ed. Richard N. Longenecker. McMNTS (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1996), 41.

[144] Brown, *Disciples in Narrative Perspective*, 131.

[145] For more on this see Matthias Konradt, *Israel, Church, and the Gentiles*, 74–87. Konradt argues convincingly that Matthew's point is not that the Gentiles replace Israel, but that the disciples replace the Jewish leadership. For similar arguments see also Scott McKnight, "New Shepherds for Israel: An Historical and Critical Study of Matthew 9:35–11:1" (PhD diss., University of Nottingham, 1986), 183–85; Young S. Chae, *Jesus as the Eschatological Davidic Shepherd: Studies in the Old Testament, Second Temple Judaism, and in the Gospel of Matthew.* WUNT 2 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebech, 2006), 217–18; Wayne Baxter, *Israel's Only Shepherd: Matthew's Shepherd Motif and His Social Setting* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2014), 145–47.

[146] As Konradt states, "the connection of the disciples' mission with Jesus's compassionate ministry to the crowds indicates that this is, according to the Matthean conception, a core task of the disciples" (Konradt, *Israel, Church, and the Gentiles*, 77).

obedient (e.g., 21:2–7; 26:18–19), trusting, and attentive followers of Jesus. These "positive characterizations and responses [to Jesus] will attract the implied reader, create sympathy for those characters, and encourage identification between the two."[147] The implied reader knows a disciple is not above his teacher, but must become like Jesus (10:24–25) taking up his cross daily to follow him, and be willing to lose his life for Jesus's sake (10:37–39; 16:24–25).

Despite their positive character traits, the disciples are also characterized as slow to understand Jesus's teaching (e.g., 13:36–43; 15:15–20),[148] they do not fully comprehend the nature of his mission (16:21–25), and sometimes show they are more concerned about human interests than the interests of God (16:23, 25; 19:13–15, 23–27; 20:20–24). At times they unwittingly attempt to impede Jesus's ministry by urging him to send people away instead of ministering to them (the crowds, 14:15; the Canaanite woman, 15:23), and by rebuking (ἐπετίμησαν) those bringing children to Jesus (19:13). They make promises of loyalty they cannot keep (26:35, 56b), and fail to remain alert (26:40, 45). Peter (the "rock"), who serves as spokesperson for the disciples, confesses Jesus as the Messiah one minute and becomes a stumbling block to him the next (16:16,

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[147] Howell, *Matthew's Inclusive Story*, 246.

[148] There is disagreement among scholars regarding whether the disciples in Matthew grow in their understanding of Jesus and themselves over the course of the narrative. Kingsbury (*Matthew as Story*, 92, 94), Edwards (*Matthew's Narrative Portrait*, 100), and Warren Carter (*Matthew: Storyteller, Interpreter*, 216) maintain the author portrays them in the process of learning and that by the end of the narrative the disciples gain full understanding. Donald J. Verseput ("The Faith of the Reader and the Narrative of Matthew 13.53–16.20," *JSNT* 14, no. 46 [1992]: 3–24) and Neil D. Nelson, Jr. ("'This Generation' in Matt 24:34: A Literary Critical Perspective," *JETS* 38, no. 3 [1996]: 369–85) disagree. They see no progress at all in the disciples' understanding. Arguments for the disciples having come to a *full understanding* do not adequately account for Matthew's note that some disciples at the end of the narrative still "doubted" or "hesitated" (28:17). Nevertheless, the author seems to suggest some development in the disciples' understanding. For example, in 16:5–12 they do not understand at first Jesus's point about being on their guard against the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees, but then realizes what he was speaking about. In 13:36 the disciples ask Jesus to explain the parable of the weeds, but then in 13:51 they affirm that they understand Jesus's parables regarding the kingdom. The disciples also ask Jesus questions in private to gain further instruction in 13:10; 17:10, 19; 18:1 and 24:3.

23).[149] The disciples occasionally show "little faith" (ὀλιγόπιστος, 6:30; 8:26; 14:31; 16:8; ὀλιγοπιστία, 17:20).[150] The implication in 21:21–22 is that they lacked sufficient faith. According to Matthew, even in the presence of the risen Lord some still "doubted" or "hesitated" (28:17, ἐδίστασαν[151]). When faced with uncertain circumstances the disciples

[149] As Craig L. Blomberg noted, "The five times in which Matthew . . . inserts references to Peter in chaps. 14–18 consistently wind up describing him in a negative or embarrassing fashion (14:28–31; 15:15–16; 16:16–23; 17:24–27 [this is arguably the only neutral text]; and 18:21–22)" (Blomberg, *Matthew: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture*, NAC, vol. 22, ed. David S. Dockery [Nashville: Broadman, 1992], 33). See also Anderson's discussion on Peter as spokesperson for the disciples in *Matthew's Narrative Web*, 90–97.

[150] The term ὀλιγόπιστος ("little faith") appears four times in Matthew (6:30; 8:26; 14:31; 16:8. The cognate noun ὀλιγοπιστία appears in 17:20), only once in Luke (12:28), but nowhere else in the NT. It does not appear in any source outside the NT earlier than Matthew and Luke (Gerhard Barth, "ὀλιγόπιστος," in vol. 2 of *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Horst Balz and Gerhard Schneider [Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1990–1993], 50). The consensus among scholars is that ὀλιγόπιστος is a term used by Jesus to rebuke his disciples for their failure to believe they will be adequately cared for, which in turn is an indication of a deficiency in their discipleship (See, for example, John Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, NIGTC [Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2005], 313, 371, 653; W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint Matthew* [Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1988–1997], 1:656; 2:73, 509; Robert H. Gundry, *Matthew: A Commentary on His Handbook for a Mixed Church under Persecution*, 2nd ed. [Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1994], 156; Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew* [Grand Rapids: InterVarsity Press, 1992], 206, 416; Heinz J. Held, "Matthew as Interpreter of the Miracles Stories," in *Tradition and Interpretation in Matthew*, ed. Günther Bornkamm, Gerhard Barth, and Heinz Joachim Held [London: SCM Press, 1963], 291–96; Keener, *Gospel of Matthew*, 278). B. Rod Doyle notes that ὀλιγόπιστος ("little faith") is a term Matthew uses exclusively for his disciples ("Matthew's Intention as Discerned by His Structure," *RB* 95 (1988): 40). Jeannine Brown sees ὀλιγόπιστος as a lack of confidence in God or in Jesus's care during difficult circumstances (Brown, *Disciples in Narrative Perspective*, 102-07). For more on ὀλιγόπιστος in Matthew, see Carlos Olivares, "The Term ὀλιγόπιστος (Little Faith) in Matthew's Gospel: Narrative and Thematic Connections," *Colloquium* 47, no. 2 (2015): 275–86; Christopher Seglenieks, "The Rhetoric of Matthean 'Small Faith,'" *ZNW* 113, no. 1 (2022): 50–68. Donald J. Verseput suggests that when the author of Matthew writes about on the "little faith" of the disciples, "it is the faith of the [implied] reader which ultimately consumes the Evangelist's attention as he relentlessly manipulates his narrative to expose [their] 'little faith'" (Verseput, "The Faith of the Reader and the Narrative of Matthew 13.53–16.20," *JSNT* 14, no. 46 [1997]: 23).

[151] The verb διστάζω ("to doubt," "hesitate" "waver," "be uncertain," "worry," "have second thoughts about a matter") occurs twice in Matthew (14:31; 28:17), but nowhere else in the NT. Outside the NT there are only a few known Koine Greek sources where διστάζω is used. For example, P Giss I. 18.9 (a private letter from time of Hadrian) δηλῶ οὖν σοι, ἵνα μὴ διστάζῃς· ἐπο[ρ]εύθη γὰρ εἰς Ἑρμοῦ πόλιν ["I told you, therefore, so that you do not hesitate; for I went to Hermopolis"]. In a letter from a young soldier to his mother the word appears to have the meaning "to be uncertain" = *to worry*, P Michigan Inv. No. 4528.5 (*ca.* 200 CE) μηδὲν δίσταζε περὶ ἐμοῦ ἐγὼ γὰρ εἰς καλὸν τόπον ἦλθον ["worry about nothing regarding my circumstances because I have come to a good place"]. The substantive occurs in P Par 63 iii. 83 (165 BCE) [= *UPZ* I. 110] παραχρῆμα προσαναφέρειν ὑπὲρ τῶν δοκούντων τινὰ διστασ[μό]ν, "to refer to us at once concerning any points which seem doubtful"]. In the context of Matthew 28:17, διστάζω most likely

appear "terrified" (14:26, ἐταράχθησαν) and "terribly frightened" (17:6, ἐφοβήθησαν σφόδρα). When Jesus told the disciples his mission included dying in Jerusalem at the hands of the religious leaders, Peter rebukes him (ἤρξατο ἐπιτιμᾶν αὐτῷ, 16:23). Later, the disciples seem to accept what Jesus was saying, but are "deeply grieved" (ἐλυπήθησαν σφόδρα) by it (17:23).[152] Ten become "indignant" (ἠγανάκτησαν) when they hear about the other two disciples vying for position (20:24), and when a woman pours expensive perfume (μύρον[153]) on Jesus's head they become "indignant" (ἠγανάκτησαν) because they see it as a waste of resources (26:8). This shows the disciples' lack of understanding of the nature of Jesus's mission and what true discipleship is.

The ultimate example of falling short of *ideal discipleship* is, of course, when Judas chooses to side with the antagonists and betray Jesus (27:3; cf. 10:4; 20:18). This disciple clearly does not represent the actions of the whole group. Even though the others also fail and abandon Jesus during the Passion (most likely out of fear for their own lives), they later return to him and remain loyal. Judas—"one of the Twelve" (26:14)—serves as an extreme example of what happens when one acts in accordance with an evaluative point of view opposed to Jesus. The author does not state explicitly Judas's

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"denotes not intellectual doubt so much as practical uncertainty, being in two minds" (France, *Gospel of Matthew*, 1111). As N. T. Wright states, "The risen Jesus both was and was not 'the same' as he had been before. . . . there was a mystery about him which even those who knew him best were now unable to penetrate" (Wright, *Resurrection of the Son of God*, 643–44, quoted in France, *Gospel of Matthew*, 1112n20). If this interpretation is correct, the disciples "hesitated," not because they lacked faith in Jesus, but because they did not know how to respond to him in this new situation. That is, some were still deficient in their understanding of who he is. But the implied reader is better informed than they are and knows what the correct response to the risen Lord should be.

[152] This event comes after a scene where the disciples are unable to drive out a demon because of their "little faith" (17:14–20). "If they cannot trust God to deliver from demons, how could they believe God can raise Jesus from the dead?" (Carter, *Matthew: Storyteller, Interpreter*, 222).

[153] A first-century private account found at Oxyrhynchus shows μύρον is a type of perfume used for burial. P Oxy IV. 736.13 (*ca.* CE 1) μύρου εἰς ἀποστολὴν ταφῆς θυγατρὸς Φνᾶς (τετρώβολον), "perfume for the dispatch of the mummy of the daughter of Phna 4 obols." See Loder, "μύρον" in *VGNTS*.

motives for betraying Jesus, but 26:15 suggests it was out of greed.[154] Nevertheless, the implied reader is told that Judas "changed his mind" (μεταμεληθείς[155]) when he saw Jesus had been condemned (27:3). But instead of turning to God for forgiveness, Judas chooses a path of self-destruction—that is, "he went out and hanged himself" (27:5).[156] This contrasts with the other eleven who, despite their failure, later respond positively to Jesus's invitation to meet him in Galilee (28:10), where they are restored to fellowship with him (28:16–20). Jesus foretold this would happen in fulfillment of Scripture (26:21–25, 31–35; cf. 16:21; 17:22–23; 20:18–19). "If the audience [i.e., implied reader] has confidence in the prophetic authority of Jesus, then it seems likely at this point that they would perceive Judas as one who, though pitiable, will pay the ultimate penalty for his sins."[157] In betraying Jesus this disciple demonstrates for the implied reader the dire

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[154] Peter and Judas are the only two named disciples who speak in Matthew. Judas's first words are "What will you give me if I betray him to you?" (Matt 26:15). Note that Matthew and Mark do not have Luke's explanation that "Satan entered Judas, called Iscariot" (Luke 22:3).

[155] The verb μεταμέλομαι denotes "to regret" or "have second thoughts about something," with the implication that a change of action will result (Johannes P. Louw and Eugene A. Nida, "μεταμέλομαι" in *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* [Philadelphia: American Bible Society, 1988], 31.59; Bauer, "μεταμέλομαι" in *BDAG*, 639.). The verb appears elsewhere in Matthew 21:29 and 21:32, apparently with the same meaning. The verbs μεταμέλομαι ("to regret") and μετανοέω ("to repent") can in most contexts be used synonymously. Arguments suggesting a strong theological difference between these two verbs are overstated (e.g., Donald Senior, *The Passion of Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew* (Wilmington, Del.: Michael Glazier, 1985), 105, esp. n. 83; Audrey Conard, "The Fate of Judas: Matthew 27:3–10," *TJT* 7 (1991): 163; Douglas Hare, *Matthew. Interpretation: Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching* [Louisville: John Knox Press, 1993], 313–14; Brown, *Death of the Messiah*, 1:638–69). Μεταμέλομαι and μετανοέω can mean both "to change one's mind" *and* "to change one's course of action," or just "to change one's mind" (See "μεταμέλομαι" and "μετανοέω" in Bauer, *BDAG*, 639–41; Loder, "μεταμέλομαι" and "μετανοέω" in *VGNTS*; O. Michel, "μεταμέλομαι, ἀμεταμέλητος," in vol. 4 of *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1990), 626–29.

[156] As Jesse E. Robertson observes, "The most direct assessment of the character of Judas in the entire Gospel occurs in Jesus's response to the actions of Judas in Matthew 26:24: 'The Son of Man goes as it is written of him, but woe to that one by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been better for that one not to have been born'" (Robertson, "The Characterization of Judas Iscariot in Three Early Christian Accounts of His Death," [PhD diss., Baylor University, 2011], 92). Raymond Brown suggests Judas's suicide is described by the author of Matthew as the fulfillment of Jesus's prediction about him (Brown, *Death of the Messiah*, 1:640–644.

[157] Robertson, "Characterization of Judas," 93.

consequences of siding with the antagonists. "The movement of Judas to the presence of the chief priests marks his shift in identity from the circle around Jesus to the camp of the opponents."[158] But the true nature of his relationship with the religious leaders is illustrated clearly in the scene where a remorseful Judas returns the thirty pieces of silver. When Judas realizes he had betrayed "innocent blood" (αἷμα ἀθῷον[159]) he attempts to return the money, but the religious leaders have no concern for justice, nor for his well-being. Rather, they see him only as a means to an end (27:3–4). For the implied reader, the message is clear; joining the antagonists in their rejection of God's evaluative point of view is not only misguided, but also detrimental.

Matthew's characterization of the disciples has a direct bearing on how the narrative functions rhetorically. This prototypical character—having both positive and negative character traits—assists the author in reaching his argumentative objective by calling upon the implied reader to evaluate the disciples' words and actions in light of the evaluative point of view espoused by the narrative. While the author's positive portrayal of the disciples encourages the implied reader to identify with them, the negative portrayal steers "the implied reader toward values of behavior in contrast to that of the disciples."[160] Or as Kingsbury puts it, "it is through such granting or withholding of approval on cue, therefore, that the reader becomes schooled in the values that govern the life of discipleship in Matthew's story."[161]

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[158] Robertson, "Characterization of Judas," 89.

[159] The adjective ἀθῷος ("innocent") appears in NT only in Matthew 27:4 and 27:24. In both instances the word appears in a context where reference is made to bearing responsibility for condemning an innocent person (i.e., Jesus).

[160] Brown, *Disciples in Narrative Perspective*, 129.

[161] Kingsbury, *Matthew as Story*, 13.

The Crowds/People in Matthew

The ὄχλος/ὄχλοι[162] ("crowd/crowds") are the characters in Matthew's story who come out to hear Jesus's teaching, have their needs met by him, and "follow" (ἀκολουθέω) him (4:25; 8:1; 12:15; 14:13; 19:2; 20:29).[163] They identify outwardly to some degree with the Jesus-movement but are not convinced he is Israel's Messiah (16:13–14; 21:11, 46). In terms of their response to Jesus, the crowds are poised somewhere between the religious leaders and the disciples.[164] They contrast sharply to

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[162] The term ὄχλος occurs fifty times in Matthew, nineteen of which are in the singular and thirty-one in the plural. While the author's frequent use of the plural ὄχλοι could be explained simply as stylistic preference, it seems more plausible that he uses the plural form to place emphasis on the *size* or *undefined large number* of individuals gathered in a given locale. That is, "its usage reflects Matthew's inclination to make the crowds about Jesus as large and as significant as possible" (J. R. C. Cousland, *The Crowds in the Gospel of Matthew*, NovTSup 102 [Leiden: Brill, 2001], 37). In twelve instances the author places further emphasis on the *size* of the crowd(s) by using ὄχλος/ὄχλοι in conjunction with a qualifier (ὄχλοι πολλοί [4:25; 8:1; 12:15; 13:2; 15:30; 19:2], πάντες οἱ ὄχλοι [12:23], πᾶς ὁ ὄχλος [13:2], πολὺν ὄχλον [14:14], ὄχλος πολύς [20:29; 26:47], πλεῖστος ὄχλος [21:8]). The singular form is used without a qualifier in 9:25 and 20:31. Matthew's point seems to be that Jesus attracted large numbers of people wherever he went. On the use of the qualifier, see Nigel Turner, in vol. 4 of *Moulton's Grammar of New Testament Greek* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1976), 43.

[163] The "crowd" that appears along with the flute players (αὐλητῶν) in the pericope of the ruler's daughter (9:18–26) is one exception. They did not "follow" Jesus but were already on the scene when he arrived. Cousland suggests this small "crowd" is a "special funerary group" and should be viewed as distinct from the other larger "crowds" depicted in Matthew because (1) they do not follow Jesus to that particular location, (2) they are conjoined with the flute players, and (3) the author has excised Mark's three references to the crowd "following" Jesus to the ruler's house (5:24, 27, 31) (Cousland, *Crowds in the Gospel of Matthew*, 40). But Cousland's reasoning for treating this group as a "special case" distinct from the other crowds in Matthew is unconvincing. In some contexts, the author of Matthew uses the term ὄχλος as a signifier for the general populace—without any reference to them "following" Jesus (e.g., 4:25; 14:5; 21:46). That the crowd in 9:18–26 is already present when Jesus arrived, and is mentioned along with the flute players, is probably best understood as the author's way of setting the scene for the reader. Such details do not warrant seeing this small "disorderly" (θορυβέω) crowd as a "special case" distinct from the prototypical "crowds" character in Matthew. Nor does the size of the crowd. As Ernst Lohmeyer observed, "Die Zahl der ὄχλος kann so gross sein, dass Jesus sich vor ihnen in ein Boot rettet (13:3) oder so klein wie die Schar die Klagefrauen bei einem Todesfall" ["The number of the ὄχλος can be so large that Jesus saves himself from them in a boat (13:3) or as small as the crowd of mourners at a death"] (Ernst Lohmeyer, *Das Evangelium des Matthäus* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1956), 77n1, as quoted in Cousland, *Crowds in Matthew*, 40n42, translation mine). As part of the prototypical "crowds" character in Matthew's *rhetorically shaped* narrative, the crowd in 9:18–26 represents a typical response to Jesus; namely, they "laugh at" or "ridicule" (καταγελάω) Jesus due to their unbelief and failure to recognize who he is (9:24). For more on the pericope of the ruler's daughter in Matthew, see William G. Thompson, "Reflections on the Composition of Mt 8:1–9:34," *CBQ* 33, no. 3 (1971): 365–88; Robert H. Gundry, *Matthew: A Commentary on his Literary and Theological Art* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 171–76.

[164] Cousland, *Crowds in Matthew*, 48.

the religious leaders by responding favorably to Jesus, but they have no special allegiance to him, as the disciples do. Unlike the disciples, they are passive recipients of Jesus's ministry, not active participants.[165] They are never summoned by Jesus to follow him, but rather, come to him of their own accord due to some need.[166] For most of the story, the crowds are generally well-disposed toward Jesus[167] (and he toward them), representing the "middle ground" in Matthew's *rhetorically shaped* narrative. They fall between the religious leaders' rejection of Jesus and the disciples' commitment to him in "a spectrum of possible responses."[168] These characters are presented as having the potential to become disciples;[169] that is, *if* they do not succumb to the influence of the religious

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[165] "While the crowds "followed" (ἠκολούθησαν) Jesus, the absence of a call from Jesus (see 4:18–22) suggests that the verb "followed" [i.e., in 4:25] indicates physical movement, not the response of new disciples to Jesus' call as in 4:18–22" (Warren Carter, "The Crowds in Matthew's Gospel," *CBQ* 55, no. 1 [1993]: 57–58).

[166] That is, the crowds are not explicitly summoned by Jesus to "follow" him as are the disciples (cf. δεῦτε ὀπίσω μου, 4:19; ἀκολούθει μοι, 8:22, 9:9, 10:38; 16:24). In 19:21, Jesus tells a rich young man what he must do if he wishes to be "perfect" (τέλειος). He could have become a disciple, but the man goes away sad because he was unwilling to part with his great wealth. In 11:28, Jesus gives an open invitation to "all who are weary and burdened" to come to him for rest. This is followed by a section where Jesus criticizes the religious leaders for being more concerned with placing burdens on people than showing mercy.

[167] The crowds take steps to oppose Jesus only when persuaded to do so by their leaders (26:47, 55; 27:20).

[168] Cousland, *Crowds in Matthew*, 144–45.

[169] See Luz, *Matthew 1–7* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Press, 1989), 456. Warren Carter notes that "the image of the plentiful harvest (cf. 3:12) suggests to the audience [i.e., implied reader] that the crowds' eschatological destiny is yet undecided; the possibility of their positive response to the mission is still open" (Carter, "Crowds in Matthew's Gospel," 60–61).

In the parable of the Sower (13:3–9; 18–23), Jesus compares those who "hear the message of the kingdom" ("ἀκούοντος τὸν λόγον τῆς βασιλείας," 13:19, 23) to different kinds of soil, most of which is rocky, shallow, and thorny, where seed will not grow to produce a crop (13:18–22). Most do not "produce a crop" because of they lack understanding (13:19), and/or endurance (13:20–21), and/or commitment (19:22). Nevertheless, there is still hope because some of the soil is good and will produce a good crop (13:23). For more on Matthew 13:18–22 see Mark L. Bailey, "Parable of the Sower and the Soils," 172–88. Bailey observes that the purpose of this parable is twofold: (1) "to explain why the word of the kingdom, as preached by John the Baptist, Jesus, and His disciples, had not been better received," and (2) "to encourage the hearers to listen to Jesus' words" (175).

leaders (16:6–12; 15:14; 23:3), and put their faith in Jesus as the Messiah Son of God (cf. 16:16).[170]

The crowds include individuals from different strata of society such as a "ruler" (ἄρχων, 9:18), a "rich man" (πλούσιος, 19:16–22), "tax collectors" (τελῶναι), "prostitutes" (πόρναι), and "sinners" (ἁμαρτωλοί) (10–13; 11:19; 21:31–32). Among them are the lame (χωλούς), the blind (τυφλούς), the crippled (κυλλούς), and the mute (κωφού) (15:30–31), as well as other social and religious outcasts such as a person with leprosy (8:2–3; cf. Lev 13:45–46), and a woman with a hemorrhage[171] (9:20–22; cf. Lev 15:33).[172] These characters come from various regions throughout the land of Israel including Galilee, the Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea, and beyond the Jordan (4:25; 19:2; 20:29).[173]

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[170] Jesus's invitation to "all" in 11:28–30 to accept his "easy" (χρηστός) yoke instead of the "heavy burdens" (φορτία βαρέα, 23:4) placed upon them by the religious leaders includes both the crowds and the disciples. For more on this, see Graham N. Stanton, *A Gospel for a New People: Studies in Matthew* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1992), 372–77; Ulrich Luz, "The Disciples in the Gospel According to Matthew," in *The Interpretation of Matthew*, ed. Graham Stanton (London: SPCK, 1983), 98–128; Hans Dieter Betz, "The Logion of the Easy Yoke and of Rest (Matt 11:28–30)," *JBL* 86, no. 1 (1967): 10–24; Celia M. Deutsch, *Hidden Wisdom and the Easy Yoke: Wisdom, Torah and Discipleship in Matthew 11:25–30*, JSNTSup 18 (Sheffield: Academic Press, 1987), 40–41. Celia M. Deutsch suggests that the invitation "reflects a context of competition for disciples between the teachers of Matthew's community and those of the opposition" (Deutsch, *Lady Wisdom, Jesus, and the Sages: Metaphor and Social Context in Matthew's Gospel* [Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1996], 118). Cousland observes "The note of invitation can be discerned in the privileged place Matthew accords to the "lost sheep" of Israel, through his emphasis on the exclusiveness of Jesus' ministry to them" (Cousland, *Crowds in Matthew*, 291).

[171] The term αἱμορροέω ("suffer from loss of blood") appears only here in the NT and only once in the LXX (Lev 15:33 = נִדָּה), where it refers to menstruation. Such a condition would have made the woman ceremonially unclean. See Nolland, *Gospel of Matthew*, 395–96.

[172] Anthony J. Saldarini notes that the crowds are "sociologically typical of the lower classes in antiquity" (*Matthew's Christian-Jewish Community* [Chicago: University Press, 1994], 38). He describes them as "Jesus' curious, confused, neutral, misled but seldom hostile audience" (Saldarini, "Boundaries and Polemics in the Gospel of Matthew," *BibInt* 3, no. 3 (1995): 244.

[173] Matthew omits Mark's reference to Tyre, Sidon, and Idumea (Mark 3:8; cf. Luke 6:17). For more on the theological significance of Matthean geography, see Jürgen K. Zangenberg, "Pharisees, Villages and Synagogues in Matthew's Galilee: Reflections on the Theological Significance of Matthew's Geography of Galilee," in *Logos-Logik-Lyrik:engagierte exegetische Studien zum biblischen Reden Gottes; Festschrift für Klaus Haacker*, ed. Volker A. Lehnert and Ulrich Rüsen-Weinhold (Leipzig: Evangelische

Like the other two aforementioned main characters in Matthew, this group functions in the narrative as a single "prototypical" character. "Almost every one of their actions and sayings could be attributed to a single individual without any appreciable disruption of the gospel's narrative."[174] The implied author characterizes the "crowds" by *telling* the implied reader about them directly using explicit statements (e.g., 9:8, 33, 36; 7:28; 15:31; 22:33), and by *showing* what they are like through their interactions with Jesus and the religious leaders.

In terms of the *degree of complexity*, this "prototypical" character is more toward the lower end of the continuum. However, they are not, as Kingsbury suggests, entirely "flat."[175] As with the disciples, the crowds in Matthew possess a mix of character traits—both positive and negative. They are said to be "amazed" by Jesus's teaching (7:28; 22:33) and the miracles he performs, and they praise the God of Israel for it (ἐδόξασαν τὸν θεὸν Ἰσραήλ) (9:33; 15:31). At one point, after having witnessed Jesus cast out a demon, the crowds proclaim, "nothing like this has ever been seen in Israel" (9:33). They are convinced Jesus has authority to heal (4:24; 8:16; 12:22; 14:35), and to forgive

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Verlangsanstalt, 2007), 151–69; Markus Tiwald, "The Rural Roots of the Jesus Movement and the 'Galilean Silence'," in *Early Christian Encounters with Town and Countryside: Essays on the Urban and Rural Worlds of Early Christianity*, ed. Markus Tiwald and Jürgen K. Zangenberg (Göttingen, Germany: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2021), 149–75; Cousland, *Growds in Matthew*, 63–68.

[174] Cousland, *Crowds in Matthew*, 44.

[175] Kingsbury, *Matthew as Story*, 23.

sins,[176] but are "afraid" (ἐφοβήθησαν[177]) and praise (ἐδόξασαν) God for giving such authority to men (9:8–9).

The crowds hear Jesus's teaching, and even recognize how it differs from that of their leaders (7:29), but fail to understand the "secrets of the kingdom" because the ability to do so has not been granted to them (13:11).[178] Nevertheless, in contrast to the religious leaders, they do exhibit signs of some awareness that God is doing something extraordinary through Jesus (cf. 9:8, 33; 15:31; 21:8–9; 22:33).[179] But the religious leaders take steps to suppress it. For example, when the crowds become "amazed" by Jesus's healings and miracles and begin to ask questions about his identity (perhaps even

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[176] R. T. France rightly observes that "Jesus [as "Son of Man"] is not arguing that it is not God's prerogative to forgive sins, but rather than [*sic*] he himself, uniquely, shares it" (*Gospel According to Matthew*, 347). This explains the religious leaders' reaction to Jesus. They interpret his words as blaspheming (βλασφημέω, 9:3). Note that Matthew omits Mark's "Who can forgive sins but God alone?" (Mark 2:7). But this would be readily understood by any reader well-versed in the OT and need not be stated explicitly. The point was certainly not lost on the religious leaders. The implied reader, of course, knows that Jesus has been sanctioned by God as his representative (cf. 1:21; 3:17). What the paralyzed man is told to do—that is, "stand up, take your cot (κλίνη), and go home"—"is itself the proof of the claim Jesus has made" (France, *Gospel According to Matthew*, 347). That is, the crowd was "afraid" (ἐφοβήθησαν) and praised God specifically because they saw the proof of Jesus's "authority" to forgive sins (ἐξουσία, 9:6; cf. 9:8).

[177] There is a textual variant in Matthew 9:8. While the majority of textual witnesses have ἐθαύμασαν "they were amazed" (C E F G K L N Γ Δ Θ Π Σ Φ 0233 *f*13 157 180 565 579 700 *et al* Byz), some other important witnesses, of various text types, have ἐφοβήθησαν "they were afraid" (א B D W 0281 *f*1 22 33 59 143 205 892 1424 *et al*). The wide geographical distribution, as well as the various text-types bearing witness to ἐφοβήθησαν, suggests this is the most probable authentic reading (cf. NA[28], SBLGNT).

[178] The NT term μυστήριον ("mystery," "secret") "is linked to the Aramaic רָז, which is used eight times in Daniel in relation to what God had revealed and what needed to be interpreted (Dan 2:18–19, 27–30, 47; 4:6)" (Mark L. Bailey, "The Parable of the Sower and the Soils," *BibSac* 155, no. 618 [1998]: 175). See also Raymond E. Brown, *The Semitic Background of the Term "Mystery" in the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Augsburg Fortress Press, 1968), 31–35.

[179] Note that the author of Matthew distinguishes between the crowds and the religious leaders when words of condemnation and rejection are spoken. For example, in 3:5–10 the general populace went out to John, "confessing their sins" and "were baptized by him in the Jordan" (v. 5). The religious leaders, however, receive only a warning of impending judgement because they do not "produce fruit in keeping with repentance" (7–10). See also 12:23 and 23:1ff.

showing some inkling of Jesus's messianic status[180]), their leaders offer an alternative view stating that it is the "prince of demons" at work in Jesus (12:23–24; cf. 9:33–34). Like the "evil one" in the parable of the Sower (13:19), the antagonists undertake to "snatch away" (ἁρπάζω) what little understanding they have. The crowds in Matthew's narrative are characterized as gullible. Consequently, they are exploited by their leaders who are concerned about matters of reputation and positions of authority (23:5–7), but not about the people's well-being.

The author of Matthew presents the relationship between the crowds and the religious leaders in his narrative as tenuous at best. Although the religious leaders were in positions of authority and enjoyed the honor and prestige that came with it (23:5–7), they "feared" (ἐφοβήθησαν) the crowds (21:26; 21:46). That is, they feared losing the support on which they relied to maintain their positions of authority. Seeing Jesus as a threat, they take steps to prevent the crowds/people from siding with him by offering an alternative evaluative point of view (9:34; 12:24), and by concealing the truth by means of deception (27:63–64; 28:11–15).

In Matthew 21:9, the crowds are mentioned at the Triumphal Entry, where they emphatically proclaim that Jesus is "the Son of David" (21:9). However, when asked specifically about his identity they reply, "the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee" (21:11). But "'prophet' . . . is in Matthew's story a misguided conception, for Jesus is in reality the Messiah Son of God (3:17; 16:16)."[181] Thus, the crowds fail to grasp fully who Jesus is and the significance of what he is doing for them. This makes them susceptible to being misled and taken advantage of by their leaders (cf. 15:14; 27:20).

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[180] The question in 12:23 about whether Jesus could be "the Son of David" is prefixed by μήτι, indicating those asking expected a negative answer. But in 21:9, they emphatically proclaim that Jesus is "the Son of David."

[181] Kingsbury, *Matthew as Story,* 24.

In Matthew 26:47, a "large crowd" (ὄχλος πολὺς) suddenly shows up at Gethsemane "with swords and clubs, *sent* from (ἀπό) the chief priests and elders of the people."[182] They are accompanied by another character now acting on behalf of the religious leaders; namely, Judas, Jesus's former disciple and betrayer. Up to this point in the narrative the crowd(s) are characterized as generally well-disposed toward Jesus, but now they emerge as key participants in his arrest and execution (26:47).[183] They appear again for the last time in Matthew's narrative at Jesus's trial before Pilate (27:20–24),

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[182] The mention of swords (*μάχαιρα*, 6x) and clubs (*ξύλον*, 2x) in 26:47–56 signals this crowd's hostile intentions, "like an official posse recruited by or on behalf of the Sanhedrin" (R. T. France, *Gospel of Matthew*, 1112).

[183] Konradt suggests there are two crowds in Matthew, a "Galilean" crowd well-disposed toward Jesus and a "Jerusalem" crowd opposed to Jesus (*Israel, Church, and the Gentiles*, 142–43). In his words, "Matthew does not identify the ὄχλος πολὺς in 26:47 with "the (Galilean) crowds who are positively disposed toward Jesus" (143). But the reasons Konradt gives for such an interpretation are scarcely adequate. His argument rests primarily on Matthew's redaction of Mark—that is, Matthew having changed Mark's καθ' ἡμέραν ἤμην πρὸς ὑμᾶς ἐν τῷ ἱερῷ ("daily I was with you in the temple," Mark 14:49) to καθ' ἡμέραν ἐν τῷ ἱερῷ ἐκαθεζόμην ("daily I sat in the temple," Matt 26:55) (143). But Matthew's choice of wording is more likely due to the role the author has the crowd(s) character play in his narrative. Matthew 21–22 recounts the interaction between the protagonists (Jesus) and the antagonists (religious leaders). The crowds are bystanders who witness the conflict. Their response to Jesus's teaching draws the implied reader's attention to the quality of Jesus's words and deeds, but they do not show signs of understanding fully what Jesus is saying, nor is there any indication they have taken sides in the conflict at this point. Moreover, the religious leaders see the crowds at the temple as hindering their plans to arrest Jesus because they "regarded him as a prophet" (21:46; no parallel in Mark). Konradt's point that the crowd in Matthew 26:24 must be a "newly defined [crowd] in contrast with the preceding occurrences" because they are introduced as ἀπὸ τῶν ἀρχιερέων καὶ πρεσβυτέρων τοῦ λαοῦ (142) is also unconvincing. What this indicates is not a different crowd character in Matthew, but rather, that the crowd character is at this point being influenced by the religious leaders acting in accordance with their evaluative point of view. For more on this, see below.

To account for the lack of consistency in the crowds' response to Jesus, Paul S. Minear also proposed there are two distinct groups in Matthew; one "for" and the other "against" Jesus. The latter appears along with the religious leaders in the Passion narrative (See Minear, "The Disciples and the Crowds in the Gospel of Matthew," *AThRSup* 3 [1974]: 28–44. For a similar view, see Rebekah Eklund, "From 'Hosanna!' to 'Crucify!' The Fickle Crowds in the Four Gospels," *BBR* 26, no. 1 (2016): 21–41). However, the fact that there are different responses from the crowds at different points in the narrative does not constitute evidence there are two crowds in view. In 26:55, Matthew has Jesus address the "large crowd" at Gethsemane directly, asking why they did not arrest him when he was teaching at the temple. Earlier, the author describes the crowds at the temple as astounded (ἐξεπλήσσοντο) by Jesus's teaching (22:33). There is nothing in the text to suggest there were two distinct crowds at the temple. "The effect is to link the groups [at Gethsemane and at the temple]—they did not arrest Jesus because they were marvelling at his message" (Cousland, "Choral Crowds," 266). The crowds' positive responses to Jesus was a problem for the religious leaders; one that had to be addressed by whatever means necessary.

where they side with the antagonists in calling for Jesus's crucifixion. This apparent "Jekyll and Hyde"[184] dimension of the crowd(s) in Matthew indicates they have been influenced by the religious leaders to act in accordance with their evaluative point of view. In 26:47, the author informs the implied reader that the "large crowd" accompanying Judas at Gethsemane were acting on behalf the antagonists (ἀπὸ τῶν ἀρχιερέων καὶ πρεσβυτέρων τοῦ λαοῦ).[185] Like Judas ("one of the Twelve," 26:14), they are pawns in the religious leaders' sinister plot to arrest Jesus "by stealth" (δόλῳ) and kill him (cf. 12:24; 26:4; 27:1).[186] Likewise, in 27:20–25, when the "crowd" (ὄχλος) at Jesus's trial side with the antagonists in calling for and accepting responsibility for his death, the author explains that they do so as a result being "persuaded" (ἔπεισαν) by the religious leaders.[187]

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[184] Cousland, *Crowds in Matthew*, 8.

[185] The author of Matthew does not say what sort of relationship these characters had with the religious leaders. This "large crowd" (ὄχλος πολὺς) could have been a group of temple guards simply doing their job, or a hired mob, or perhaps a group of individuals who were persuaded by the religious leaders to act on their behalf. But there is no way of knowing for sure. Konradt admits that his suggestion they were "subordinates of the members of the Sanhedrin" is speculation (Konradt, *Israel, Church, and the Gentiles*, 143). What is clear, however, is that this crowd demonstrates for the implied reader what is looks like to act in accordance with the antagonists' evaluative point of view. Historically speaking, the "crowds" portrayed in Matthew's Gospel would have consisted of different groups of individuals that Jesus encountered during his earthly ministry. But as literary characters in Matthew's narrative they are part of the "prototypical" character which represents the middle-ground in his rhetorical argument. The "large crowd" in 26:47 represents the kind of response to Jesus one would expect from those who are aligned with the antagonists.

[186] The author of Matthew draws a parallel between Judas and the crowds in chapter 27, especially in the matter of the religious leaders' attitude toward them. In 27:4, when Judas confesses that he had betrayed "innocent blood" (αἷμα ἀθῷον), the religious leaders respond by saying "What is that to us? *That is your responsibility*" (lit. "you will see to that," σὺ ὄψῃ). They accept no responsibility themselves, even though they are the ones plotting to bring about Jesus's death. In 27:24, when the religious leaders hand Jesus over to Pilate and "persuade" the crowd to call for Jesus's crucifixion, Pilate washes his hands in front of the crowd declaring "I am innocent of this man's blood, *that is your responsibility*" (lit. "you will all see to it yourselves," ὑμεῖς ὄψεσθε). The religious leaders allow "the people" (ὁ λαός) to naively accept responsibility for what they themselves have orchestrated. They see the crowd/people as they saw Judas, merely as a means to an end. The religious leaders wanted to get rid of Jesus because he was a threat to their status and authority and took advantage of Judas and the crowd/people to achieve that goal.

[187] Matthew has ἔπεισαν ("persuaded," 27:20), where Mark has ἀνέσεισαν ("stirred up," 15:10). Matthew's redaction of Mark suggests to the implied reader that there was some reluctance on the part of the crowds to take part in the religious leaders' rejection of Jesus.

The abrupt change in the crowd's attitude toward Jesus at the end of Matthew's narrative does not come as a surprise for the implied reader who is well-informed about what is going on behind the scenes. The author prepares the reader for what may otherwise have been interpreted as an unexpected tragic turn of events. He does this by having Jesus explain to his disciples (and the implied reader), "this has all taken place that the writings of the prophets might be fulfilled" (26:56; cf. 26:24, 31, 54; 27:9–10). As the events of the Passion Narrative unfold, the irony of what happens would not be lost on the implied reader. The crowds at the Triumphal Entry welcome Jesus into Jerusalem saying he is a "prophet" (21:11), but Jerusalem is where prophets are killed (23:37). The religious leaders make every effort to get rid of Jesus, but ironically it is through their actions that God's plan of salvation for Israel (and indeed, for all humankind) is realized. When Matthew has "all the people" (πᾶς ὁ λαός) declare "let his blood be on us and all our children" (27:25), they probably meant it as an expression of their willingness to accept responsibility for Jesus's death, but the implied reader knows it is by giving his life "as a ransom for many" (20:28) that Jesus accomplishes his mission to "save his people from their sins" (1:21).[188] Jesus's blood "poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins" (26:28) is precisely what the people need to bring them back into a right relationship with God. Accordingly, they are no more or less responsible for Jesus's death than anyone else who comes to God through Christ (the Messiah).[189] "Such ironies are rooted in a theme found in all four Gospel narratives, namely, the idea that God's rule comes in ways that people do not expect."[190]

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[188] See Andrew Simmonds, "Uses Of Blood: Re-Reading Matt. 27:25," *Law and Critique* 19 (2008): 165–91; Simmonds, "'His Blood on Us and on Our Children" (Mt. 27.25) is Modeled on Oedipus's Unwitting Kinship Oath to His Father in Sophocles' Oedipus Tyrannus," *JGRChJ* 16, no. 2 (2020): 30-64; Timothy B. Cargal, "'His Blood Be upon Us and upon Our Children': A Matthean Double Entendre?" *NTS* 37 (1991): 101–12.

[189] For more on Matthew's use of irony, especially in the Passion Narrative, see InHee C. Berg, *Irony in the Matthean Passion Narrative* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Press, 2014), chap. 4.

[190] Powell, *What is Narrative Criticism?*, 31.

"The emphasis in the Passion Narrative on the influence of the leaders over the ὄχλοι, and the hope expressed even after the crucifixion (albeit in ironic terms) that the λαός would believe in the resurrection (27.64)—all indicate that for Matthew the eschatological status of the crowds remains open to the end."[191] In 10:23, the implied reader is informed (via Jesus's words) that the disciples' mission to Israel would not be completed until the *Parousia*. In 28:11–15, the author reports that after the resurrection, the religious leaders refused to listen to the guards' eyewitness report, and instead, devised a plan to spread a lie about what had happened. The religious leaders' reason for doing so stems from their concern the crowds/people may yet put their faith in Jesus (27:62–64). The author characterizes the crowds/people as having the potential to become disciples *if* they do not succumb to the influence the religious leaders.

The Interrelationship between ὄχλος/ὄχλοι and ὁ λαός in Matthew

In Matthew's narrative, the ὄχλος/ὄχλοι ("crowd/crowds") are presented as part of ὁ λαός[192] ("the people") of Israel. The author of Matthew uses the term λαός in several ways: (1) in a generic sense to denote the common "Jewish" people in his narrative (4:15–16, 23, 25;[193] 26:5; 27:25); (2) as a signifier for Israel as a whole (2:6 [cf. Mic 5:1;

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[191] Terrance L. Donaldson, *Jesus on the Mountain: A Study in Matthean Theology*, JSNTSup 8 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1985), 207.

[192] The term λαός occurs fourteen times in Matthew, always with the definite article (1:21; 2:4, 6; 4:16, 23; 13:15; 15:8; 21:23; 26:3; 26:5, 47; 27:1, 25, 64).

[193] Matthew's reference to "Galilee of the Gentiles" does not mean the λαός referred to in 4:23–25 are Gentiles. Jesus preaches to and heals the people "in their synagogues" (4:23; cf. 9:35; 10:17; 12:9; 13:54). When the Gospel of Matthew was written Galilee was regarded as part the land of Israel, with a mixed population of both Jews and Gentiles. See Seán Freyne, *Galilee from Alexander the Great to Hadrian, 323 B.C.E. to 155 C.E.: A Study of Second Temple Judaism* (Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1980), 22–98; Freyne, "Galilee (Hellenistic/Roman)" in vol. 2 of *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992), 896; Freyne, "Behind the Names: Samaritans, loudaioi, Galileans," in *Text and Artifact in the Religions of Mediterranean Antiquity: Essays in Honour of Peter Richardson.* Studies in Christianity and Judaism 9, ed. Stephen G. Wilson and Michel Desjardins1 (Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2000), 389–40; Cousland, *Crowds in the Gospel of Matthew*, 78–79. The most plausible explanation of Matthew's reference to "Galilee *of the Gentiles*" is not that Jesus's ministered to Gentiles, but rather, that it took place at a certain geographical

2 Sam 5:2]; 13:15 [cf. Isa 6:9]); and (3) as a qualifier indicating the religious leaders' relationship to "the people" as their formal representatives (οἱ ἀρχιερεῖς καὶ γραμματεῖς τοῦ λαοῦ, 2:4; οἱ ἀρχιερεῖς καὶ οἱ πρεσβύτεροι τοῦ λαοῦ, 21:23; 26:3, 47; 27:1).[194] When the author uses the term λαός it always has "an underlying ethnic connotation," meaning the covenant people of God.[195]

The first time λαός occurs in Matthew's narrative is when the angel announces an explanation of Jesus's name informing Joseph (and the implied reader) that Jesus "will save his people from their sins" (1:21).[196] This is followed by two fulfillment citations

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region known by that name. Luz notes that "Galilee of the Gentiles" was an OT designation for the land occupied by the tribes of Naphtali and Zebulun (cf. Isa 9:1–2) (Luz, *Matthew 1–7*, 157–60). Moreover, "It is he [the author of Matthew] who makes clear in his Gospel that Jesus was Israel's Messiah, that he was active in Israel's synagogues, and that he forbade his disciples to engage in mission outside Israel (10:5–6)" (Luz, *Matthew 1–7*, 158).

[194] The term λαός appears in the fulfillment citations in Matthew 13:15 (cf. Isa 6:9 LXX) and 15:8 (cf. Isa 29:13). The first applies to the crowds alone (cf. 13:2), where Jesus explains to the disciples that he speaks to the crowds in parables due to their spiritual condition, and the second to the religious leaders specifically—as distinct from the crowds (cf. 15:1), where Jesus reprimands them for their hypocrisy. The term can denote the covenant people of God as a whole or specific individuals who are identified as part of Israel.

[195] Cousland, *Crowds in the Gospel of Matthew*, 81.

[196] The precise meaning of τὸν λαὸν αὐτοῦ in Matthew 1:21 is a matter of intense scholarly debate. It is frequently asserted that "his people" refers not to ethnic Israel but to the new people of God, and that this passage is proleptic, anticipating the Church. See, for example, Kingsbury, *Matthew: Structure, Christology, Kingdom* (London: SPCK, 1976), 85; Davies and Allison, *Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, 1:210; Donald A. Hagnar, *Matthew 1–13*. Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 33A, ed. David Allan Hubbard (Dallas: Word Books, 1993), 20; Gundry, *Matthew: A Commentary on His Handbook*, 22–23; Lidija Novakovic, *Messiah, the Healer of the Sick: A Study of Jesus as the Son of David in the Gospel of Matthew*, WUNT 2 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2019), 66. However, the context of Matthew 1:21 suggests the most plausible interpretation is that τὸν λαὸν αὐτοῦ refers to the people from whom Jesus came (i.e., Israel), for at least three reasons. First, the genealogy and birth narrative establish Jesus's "Jewish" roots. "As seventeen of the verses that precede 1:21 are devoted to an elaboration of Jesus' genealogy, it seems rather unnecessary to propose a people other than the one Matthew has already—and lengthily—furnished" (Cousland, *Crowds in the Gospel of Matthew*, 85). Second, up to this point in the narrative there is no indication that the author has any other *new* people in view. "Even the women in the genealogy, although perhaps signaling the inclusion of Gentiles, are women who have become part of Israel" (Boris Repschinski, "'For He Will Save His People from Their Sins' (Matthew 1:21): A Christology for Christian Jews," *CBQ* 68, No. 2 [2006]: 255–56). Third, the fulfillment passage in Matthew 2:6 (on the lips of the religious leaders, cf. Mic 5:2) clearly associates Jesus, the Christ/Messiah, with the people of Israel.

anticipating Jesus's ministry. He will shepherd God's people Israel (Matt 2:6; cf. Mic 5:2) and be a light to "the people" sitting in darkness (Matt 4:15–16; cf. Isa 9:1). The next time the author uses λαός is at the beginning of Jesus's public ministry. In 4:23–25, Matthew recounts that Jesus went throughout all of Galilee (ἐν ὅλῃ τῇ Γαλιλαίᾳ) teaching and preaching in "their (i.e., the "Jewish" Galileans) synagogues," and healing every disease and sickness "among the people" (ἐν τῷ λαῷ). Word about him spreads throughout Syria. Then people[197] brought to Jesus their sick and demon possessed to be healed by him. As a result, "large crowds" (ὄχλοι πολλοί) from all over the land of Israel "followed" him (4:25).[198] "Precisely at this juncture (4:25) Matthew suddenly begins to refer to the crowds and, barring formula citations, he, as narrator, does not use the word λαός in an unqualified sense again until 27:25, where the crowds join their leaders in assuming responsibility for Jesus' death."[199] Between Matthew 4:25 and 27:25, ὁ λαός are represented in Matthew's narrative by the ὄχλος/ὄχλοι.[200] The crowd(s) constitute that part of "the people" of Israel who are afforded the opportunity to hear the message of the kingdom, interact with Jesus during his public ministry, and respond to him accordingly. The response from the crowd(s) is generally positive until Jesus encounters those associated with and influenced by the religious leaders who reject him. Once the crowd(s)

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[197] The indefinite plural προσήνεγκαν ("they brought") is most likely a reference to people in general rather than the Syrians specifically.

[198] "Historically speaking, of course, these various 'crowds' would probably have consisted of different people, but Matthew's repeated use of the term is probably intended to allow us to trace a movement in the response of the people of Jerusalem, from an initial openness and indeed support for Jesus as a prophet to their eventual acceptance of their leaders' view that he was a false prophet" (France, *Gospel of Matthew*, 819).

[199] Cousland, *Crowds in the Gospel of Matthew*, 75.

[200] The term ὄχλος/ὄχλοι ("crowd/crowds") is used by the author of Matthew to denote those immediately present at a given event (e.g., 5:1; 7:28; 8:1; 21:26) and, in contexts where there is no clear line distinguishing the crowds gathered around Jesus from the general populace, as a signifier for the common "Jewish" people (e.g., 4:25; 9:36; 14:5; 21:46).

in 27:20–24 align themselves with the antagonists they are no longer heard from again. From then on, the covenant people of God are referred to as ὁ λαός (27:25; 27:64).[201]

The "crowds" in Matthew are those whom the author describes as "harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd" (9:36 NIV; cf. Jer 23:5; Ezek 34:5–6; Zech 10:2–3a). They are "the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (15:24; cf. Jer 50:6);[202] the

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[201] The question of whether the term Ἰουδαῖος in Matthew 28:15 means "Jews" (religious and ethnic) or "Judeans" (geographical origin) is the subject of much scholarly debate. Either meaning is possible. For more on this, see Freyne, "Behind the Names," 389–401; Daniel R. Schwartz, *Judeans and Jews: Four Faces of Dichotomy in Ancient Jewish History* (Toronto, ON: University Press, 2014); David M. Miller, "Ethnicity Comes of Age: An Overview of Twentieth-Century Terms for Ioudaios," *CBR* 10, no. 2 (2012): 293–311; Steve Mason, "Jews, Judaeans, Judaizing, Judaism: Problems of Categorization in Ancient History," *JSJ* 38, no. 4/5 (2007): 457–512. In the context of Matthew 28, it is unclear whether the author meant "Judeans" specifically or "Jews" in general. But this does not determine the meaning of the text as it relates to the author's socio-religious or ethnic identity. Assuming the latter, the author could make reference to a report "widely circulated among the Jews to this very day" without implying he is "non-Jewish" (i.e., Gentile and/or "Christian," as opposed to "Jewish"). For example, a modern American Southern Baptist Christian could make reference to some report he or she does not agree with and say it is widely circulated among Americans without implying he or she is not an American. It would only mean that he or she does not agree with the majority view among his or her fellow Americans.

[202] The "crowds" portrayed in Matthew are generally understood to be "Jewish" (i.e., non-Gentile), with one notable exception. Scholars are divided on the ethnic identity of the crowd in Matthew 15:29–31. It is frequently argued that the author of Matthew has a Gentile crowd in view in his account of the feeding of the 4,000. For example, Craig L. Blomberg, *Matthew: Exegetical and Theological Exposition*, 245; Gundry, *Matthew: Commentary on His Handbook*, 319; D. A. Carson, "Matthew," in vol. 8 of *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelen (1984; repr., Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 356–59; France, *Gospel of Matthew*, 596–99; Grant R. Osborne, *Matthew*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on The New Testament (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 601–602, 608–609; J. Benjamin Hussung, "Jesus's Feeding of the Gentiles in Matt 15:29–39: How the Literary Context Supports a Gentile Four Thousand," *JETS* 63, no.3 (2020): 473–89. For a more comprehensive list see Donaldson, *Jesus on the Mountain*, 261n42; Hussung, "Jesus's Feeding of the Gentiles," 474n2.

Those in favor of a Gentile crowd in Matthew 15:29–31 focus primarily on the author's redaction of Mark's geographical references (i.e., Jesus's itinerary and the list of place names) and/or Matthew's account of the crowd praising "the God of Israel" (15:31). But as Hussung clearly demonstrates, "the geographic evidence could conceivably be compatible with either identity" ("Jesus's Feeding of the Gentiles," 477). The same may be said regarding the author's reference to "the God of Israel." As Donaldson observes, "the term 'the God of Israel', . . . does not imply a Gentile speaker [in Matt 15:31] any more than it does in the Psalms (e.g., 41:13; 59:5; 68:35; 69:6; 72:18; 106:48) or in Luke 1:68" (Donaldson, *Jesus on the Mountain*, 261n42). Thus, the "evidence" produced by redaction-critical studies (on both sides of the Gentile-Jewish debate) regarding the ethnicity of the crowd in 15:29–31 is inconclusive at best (as attested by the ongoing scholarly debates on the subject).

Hussung proposes a literary critical solution to the question of the ethnicity of the crowd in Matthew 15:29–39 ("Jesus's Feeding of the Gentiles," 473–89). Building on the works of Wilhelmus J. C. Weren (*Studies in Matthew's Gospel: Literary Design, Intertextuality, and Social Setting*, Biblical Interpretation Series 130 [Leiden: Brill, 2014]) and Janice Capel Anderson (*Matthew's Narrative Web*), he argues that a Gentile reading of the crowd in 15:29–31 "best satisfies the Gentile trajectory of the literary

target recipients of Jesus's and his disciples' ministry (9:36; 10:6; 15:24). In Cousland's words, the crowds in Matthew are "the present exemplars of the covenant people of God, who . . . have suffered from bad leadership and await divine intervention."[203]

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context of Matthew 14:1–16:12" and "provides the most fulfilling literary climax to the theme of Jewish-Gentile relations surrounding the passage" (489). Hussung reaches his conclusion primarily on the basis that Matthew's account of the feeding of the 4,000 is located within a chiasm (literary structure) encompassing Matthew 9:27 to 20:34 (see Anderson, *Matthew's Narrative Web*, 179). Hussung sees the account of the Canaanite Woman (15:22–28)—the "crux" of the chiasm—as marking the turning point in the narrative where Jesus's ministry opens to the Gentiles (488). On the basis of this assumption, he goes on to argue that the following account of the feeding of the 4,000 is presented by Matthew to signify this new trajectory. However, the reasons given for such an interpretation are scarcely adequate. If such were the case, one would expect to find a noticeable shift in Jesus's ministry more toward Gentiles after 15:22–28. But in Matthew's narrative Jesus's ministry continues to focus exclusively on "the lost sheep the house of Israel" until after the resurrection. Only then is the message of salvation extended to include "all nations/Gentiles" (28:18–20). Moreover, it is highly unlikely that the author of Matthew would have Jesus announce that he was "sent only to the lost sheep the house of Israel" (15:24) only to have him forget what he had said in the very next pericope and minister to 4,000 Gentiles. While Hussung is correct in seeing Matthew's concern for the salvation of the Gentiles, the fact that 15:29–31 is part of a chiasm does not constitute evidence that the crowd depicted there is Gentile. A more plausible explanation for the chiasm is that the feeding of the 5,000 in 14:13–21 and of the 4,000 in 15:30–38 is related to the Canaanite woman's statement that "even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their master's table" (15:27). In both accounts the "Jewish" crowds are fed and are satisfied with plenty left over. The point seems to be that Jesus provides more than enough for everyone. The abundance of leftovers from each feeding suggests, in light of the Canaanite woman's statement, that such abundance could be destined for the Gentiles.

A survey of the literature shows a major weakness of redaction critical studies; namely, the tendency to read Mark's characterizations into Matthew's narrative. While some of the crowds in Mark may indeed be characterized as Gentile (cf. Mark 8:1–9; 6:32–44), the same cannot be said with any degree of certainty about Matthew's crowd in 15:29–31. Matthew's characterization is to be understood *within* the context of his own "story world." Given Jesus's statement that he was "sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel," (15:24), the references to "their scribes" in 7:29 and "their synagogues" in 4:23; 9:35; 10:17; 12:9; 13:54, as well as the author's description of the crowds as originating from territory traditionally associated with the land of Israel, the most plausible reading is that Matthew characterizes all the crowds in his narrative as "Jewish" (i.e., non-Gentile)—including the one in 15:29–31. See Donaldson, *Jesus on the Mountain*, 255n50; J. Andrew Overman, *Church and Community in Crisis: The Gospel According to Matthew.* The New Testament in Context, ed. Howard Clark Kee and J. Andrew Overman (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press, 1996) 70–71.

[203] J. R. C. Cousland, *The Crowds in the Gospel of Matthew*, NovTSup 102 (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 98.

CHAPTER 5

MATTHEW AS A RHETORICAL ARGUMENT: CHARACTERS AND CHARACTERIZATION AS A RHETORICAL DEVICE

The previous chapter focused on Matthew's use of character and characterization as a means of representing divergent standpoints in a two-sided rhetorical argument. The purpose of this chapter is to clarify what is meant by "rhetorical argument" in the context of this study, and to explain why the Gospel of Matthew should be read as such. This is followed by a discussion on how character and characterization functions in the narrative as a "rhetorical device."

Matthew as Rhetorical Argument

In his book *New Testament Interpretation through Rhetorical Criticism,* George A. Kennedy observes that the author of Matthew "makes the widest use of all aspects of rhetoric" and consistently provides "his readers with something close to a logical argument."[1] But, one may ask, in what sense is Matthew's Gospel a rhetorical *argument*? Surely, the author does not need to persuade his ἐκκλησία of Jesus-followers to believe in Jesus. Since he is writing to believers, does he even have a case to argue? Not all arguments, however, are designed to change a person's mind on a particular issue. From early on the Gospels "served both as the cardinal pieces of devotional and instructional literature for believers as well as the literary foundation for carrying out the

[1] George A. Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation through Rhetorical Criticis*m (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984), 102.

Great Commission (Matt. 28:16–20) to non-believers."[2] In the case of Matthew's Gospel, the primary goal is not to persuade believers to accept the claim that Jesus is Israel's Messiah, but rather, to *affirm* the acceptability of that claim by providing a trustworthy and compelling argument in support of their faith. For believers, Matthew's explicit standpoint that Jesus is the Messiah also relates to an implicit one; namely, "acceptance or obedience to Jesus' teaching is the proper response according to the evangelist, and the implied reader is challenged to respond correspondingly in the open-ended conclusion to the Gospel."[3] Matthew's aim for believers and non-believers alike is to encourage adherence to an appropriate pattern of life. Or as Agusti Borrell puts it, the Gospels are "works with a marked and clear purpose of influencing their readers (or listeners) in a practical way, right down to effecting their whole way of life."[4]

Matthew's narrative is an exchange of words and ideas strategically designed to persuade readers—both believers and non-believers—to choose the best course of action in light of the evidence provided. The believer who agrees with Matthew's standpoint regarding Jesus's identity should feel not only "some sense of intellectual security in his account,"[5] but also, the need to respond to Jesus appropriately and live one's life accordingly. For the non-believer (i.e., the "real" reader) who is willing "to accept the dynamics of the story world that are established by the implied author,"[6] the

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[2] Mika Hietanen, "The Gospel of Matthew as a Literary Argument," *Argumentation* 25 (2011): 65.

[3] David B. Howell, *Matthew's Inclusive Story: A Study in the Narrative Rhetoric of the First Gospel*, JSNTSup 42 (1990, repr., London: Bloomsbury, 2015), 159.

[4] Agusti Borrell, *The Good News of Peter's Denial: A Narrative and Rhetorical Reading of Mark 14:54, 66–72*, trans. Sean Conlon, ISFCJ 7 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1998), 174.

[5] Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation*, 101–2.

[6] Mark Allen Powell, "Narrative Criticism," in *Hearing the NT: Strategies for Interpretation*, ed. Joel B. Green, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2010), 243.

narrative should persuade him or her to accept the claim that God's plan of salvation for Israel, and indeed for all people, is realized in and through Jesus the Messiah.

As discussed in chapter 1 of this study, the conventions found in ancient handbooks on rhetoric can be applied not only to speeches but also to the study of arguments presented in various kinds of literature, including narratives. "For Aristotle and many later rhetorical theorists, constructing 'narratives' and employing 'rhetoric' are not mutually exclusive activities."[7] Burton L. Mack explains in his *Rhetoric and the New Testament* that the standard rules of rhetoric were "originally developed on the model of the judicial speech" and later "accommodated to the requirements of the deliberative speech."[8] Eventually, the deliberative speech form was "transformed into a standard outline for a 'deliberation' on a 'thesis.'"[9] Patricia Bizzell and Bruce Herzberg note that, "after the classical period, the bounds of rhetoric expanded, until today virtually all forms of discourse and symbolic communication can be included within its scope."[10]

A Note of Clarification

Isidore of Seville (*ca.* 560–636 CE) described rhetoric as "the science of speaking well: it is a flow of eloquence . . . whose purpose is to persuade men to do what is just and good."[11] A common misconception in modern popular culture, however, is that "rhetoric" is nothing more than unconscionable flattery designed to "win" an argument

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[7] Michal Beth Dinkler, "New Testament Rhetorical Narratology: An Invitation Toward Integration," *BibInt* 24, no. 2 (2016): 211.

[8] Burton L. Mack, *Rhetoric and the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1990), 42.

[9] Mack, *Rhetoric and the New Testament*, 42.

[10] Patricia Bizzell, Bruce Herzberg, and Robin Reames, eds., *The Rhetorical Tradition: Readings from Classical Times to the Present*, 3rd ed. (Boston: Bedford Books, 2020), 2.

[11] Isidorus Hispalensis, *Etymologies II*, ed. and trans. P. K. Marchall (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1983), 22. Quoted in Brenda Deen Schildgen, ed., *The Rhetoric Canon* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1997), 11.

by whatever means necessary, with little or no concern for the truth value of the premise(s) on which the argument is built. This rather skewed view of "rhetoric" is well articulated by some seventeenth- and eighteenth-century philosophers whose influential writings have made a lasting impression on Western thought. John Locke (1632–1704), for example, described rhetoric as a verbal battery of "perfect cheats," serving to "insinuate wrong ideas, move the passions, and thereby mislead the judgment."[12] Immanuel Kant (1724–1804) defined it as "the art of deluding by means of such beautiful semblance . . . to win over people's minds to the side of the speaker before they have weighed the matter, and to rob their verdict of its freedom"[13] He goes on to say that rhetoric is "the machinery of persuasion, which, being equally available for the purpose of putting a fine gloss or a cloak upon vice and error, fails to rid one completely of the lurking suspicion that one is being artfully hoodwinked."[14] Locke's and Kant's negative sentiments toward what they call "rhetoric" show that by the early modern period a semantic shift had occurred; that is, the term "rhetoric" had come to mean something quite different than it did in ancient times. According to Aristotle, rhetoric consists of three essential modes or means of persuasion: (1) λόγος (*logos*)—use of logic and reasoning; (2) ἔθος (*ethos*)—establishing the credibility, integrity and virtue of the speaker (or writer); and (3) πάθος (*pathos*)—appealing to the emotions and sympathies of

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[12] John, Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. Kenneth Winkler (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1996), 214. The original edition was published in 1789/1790 under the title, *An Essay Concerning Humane Understanding: In Four Books* (London: Baffit).

[13] Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgement*. ed. Nicholas Walker, trans. James C. Meredith (Oxford: University Press, 2007), 155. The original German reads "durch den schönen Schein zu hintergehen . . . die Gemüther vor der Beurtheilung für den Redner zu dessen Vortheil zu gewinnen und dieser die Freiheit zu benehmen" (*Kritik der Urteilskraft* [Berlin und Liban: Ben de Lagarde und Friedrich, 1790], 216).

[14] Kant, *Critique of Judgement*, 156. The original German reads "die Maschinen der Überredung hiebei anzulegen; welche, da sie ebensowohl auch zur Beschönigung oder Verdeckung des Lasters und Irrtums gebraucht werden können, den geheimen Verdacht wegen einer künstlichen Überlistung nicht ganz vertilgen können" (*Kritik der Urteilskraft*, 222).

the audience.[15] The notion that a speaker or writer can make a rhetorical argument on the basis of a false premise without affecting the *validity* of the argument is not something Aristotle or other ancient rhetoricians would agree with (see below).

Another contributing factor which seems to have fostered suspicion against rhetoric is the way in which some have used persuasive techniques "irrespective of the rationality of [the] argumentative exchange"[16] in order to gain support for one's agenda and influence others to act in a certain way. The political theorist Robert E. Goodin, for example, commenting on how some modern politicians influence their audiences, writes about how "rhetorical appeals" have replaced "reasoned arguments."[17] By "rhetorical appeals" Goodin means passionate speeches intended to play upon the emotions and sympathies of a target audience without presenting a valid or plausible argument for why one should make a decision and/or choose a particular course of action. This sort of audience manipulation has caused many to view rhetoric with a "generalized suspicion of a culpable indifference to the truth."[18]

What Locke, Kant, and Goodin describe, however, is not "rhetoric" in the classical sense. For Aristotle and other ancient rhetors, "rhetoric" is about (1) "finding

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[15] In Aristotle's words, "Now the means of persuasion furnished by a speech are of three kinds. The first depends on the character of the speaker, the second on putting the listener into a certain frame of mind, the third on the speech itself, in so far as it proves or seems to prove" (*Art of Rhetoric*, ed. and trans. J. H. Freese, rev. Gisela Striker, Loeb Classical Library 193 [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2020], 3). The Greek text reads, Τῶν δὲ διὰ τοῦ λόγου πορι̣ζομένων πίστεων τρία εἴδη ἐστίν· αἱ μὲν γάρ εἰσιν ἐν τῷ ἤθει τοῦ λέγοντος, αἱ δὲ ἐν τῷ τὸν ἀκροατὴν διαθεῖναί πως, αἱ δὲ ἐν αὐτῷ τῷ λόγῳ, διὰ τοῦ δεικνύναι ἢ φαίνεσθαι δεικνύναι (1.2.3). Later authors commonly refer to this as the "rhetorical triangle."

[16] Harvey Siegel and John Biro, "Epistemic Normativity, Argumentation, and Fallacies," *Argumentation* 11, no. 3 (1997): 282–83.

[17] Robert E. Goodin, "Democratic Deliberation Within," *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 29, no. 1 (2000): 81–109.

[18] Christian Kock, "Defining Rhetorical Argumentation," *PR* 46, No. 4 (2013): 449–50.

good reasons to justify a decision,"[19] (2) taking into account the credibility, integrity, and virtue of the speaker, and (3) appealing to an audience's emotions and sympathies *on the basis of* relevant "proofs" (πίστεις, i.e., "proper grounds for conviction") presented in the argument. Commenting on earlier handbooks on rhetoric, Aristotle notes,

> At this point, previous compilers of "Arts" [λόγων] of rhetoric have worked out only a small portion of this art, for the means of persuasion are the only part that comes within the province of art; everything else is merely an accessory. And yet they say nothing about enthymemes [ἐνθυμημάτα], which are the body of proof, but chiefly devote their attention to matters outside the subject.[20]

Aristotle defines an ἐνθύμημα as a (rhetorical) syllogism, a form of rational appeal or deductive argument which is fed by four sources: εἰκός ("probability"), παράδειγμα ("example"), σημεῖον ("sign"), and τεκμήριον ("necessary sign").[21] The first three relate to conclusions in the realm of likelihood, while the fourth relates to conclusions beyond refutation.[22] Aristotle recognized that in some instances the "proofs" used to support an argument are only *apparent*—that is, they seem plausible but are not verifiable.[23] In such cases, he says, the hearer (or reader) can judge the validity of the

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[19] Chaïm Perelman, "The New Rhetoric: A Theory of Practical Reasoning," in *The Rhetorical Tradition: Readings from Classical Times to the Present*, ed. Patricia Bizzell and Bruce Herzberg, SyLI 140 (1990; repri., New York: Bedford Books, 2001), 1099.

[20] Aristotle, *Art of Rhetoric*, 17. As Kendall R. Phillips observes, "Much of the classical tradition of rhetorical theory focused on attempting . . . to construct a noble rhetoric, one grounded not so much in the capacity to persuade but in the capacity to amplify the Truth" (Phillips, "Proofs of the Past: Rhetorical Approaches to Difficult Memories," *Rétor* 9, no. 2 [2019]: 142).

[21] Aristotle, *Art of Rhetoric*, 337.

[22] For more on this, see W. M. A. Grimaldi, "Semeion, Tekmerion, Eikos in Aristotle's Rhetoric," *American Journal of Philology* 101, no. 4 (1980): 383–98.

[23] This is not to be confused with another type of argument Aristotle calls *contentious* (ἐριστικός) or *sophistical*. He defines these as arguments which only apparently establish their conclusions, but cannot be drawn logically from the premise(s). See Aristotle, *On Sophistical Refutations*, trans. Edward S. Forster and David J. Furley, ed. Jeffery Henderson, Loeb Classical Library 400 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1951), 60–61.

argument on the basis of the credibility, integrity, and virtue (i.e., ἔθος) of the one making the argument. In Aristotle's words,

> The orator persuades by character when his speech is delivered in such a manner as to render him worthy of trust; for we feel confidence in a greater degree and more readily in persons of worth in regard to everything in general, but where there is no certainty and opinions are divided, our confidence is absolute. . . . [The orator's] character, so to speak, constitutes the most effective means of persuasion.[24]

In Aristotle's view, the speaker (or writer) must present real or apparent proofs related to the subject at hand when appealing to the emotions and sympathies of an audience (cf. *Art of Rhetoric,* 1.1.8; 3.17.12).[25] He criticized those who used emotional-arousal "without reference to the facts of the case, whose rhetorical power would be independent of the underlying strength of the speaker's."[26] Aristotle maintained that "proofs" (πίστεις) are an essential part of any rhetorical argument.[27] In his *Nicomachean Ethics*, he says arguments must "be tested by the facts of life. . . if they are in harmony

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[24] Aristotle, *Art of Rhetoric,* 17.

[25] Aristotle states, "As for persuasion by proving, or appearing to prove: just as dialectic possesses two modes of argument, induction and the syllogism, real or apparent, the same is the case in rhetoric; for the example is induction, and the enthymeme a syllogism, and the apparent enthymeme an apparent syllogism" (Aristotle, *Art of Rhetoric*, 19). For Aristotle, "dialectic is the argumentative technique of the social, practical, deliberative and 'alternative' sciences (ethics and politics)" (William K. Wimsatt Jr., and Cleanth Brooks, *Literary Criticism: A Short History* [1957; repr., New York: Routledge, 2021], 260).

[26] Jamie Dow, "A Supposed Contradiction about Emotion-Arousal in Aristotle's Rhetoric," *Phronesis* 52, No. 4 (2007), 396. Dow explains, "it is not emotion-arousal *per se* that Aristotle criticises, but the inclusion of sections of emotion-arousal deployable independently of the orator's argument" (396). For a more extensive discussion on this, see Dow, "The Role of Emotion-Arousal in Aristotle's Rhetoric," PhD diss. University of St Andrews, 2008. See also Aristotle, *On Sophistical Refutations*, 60–61. Aristotle criticized the Sophists who had a reputation for drawing conclusions which could not be drawn logically from the premise(s) presented in their arguments.

[27] A good example of this is Aristotle's statement regarding "proofs," which he says, "should be demonstrative . . . the demonstration should bear on the particular point disputed; for instance if the fact is disputed, proof of this must be brought at the trial before anything else" (Aristotle, *Art of Rhetoric*, 449). The author of *Rhetorica ad Alexandrum* (*Rhetoric to Alexander*, once thought to be by Aristotle) commented, "He who persuades must show that those things to which he exhorts are just, lawful, expedient, honourable, pleasant, and easy of accomplishment." Quoted in David A. deSilva, *The Hope of Glory: Honor Discourse and New Testament Interpretation* (1999; repr., Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2009), 32.

with the facts, we may accept them; if found to disagree, we must deem them mere theories."[28]

In the context of this study, "rhetoric" is understood as the "art of persuasion" in the classical sense—that is, as Aristotle and other ancient rhetors defined it. "To speak of classical rhetoric is thus to speak of Aristotle's system and its elaboration by Cicero and Quintilian."[29]

Rhetoric in Narrative Form

"Rhetorical narratology recognizes that—contrary to contemporary parlance—rhetoric is not simply 'cheap talk' and narrative is never 'just a story.' Telling a story is a rhetorical act; narratives create rhetorical effects as *narratives*."[30] Some ancient writers such as Cicero (106–43 BCE), Quintilian (35–100 CE), and Livy (59 BCE–17 CE), apparently agree with this assessment when they recognize "a natural affinity between storytellers and rhetoricians."[31] In his *Poetics,* Aristotle too acknowledged a close

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[28] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics,* ed. and trans. H. Rackham, Loeb Classical Library 73 [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1934], 627.

[29] Bizzell, Herzberg, and Reames, *The Rhetorical Tradition*, 3.

[30] Dinkler, "New Testament Rhetorical Narratology, 216, (emphasis hers).

[31] Dinkler, "New Testament Rhetorical Narratology," 210. According to Cicero, "poets, who have the nearest affinity to orators . . . may be attributed to them all in different kinds of writing" (3.27). (Marcus Tullius Cicero, *On Oratory and Orators,* trans. J. S. Watson [1860; repr., Carbondale, Ill: Southern Illinois University Press, 1986], 39). Quintilian writes, "history has a certain affinity to poetry (*poetis*) and may be regarded as a kind of prose poem . . . written for the purpose of narrative, not of proof" (10.1.31). He goes on to say, "rhetoric will also acquire some features of an art which has an end product, by writing speeches or history, an activity which we rightly regard as itself coming within the sphere of oratory" (1.19.2). (Quintilian, *The Orator's Education, Volume I: Books 1–2*, ed. and trans. Donald A. Russell, Loeb Classical Library 126 [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002], 269, 399). Livy writes, "What chiefly makes the study of history wholesome and profitable is this, that you behold the lessons of every kind of experience set forth as on a conspicuous monument; from these you may choose for yourself and for your own state what to imitate, from these mark for avoidance what is shameful in the conception and shameful in the result" (Livy, *History of Rome, Volume I: Books 1–2*, trans. B. O. Foster, ed. Jeffery Henderson, Loeb Classical Library 114 [Cambridge. MA: Harvard University Press, 1919], 7). By "the study of history" Livy meant the study of historical narratives. For more on ancient rhetoric and historiography, see Clare K. Rothschild, *Luke-Acts and the Rhetoric of History: An Investigation of Early Christian Historiography* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004).

relationship between rhetors and storytellers. For example, in his discussion on Tragedy (i.e., as a dramatic art form) he explains that an author/performer affects his reader/audience by means of "the *mimesis* ["imitation"] of an action . . . through pity and fear accomplishing the *catharsis* (κάθαρσις) of such emotion."[32] In other words, characters in a story affect the reader/audience through *character-effect*.[33] Douglas D. Hesse argues that Aristotle's *Poetics* advances "a fourth mode of persuasion—the mimetic or narrative—that complements and completes the logical, ethical, and pathetic forwarded in the *Rhetoric*."[34] The modern literary critic James Phelan observes that "narrative is a rhetorical action in which somebody tries to accomplish some purpose(s) by telling somebody else that something happened."[35] This is certainly true of those who came to believe in Jesus as Israel's Messiah after having spent time with him during his life, ministry, death, and resurrection. They told stories about their experiences (i.e., gave eyewitnesses accounts) to persuade others to become disciples of Jesus (Matt 28:16–20).

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[32] Aristotle, *Poetics. Longinus: On the Sublime. Demetrius: On Style*, trans. Stephen Halliwell, W. Hamilton Fyfe, Doreen C. Innes, and W. Rhys Roberts, rev. Donald A. Russell, Loeb Classical Library 199 [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995], 46–47). Unfortunately, Aristotle does not explain what he meant by the term κάθαρσις. Some interpret it as the "purification," "cleansing," or "purgation" of the emotions through dramatic art. Others see it as the extreme emotional state that results in renewal and restoration. This has long been the topic of scholarly debate. In any case, it is clear that for Aristotle storytelling functions as rhetoric in the sense it creates an effect on an audience. For more on this see Douglas Hesse, "Aristotle's Poetics and Rhetoric: Narrative as Rhetoric's Fourth Mode," in *Rebirth of Rhetoric: Essays in Language, Culture, and Education*, ed. Richard Andrews (1992; repr., New York: Routledge, 2012), 19–39; Elizabeth S. Belfiore, *Tragic Pleasures: Aristotle on Plot and Emotion.* (Princeton: University Press, 1992); Sofia Frade, "Retelling the War of Troy: Tragedy, Emotions, and Catharsis," in *Emotions and Narrative in Ancient Literature and Beyond: Studies in Honour of Irene de Jong*, ed. Mathieu de Bakker, Baukje van den Berg and Jacqueline Klooster (Leiden: Brill, 2022), 324–36.

[33] For more on the concept of *character-effect*, See Mieke Bal, *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative*, 4th ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto, 2017), 105–13.

[34] Douglas D. Hesse "Aristotle's Poetics and Rhetoric, 19–20.

[35] James Phelan, "Rhetoric/Ethics," in *The Cambridge Companion to Narrative*, ed. David Herman (Cambridge: University Press, 2007), 209.

Eventually, their accounts were written down, collated, redacted, and incorporated into Gospel narratives—such as the Gospel of Matthew.

Rhetorical "Invention"

One of the aims of rhetorical analysis is to determine the "invention" (Latin *inventio* = Greek στάσις) of a rhetorical unit.[36] In classical rhetoric, "invention" is defined as "the process of, first, identifying the central issues in a dispute, and next finding arguments by which to address those issues effectively."[37] Cicero defined "invention" (*inventio*) as "the discovery [*excogitation*, "thinking out"] of valid or seemingly valid arguments to render one's cause plausible" (*De Inventione,* 1.7.9).[38] For Aristotle this meant discovering "artistic" (ἔντεχνος) proofs "that can be constructed by system and by our own efforts."[39] This may be achieved most effectively, he says, by forming logical arguments that make the best use of "inartistic" (ἄτεχνος) proofs "that have not been furnished by ourselves but were already in existence."[40] In his *Eudemian Ethics*, Aristotle insisted that "the endeavour must be made to seek to convince by means of rational arguments, using observed facts as evidences (μαρτύριος) and examples (παραδείγματα)"

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[36] Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation*, 36–37.

[37] Richard Nordquist, "Stasis Theory in Rhetoric," *Glossary of Grammatical and Rhetorical Terms*, accessed on February 12, 2022, https://www.thoughtco.com/stasis-rhetoric–1692138). For more on the concept of *stasis* in ancient rhetoric, see Sharon Crowley and Debra Hawhee, *Ancient Rhetorics for Contemporary Students* (Pearson Education, 2004), 53–75.

[38] Cicero, *On Invention. The Best Kind of Orator. Topics*, trans. H. M. Hubbell, ed. Jeffery Henderson, Loeb Classical Library 386. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1949), 19.

[39] Aristotle, *Art of Rhetoric*, 15.

[40] Aristotle, *Art of Rhetoric*, 15.

(1.6.1).[41] This is what the author of Matthew does when he uses what he considered empirical evidence to support his argument that Jesus is the Messiah.[42]

The first example of Matthew's use of "inartistic" (ἄτεχνος) proofs is found in the opening lines of his narrative. The author begins with Jesus's genealogy (1:1–17),[43] which provides important information about Jesus's ethnicity ("the son of Abraham"—situating him within the Jewish tradition[44]) and lineage ("the son of David"—part of the

[41] Aristotle, *Eudemian Ethics*, ed. and trans. H. Rackham, Loeb Classical Library 285 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1935), 219. According to Aristotle, there are two kinds of "proofs" one can present in a rhetorical argument: (1) "artistic" (ἔντεχνος) and (2) "inartistic" (ἄτεχνος). "Artistic" (ἔντεχνος) proofs are invented forms of persuasion that include λόγος, ἔθος, and πάθος. "Inartistic" proofs are "those that are 'preexisting' in that they exist outside the individual rhetor's construction" (Kendall R. Phillips, "Proofs of the Past, 142–43).

[42] It is worth noting that the author of Matthew makes no attempt to *prove* the truth value of his sources. Instead, he takes for granted that the Jewish Scriptures, the eyewitness accounts, and the other source materials he uses to write his Gospel are all factual—and he expects the implied reader to do the same.

[43] Cf. Luke 3:23–38. For more on Jesus's genealogy presented in Matthew, see Warren Carter, *Matthew and the Margins: A Sociopolitical and Religious Reading* (New York: Maryknoll, 2000), 53–66; Carter, *Matthew: Storyteller, Interpreter, Evangelist.* Rev. ed. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2004), 40–42, 81–116; Raymond E. Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah: A Commentary on the Infancy Narratives in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke*, upd. ed. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1999), 57–95, 587–96. For a survey of scholarly opinions regarding the significance of Matthew's opening verse, see Dale C. Allison, Jr., *Studies in Matthew: Interpretation Past and Present* (2005; repr., Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2016), 158–60; cf. W. Barnes Tatum, "'The Origin of Jesus Messiah' (Matt 1:1, 18a): Matthew's Use of the Infancy Traditions," *JBL* 96/4 (1977), 523–35; D. A. Carson, *Matthew, Mark, Luke*. The Expositor's Bible Commentary, vol. 8, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984:): 61; David R. Bauer, "The Literary and Theological Function of the Genealogy in Matthew's Gospel," in *Treasure Old and New: Contributions to Matthean Studies*, ed. David R. Bauer and Mark A. Powell, SBLSymS 1 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1996), 129–59.; Ulrich Luz, *Matthew: A Commentary*, ed. Helmut Koester, trans. James E. Crouch, vol. 1., Hermeneia 61A (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Press, 1989), 69–70; John Nolland, "What Kind of Genesis do we Have in Matt 1.1?" *NTS* 42/3 (1996), 463–71.

[44] As Quarles and Konradt aptly point out, the title "Son of Abraham" not only situates Jesus within the Jewish tradition, it also "establishes great expectations regarding Jesus' identity and mission in the minds of Matthew's readers" (Charles L. Quarles, *A Theology of Matthew: Jesus Revealed as Deliverer, King, and Incarnate Creator* [Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2013], 99). The title "broadens the perspective of the text to include salvation to the Gentiles" (Matthias Konradt, *Israel, Church, and the Gentiles in the Gospel of Matthew: Studies in Early Christianity*, ed. Wayne Coppins and Simon Gathercole, trans. by Kathleen Ess [Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2014], 24).

Davidic bloodline[45]). "In addition to focusing on these central figures [David and Abraham], the genealogy elaborates the active presence and intervention of God throughout Israel's history."[46] In 1:17, the author draws attention to three periods of fourteen generations each from the time of Abraham to the Christ (Messiah). While the significance of the number "fourteen" is uncertain,[47] the divisions in the genealogy clearly mark two major turning points in Israel's history: the beginning of Israel's united monarchy under king David, and the beginning of the period after (cf. μετά, 1:12) the deportation (μετοικεσία) to Babylon. Not only is the genealogy meant to confirm Jesus's identity by establishing a reliable connection back to Israel's first patriarch (Abraham, 1:6) and greatest king (David, 1:6), it also "demonstrates for the implied reader that God

[45] The Jewish scholar Rabbi Joseph Telushkin identifies five things which the Jewish tradition affirms about the Messiah, "He will: be a descendant of King David, gain sovereignty over the land of Israel, gather the Jews there from the four corners of the earth, restore them to full observance of Torah law, and, as a grand finale, bring peace to the whole world" (Telushkin, *Jewish Literacy: The Most Important Things to Know About the Jewish Religion, Its People, and Its History*, revied ed. [1991, repr., New York: William Morrow and Co., 2008], 545). These expectations are also part of the Christian tradition.

[46] Carter, *Matthew: Storyteller, Interpreter, Evangelist*, 107.

[47] The author of Matthew does not explain the significance of the number "fourteen." Most scholars agree this is an example of *gematria*—that is, the practice of assigning a numerical value to a name (in this case, the Hebrew name 'David,' דוד), though not all. If it is indeed an example of *gematria*, it further emphasizes the author's "Jesus as 'Son of David'" motif—assuming Matthew's readers picked up on it. For more on this, see R. T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2007), 98–102; George F. Moore, "Fourteen Generations: 490 Years: An Explanation of the Genealogy of Jesus," *HTR* 14, no. 1 (1921): 97–103; Herman C. Waetjen, "The Genealogy as the Key to the Gospel According to Matthew," *JBL* 95, no. 2 (1976): 205–30; W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison, *Matthew 1–7*, vol. 1 (1988. Reprint, Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2004), 163–65; Donald A. Hagner, *Matthew 1–13*. Word Biblical Commentary, vol 33a. ed. David A. Hubbard and Glenn W. Barker (Dallas: Word Books, 1993), 6–9; W. D. Davies, "The Jewish Sources of Matthew's Messianism," in *The Messiah: Developments in Earliest Judaism and Christianity*, ed. James H. Charlesworth (1992; repr., Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Press, 2009), 494–511; Stephen C. Carlson, "The Davidic Key for Counting the Generations in Matthew 1:17," *CBQ* 76 (2014): 665–683; Steven M. Bryan; "The Missing Generation: The Completion of Matthew's Genealogy," *BBR* 29, no. 3 (2019): 294–316; H. Daniel Zacharias, *Matthew's Presentation of the Son of David: Davidic Tradition and Typology in the Gospel of Matthew* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2017), 40–52.

has been active within the history of his people since its founding members."[48] From the implied author's temporal point of view, the coming of Jesus the Messiah signifies the beginning of the next major turning point in Israel's history.[49] According to Matthew, the history of God's people, which is under divine control and unfolding in an orderly pattern, leads to Jesus as the climax. The implied author presents Jesus's genealogy as an "inartistic" (ἄτεχνος) proof. The implication is that the implied reader can judge the validity of his argument by observing the biblical record and reviewing Israel's history.

Peter J. Rabinowitz has observed that the placement of certain information in a "privileged position" in a narrative—such as at the beginning—ensures that some details gain special attention.[50] According to Abraham S. Luchins, N. H. Anderson, A. A. Barrios, et. al., this literary/rhetorical technique—known as "primacy-recency effect"—is commonly used by authors when characterizing individuals in a story.[51] While the author of Matthew certainly would not have thought of it in such modern terms, his *use* of

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[48] David D. Kupp, *Matthew's Emmanuel: Divine Presence and God's People in the First Gospel*, SNTSM 90 (Cambridge: University Press, 1990), 53.

[49] For a discussion on temporal plane of point of view, see Boris Uspensky, *A Poetics of Composition: The Structure of the Artistic Text and Typology of a Compositional Form*, trans. Valentina Zavarin and Susan Wittig (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973), 1–100.

[50] Peter J. Rabinowitz, *Before Reading: Narrative Conventions and the Politics of Interpretation* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1987), 58–64.

[51] "Primacy-recency effect" was coined by Abraham S. Luchins in the 1950s to refer to "the effect of various kinds and sequences of information communicated about an individual on the impressions formed concerning that person's personality and nature" (Luchins, "Primacy-Recency in Impression Formation," in *The Order of Presentation in Persuasion.* Yale Studies in Attitude and Communication 1, ed. Carl I. Hovland [1957; repr., New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1966], 33). For more on this, see Luchins, "Definitiveness of Impression and Primacy-Recency in Communications," *Journal of Social Psychology* 48, no. 2 (1958): 275–90; Abraham S. Luchins and Edith H. Luchins, "The Effects of Order of Presentation of Information and Explanatory Models," *Journal of Social Psychology* 80, no. 1 (1970): 63–70; Luchins and Luchins, "Primacy and Recency Effects with Descriptions of Moral and Immoral Behavior," *Journal of General Psychology* 113, no. 2 (1986): 159–77; Norman H. Anderson and Alfred A. Barrios, "Primacy Effects in Personality Impression Formation," *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology* 63, no. 2 (1961): 346–50; Stephen Labbie, "Primacy-Recency Effects in Impression Formation and Congruity-Incongruity of Stimulus Material," *Perceptual and Motor Skills* 37, no. 1 (1973): 275–78.

"primacy-recency effect" (whether intentionally or intuitively) is evident. In the opening line the implied author prepares the implied reader for "the hearing of the Gospel as a whole"[52] by ascribing to Jesus the titles "Christ" (ὁ Χριστός), "Son of David" (ὁ υἱὸς Δαυίδ) and "Son of Abraham" (ὁ υἱὸς Ἀβραάμ). He alerts the reader to key theological/ christological themes which he further develops in the narrative. David B. Howell notes that in Matthew's Gospel "the initial information about the attitudes, characters, and narrative world which is projected plays a large part in the process of teaching readers the correct interpretative techniques for reading the text."[53]

Of course, Jesus's genealogy alone does not prove Jesus is Israel's Messiah. After all, there were probably many others born at the time who could trace their lineage back to Abraham and David. This "inartistic" proof would do little to persuade the reader if the author of Matthew had not also employed the "artistic" (ἔντεχνος) proof of logical argument showing how this "evidence" (μαρτύριον) leads to the most reasonable conclusion that Jesus is Israel's Messiah. As the story unfolds, the implied reader learns that Jesus's genealogy is just one of many "inartistic" proofs cited by the author. Other "evidences" (μαρτύριος)[54] include the following: (1) The miraculous circumstances by which Jesus came into the world—that is, his conception by the Holy Spirit (ἐκ πνεύματος ἁγίου, 1:18, 20) and virgin birth (ἡ παρθένος ἐν γαστρὶ ἕξει καὶ τέξεται υἱόν, 1:18, 23); (2) OT prophecies which were fulfilled by Jesus, the Messiah. For example, following his account of "how the birth of Jesus the Messiah came about" (1:18) the author says, "all this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet" (1:22). Matthew repeats his promise and fulfillment motif throughout the narrative (cf. 4:14–16; 8:17;

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[52] J. Duncan M. Derrett. "Further Light on the Narratives of the Nativity," *NovT* 17, no. 2 (1975): 81.

[53] Howell, *Matthew's Inclusive Story*, 115.

[54] Cf. Aristotle, *Eudemian Ethics*, 219.

12:17–21; 13:14–15, 35; 21:4–5; 27:9); (3) God's "voice from heaven" (3:17; 17:5) declaring Jesus as his Son. This claim could be made on the basis of the personal testimonies of those who were present;[55] (4) Jesus's death at the hands of the Romans; (5) Eyewitness accounts of supernatural events such as healings and exorcisms, and, of course, Jesus's resurrection;[56] and (6) The disciples' immediate response to Jesus's call, and their continued obedience and commitment to him after the resurrection; and (7) The unsuccessful attempt by the religious leaders to cover up Jesus's resurrection using a false report (28:12–15).[57] All of these "inartistic" (ἄτεχνος) proofs are cumulative and together form the basis for Matthew's compelling argument. The central issue in dispute in the Gospel of Matthew is clearly Jesus's identity. The author addresses this issue effectively by weaving an array of "inartistic" proofs into a persuasive logical argument (λόγος). He demonstrates how the Jewish Scriptures, Israel's history, personal testimonies, and exemplary characters all point to the Jesus as the Messiah.

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[55] For example, Peter, James and John witnessed the transfiguration and would have told others about it after the resurrection (17:1–9). Personal testimony meets one of Aristotle's criteria of five external proofs, which he identifies as laws (νόμοι), witnesses (μάρτυρες), contracts (συνθῆκαι), torture (βάσανοι), and oaths (ὅρκοι) (Aristotle, *Art of Rhetoric*, 149).

[56] Kennedy notes, "the evidence for the resurrection is not to be found in the multiplication of witnesses, but in the depth of personal experience of those who acknowledge it" (Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation*, 101).

[57] William L. Craig argues convincingly that "the real value of Matthew's story [regarding the antagonists' attempt to conceal the truth about the resurrection] is the incidental—and for that reason all the more reliable—information that Jewish polemic never denied that the tomb was empty, but instead tried to explain it away. Thus, the early opponents of the Christians themselves bear witness to the fact of the empty tomb" (Craig, "The Guard at the Tomb," *NTS* 30, no. 2 [1984]: 280). He further states, "The fact that the enemies of Christianity felt obligated to explain away the empty tomb shows not only that the tomb was known (confirmation of the burial story), but also that it was *empty*" ("Guard at the Tomb," 280n16 [emphasis his].) For more on current scholarly debates on the resurrection of Jesus, see Allison, Dale C. Jr., *Resurrecting Jesus: The Earliest Christian Tradition and Its Interpreters* (New York/London: T & T Clark, 2005); Allison, "Explaining the Resurrection: Conflicting Convictions," *JSHJ* 3, no.2 (2005): 117–33; Simon J. Joseph, "Redescribing the Resurrection: Beyond the Methodological Impasse?," *BTB* 45, no. 3 (2015): 155–73.

Kennedy notes one of the ways Matthew employs the "artistic" (ἔντεχνος) proof of logical argument is to have characters in his story regularly speak in *enthymemes*—that is, having them "support an assertion with a reason which helps to make it more comprehensible."[58] Kennedy gives several examples of this including the angel who informs Joseph of Jesus's miraculous conception (1:20) and the significance of Jesus's name (1:21), the magi who explain why they have come (2:2), and the chief priests and scribes who explain how they know the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem (2:5–6).[59] These characters make assertions and provide rationale in support of the implied author's standpoint (some even do so unwittingly). Another "artistic" (ἔντεχνος) proof employed by the author is to have the protagonist in his story (Jesus) provide rationale for why the antagonists' opposing standpoint does not make logical sense. For example, the religious leaders in 12:24 contend that it is only by "the prince of demons" Jesus is able to drive out demons. They make this claim without offering any rationale for it. In the following verses, however, Jesus shows the logical fallacy of their assertion (12:25–32).

Matthew's Rhetorical Situation

A necessary step in the practice of rhetorical criticism is to define the *rhetorical situation*.[60] This is important because "the unity and coherence of a rhetorical unit is to be found not in the uniformity of its structure, but in the unity of its rhetorical situation."[61] Lloyd F. Bitzer observes that "a rhetorical situation must exist as a necessary

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[58] Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation*, 103.

[59] Kennedy, see *New Testament Interpretation*, 103–4.

[60] Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation*, 34.

[61] Thomas Renz, *The Rhetorical Function of the Book of Ezekiel*, VTSup 76 (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 13. Regarding "rhetorical unit," Kennedy notes that this can be a single pericope or a series of pericopae grouped together to form larger units that interact, which taken together form an integrated whole (Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation*, 34). For the purpose of this narrative-rhetorical study of

condition of rhetorical discourse, just as a question must exist as a necessary condition of an answer."[62] He goes on to say, "discourse is rhetorical insofar as it functions (or seeks to function) as a fitting response to a situation which needs and invites it."[63] Much of Matthew's story centers around conflict between Jesus (and his followers) and the religious leaders over the issue of Jesus's identity. No attempt is made here to establish the identity of the "real" author or his first "real" readers by piecing together information from historical evidence extrinsic to the text. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that even when Matthew's narrative is viewed from a strictly literary (i.e., narrative-rhetorical critical) perspective, certain things may be inferred from the text. For example, it is highly unlikely that the "real" author of a historical narrative presented as a reliable record of recent events would write a story where the "implied" author's point of view is different from his own. Likewise, the anticipated rhetorical effect on the "implied" reader would probably not be something other than what the "real" author was aiming for. "A rhetorical approach to the literature of the New Testament should give us some access to the social and ideological dynamics of the first-century movements and help us determine more precisely what exactly the new persuasion was."[64] Accordingly, in all probability the conflict in the narrative corresponds to the conflict between the Matthean community and other rival groups within Second Temple Judaism—particularly those holding official positions of power and influence.[65]

Matthew, the entire Gospel is treated on a macrolevel as a single internally coherent "rhetorical" narrative made up of a series of smaller (enclosed) rhetorical units. A detailed analysis of the smaller rhetorical units in the text is outside the scope of this study.

[62] Lloyd F. Bitzer, "The Rhetorical Situation," *PR* 1 (1968): 6.

[63] Bitzer, "The Rhetorical Situation," 6.

[64] Burton L. Mack, *Rhetoric and the New Testament*, 94

[65] Thomas C. Fraatz, comments that "it is increasingly clear that Matthew existed within the normative boundaries of what E. P. Sanders termed 'Common Judaism'" (Thomas C. Fraatz, "Social Conflict Theory and Matthew's Polemic against the Pharisees," in *Beyond Borders: Selected Proceedings*

The Implied Author's Credibility (ἔθος)

Matthew's ἐκκλησία of Jesus-followers were part of "the Greek-speaking world in which rhetoric was the core subject of formal education and in which even those without formal education necessarily developed cultural preconceptions about appropriate discourse."[66] Therefore, it seems plausible they would have understood the importance of the author's credibility (ἔθος). Matthew's implied author establishes his credibility not explicitly but implicitly by showing he is well-informed about the Jesus's story. For example, he has access to privileged information (e.g., 1:20–21; 2:12–13, 19–20, 22; 21:15, 25–27, 45–46; 22:18; 26:8; 27:19) and knows the Jewish Scriptures and how they are fulfilled by Jesus (e.g., 1:22; 2:15, 17; 4:14; 12:1–13, 17; 13:14; 15:1–20; 21:4; 27:9). Even the very act of telling the story shows the implied author's ongoing commitment to Jesus and to fulfilling the Great Commission (28:18–20). The implied reader who shares these values would welcome the implied author as a knowledgeable, trustworthy, and reliable narrator.[67] "Based on the notion that the implied author is the defender of the divine perspective, it can be said that the implied author is the foremost believer and the prime example for the reader."[68]

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of the 2010 Ancient Borderlands International Graduate Student Conference [Santa Barbara, University of California, 2010], 5). The German scholar Reinhard Hummel describes the rivalry between the early followers of Jesus and others within the Jewish community as part of a larger "family conflict" or a rival among *feindliche Brüder* (Hummel, *Die auseinandersetzungzwischen kirche und Judentumim Matthäusevangelium*, Kaisar, München, 1966], 55. Cited in Francois P. Viljoen, "The Matthean Community According to the Beginning of His Gospel," *Acts Theologica* 2 [2006]: 246; Viljoen, "The Matthean Community within a Jewish Religious Society," *HTS* 72, no. 4 [2016], 4).

[66] Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation*, 5.

[67] "Since the object of rhetoric is judgment—for judgments are pronounced in deliberative rhetoric and the judicial verdict is a judgment—it is not only necessary to consider how to make the speech itself demonstrative and convincing, but also that the speaker should show himself to be of a certain character and should know how to put the judge into a certain frame of mind" (Aristotle, *Art of Rhetoric*, 167).

[68] InHee C. Berg, *Irony in the Matthean Passion Narrative* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Press, 2014), 16n62.

Characters and Characterization as a Rhetorical Device

The argumentation theorists Frans H. van Eemeren and Rob Grootendorst define *argumentation* as "a verbal, social, and rational activity aimed at convincing a reasonable critic of the acceptability of a standpoint by putting forward a constellation of propositions justifying or refuting the proposition expressed in the standpoint."[69] A well-formed argument, therefore, allows for dissenting views to be stated in order to address in a logical manner objections to the main point being offered for consideration and acceptance. In Aristotle' words "we ought . . . not only to state the true view, but also to account for the false one, since to do so helps to confirm the true; for when we have found a probable explanation why something appears to be true though it is not true, this increases our belief in the truth."[70] To achieve his argumentative objective, the author of Matthew employs literary characters who exemplify certain character traits and behaviors to be imitated or avoided. The character Jesus represents the main standpoint in the argument. He acts in "complete accord with God's system of values."[71] To accept him would be to align oneself with the dominant evaluative point of view espoused in the narrative. The antagonists represent the opposing standpoint. They are characteristic of the sort of people who espouse an evaluative point of view diametrically opposed to that of God. When these characters "step on stage," the implied reader "is summoned to be attentive to the character dynamics and the differences in values which each . . . upholds. He makes a value judgment on the characters not based on his personal beliefs, but based on the divine point of view, which the implied author suggests as the ultimate norm of the

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[69] Van Eemeren and Grootendorst, *A Systematic Theory of Argumentation: The Pragma-dialectical Approach* (Cambridge: University Press, 2004), 1. For more on argumentation theory, see Frans H. van Eemeren, Rob Grootendorst, Ralph H. Johnson, Christian Plantin, et al., *Fundamentals of Argumentation Theory: A Handbook of Historical Backgrounds and Contemporary Developments* (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1996).

[70] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 443, 445.

[71] Kingsbury, *Matthew as Story*, 10.

story."[72] The *character-effect* created by the implied author when he reports on the negative words and actions of the antagonists toward Jesus appeals to the emotions and sympathies of the implied reader (πάθος). Their "opposition could be turned to advantage in that it could arouse sympathy and understanding for Jesus. In this way, the author's use of characters and characterization functions as a rhetorical device.

[72] Berg, *Irony in the Matthean Passion*, 14.

CHAPTER 6

THE GENTILE (NON-JEWISH) CHARACTERS IN MATTHEW'S STORY

The non-Jewish (Gentile) characters in Matthew's story show up only occasionally, are seen on the periphery of Jewish society, and have relatively few character traits ascribed to them. Nevertheless, these minor characters play an important role in helping the implied author shape the implied reader's understanding of Jesus's identity and the nature of his mission to Israel and to the rest of humankind. This chapter examines the role of Matthew's Gentile characters from a narrative-rhetorical critical perspective. The aim here to determine how these literary characters function in the narrative to assist the author in reaching his argumentative objective.

Matthew's Gentile Characters in their Literary Context

Matthew begins with a scene where an angel of the Lord announces an explanation of Jesus's name identifying him as the one who "will save his people from their sins" (1:21). This is followed by another scene where the Jewish religious leaders identify him (albeit unwittingly) as the one who fulfills the prophecy concerning a coming "ruler who is to shepherd [God's] people Israel" (2:6; cf. Mic 5:2). During his earthly ministry, Jesus restricts his mission to Israel (15:24) and instructs his disciples to do the same (10:5–6). In the final scene, however, the resurrected Jesus commissions his disciples to "go and make disciples of all nations/Gentiles" (28:19). This apparent shift in target audience has led many to interpret Matthew's story as one in which God has replaced Israel with a new people (the ἐκκλησία) drawn largely from the non-Jewish

(Gentile) nations.[1] Kenneth W. Clark even goes so far as say that "the Jews as a people are no longer the object of God's salvation."[2] This reading of Matthew assumes that Jesus's commission to go to the nations/Gentiles (Matt 28:19) signifies God's rejection of the Jewish people *in toto* due to their sin and rejection of Jesus as their Messiah.[3] But as

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[1] For example, Kenneth W. Clark, "The Gentile Bias in Matthew," *JBL* 66, no. 2 (1947): 165–72; Douglas R. A. Hare, *The Theme of Jewish Persecution of Christians in the Gospel According to St. Matthew*, SNTSMS 6 (Cambridge: University Press, 1967); Lloyd Gaston, "The Messiah of Israel as Teacher of the Gentiles: The Setting of Matthew's Christology," *Interpretation* 29, no. 1 (1975): 24–40. For historical surveys of the development of supersessionist ("replacement theology") views, see James W. Parkes, *The Conflict of the Church and the Synagogue: A Study in the Origins of Antisemitism* (Cleveland and New York: The World Publishing Company, 1961); Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Faith and Fratricide: The Theological Roots of Anti-Semitism* (New York: Seabury Press, 1974); John G. Gager, *The Origins of Anti-Semitism: Attitudes Toward Judaism in Pagan and Christian Antiquity* (Oxford: University Press, 1983).

[2] Clark, "Gentile Bias in Matthew," 166. Clark argues that the author of Matthew was a Gentile writing for a largely Gentile audience. David C. Sim takes the opposite position, contending that the author was Jew writing for an exclusively Jewish audience. Sim asserts that Matthew's ἐκκλησία of Jesus-followers did not engage in the Gentile mission even after Jesus's resurrection. Gentiles were shunned, and any who wished to become members of the ἐκκλησία would first have to convert to Judaism and obey the Torah (Sim, "The Attitude to Gentiles in the Gospel of Matthew," in *Attitude to Gentiles in Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity*, ed. David C. Sim and James S. McLaren, LNTS 499 [New York: Bloomsbury, 2013], 173–90). While Clark sees the Gospel of Matthew as entirely *pro*-Gentile, Sim sees it as entirely *anti*-Gentile. Neither view, however, has gained wide acceptance among scholars—at least not in the past four decades. Most contemporary scholars agree that the author of Matthew was a Jew writing for a blended audience made up of both Jews and Gentiles (See, for example, Anthony J. Saldarini, *Matthew's Christian-Jewish Community* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994], 58–61; W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. Matthew*. ICC, vol. 3 [Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark], 190; Wesley G. Olmstead, *Matthew's Trilogy of Parables: The Nation, the Nations and the Reader in Matthew 21.28–22.14*, SNTSMS 127 [Cambridge: University Press, 2003], 91, 114–17, 160–64). If nothing else, Clark and Sim demonstrate well Matthew's mixed views toward Gentiles.

[3] See, for example, Hans Kvalbein, "Has Matthew Abandoned the Jews?" A Contribution to a Disputed Issue in Recent Scholarship," In *The Mission of the Early Church to Jews and Genitles*, edited by J. Adna and H. Kvalbein (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000), 54-58; Peter Stuhlmacher, "Matt 28:16-20 and the Course of Mission in the Apostolic and Postapostolic Age," In *The Mission of the Early Church to Jews and Genitles*," edited by J. Adna and H. Kvalbein (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000), 17-44. For a response to Kvalbein and Stuhlmacher, see Ulrich Luz, "Has Matthew Abandoned the Jews? A Response to Hans Kvalbein and Peter Stuhlmacher concerning Matt 28:16-20," In *The Mission of the Early Church to Jews and Genitles*, edited by J. Adna and H. Kvalbein (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000), 63-68. For more on the "sin-rejection-replacement framework," see Terence L. Donaldson, *Jews and Anti-Judaism in the New Testament: Decision Points and Divergent Interpretations* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2010); "Supersessionism and Early Christian Self-Definition," *JJMJS* 3 (2016): 1–32. Donaldson defines supersessionism as "denoting traditional Christian claims that the church has replaced Israel in the divine purposes and has inherited all that was positive in Israel's tradition" ("Supersessionism," 2).

Craig S. Keener[4] and Matthias Konradt[5] clearly point out, the text does not actually state this. While the phrase "πάντα τὰ ἔθνη" in Matthew 28:19 could be interpreted as either "all the *nations*" including Israel, or "all the *Gentiles*" excluding Israel,[6] neither reading signals rejection of the Jewish people, nor does it mean that the mission to Israel had been abandoned.[7] "What is important to remember," says Keener, "is that the Gentile mission extends the Jewish mission—not replaces it; Jesus nowhere revokes the mission to Israel (10:6), but merely adds a new mission revoking a previous prohibition (10:5)."[8] Konradt notes that "the disciples are already entrusted with the task of tending to the 'lost sheep of the house of Israel' in 10.6–8, and 10.23 at the latest makes it clear that this is a task that will persist until the Parousia."[9] In the preamble to his commission to the disciples Jesus says nothing about Israel having rejected him. He only speaks of "all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to [him]" (28:18). "The most immediate

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[4] Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2020), 718–20.

[5] Matthias Konradt, *Israel, Church, and the Gentiles in the Gospel of Matthew*, trans. Kathleen Ess (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2014), 311–25.

[6] The meaning of πάντα τὰ ἔθνη in Matthew 28:19 is a topic of much scholarly debate. See, for example, Douglas R. A. Hare and Daniel J. Harrington, "'Make Disciples of All the Gentiles' (Mt 28:19)," *CBQ* 37 (1975): 359–69; Meier, "Nations or Gentiles," 94–102. Hare and Harrington argue that the author of Matthew meant "all the Gentiles" (i.e., non-Jews only). Meier, on the other hand, maintains that πάντα τὰ ἔθνη should be translated "all the nations," or "all (the) peoples" (i.e., the whole inhabited earth, including the Jews). For a more comprehensive list of scholars who debate this issue, see Konradt, *Israel, Church, and the Gentiles*, 311n252. For a discussion on the meaning of ἔθνος in Matthew, see Glenna S. Jackson, "Are the "Nations" Present in Matthew?," *HTS* 56, no. 4 (2000): 940-43; Jackson, *'Have Mercy on Me': The Story of the Canaanite Woman in Matthew 15:21-28*, JSNTSup 228 (Sheffield Academic Press, 2002), 29-34.

[7] Note the preamble to Jesus's commission. He says nothing about Israel having rejected him. During his earthly ministry, Jesus was sent "only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matt 15:24), but now, he says, "all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to [him]" (Matt 28:18). "Therefore" (i.e., on the basis of this authority), he instructs his disciples to extend the scope of their mission *beyond* Israel (Matt 28:19).

[8] Keener, *Gospel of Matthew*, 719.

[9] Konradt, *Israel, Church, and the Gentiles*, 316.

literary context of the command to make disciples is the risen Jesus's claim of authority over heaven and earth. The command to make disciples is closely related to the claim of authority through the use of the conjunction οὖν."[10] It seems, therefore, the change (expansion) of the target audience is related to Jesus's authority, not Israel's rejection. Keener and Konradt argue convincingly that the resurrected Jesus's commission to his disciples (28:19) is to be understood as broadening the scope of their mission *beyond* Israel, not replacing their mission *to* Israel.[11]

Everything the author of Matthew says about Gentiles is in relation to Jesus's and his disciples' ministry to "the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (1:21; 10:6; 15:24). The final scene anticipates a future mission to all nations/Gentiles, but as the Gospel draws to a close the disciples have yet to engage in this mission. Questions about how the Gentile mission was later carried out, whether Matthew's ἐκκλησία of Jesus-followers expected Gentile believers to follow the Mosaic law in full, and other such historical matters, is beyond the scope of this study. This narrative-rhetorical analysis focuses on how the author of Matthew uses characters and characterization as a rhetorical device to assist him in reaching his argumentative objective.

In the case of Matthew's Gentile characters, characterization is achieved entirely by showing.[12] There are no narrative "asides" explaining their significance or

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[10] Kukzin Lee and Francois P. Viljoen, "The Target Group of the Ultimate Commission (Matthew 28:19)," *HTS* 66, no. 1 (2010): 4.

[11] For similar views, see Ulrich Luz, *Matthew 21–28: A Commentary*, ed. Helmut Koester, trans. James E. Crouch, vol. 3., Hermeneia 61C (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Press, 2005), 628; Warren Carter, *Matthew and the Margins: A Sociopolitical and Religious Reading* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2000), 552–53; Joel Willitts, "The Friendship of Matthew and Paul: A Response to a Recent Trend in the Interpretation of Matthew's Gospel," *HTS* 65, no. 1 (2009): 150–57; and Ho Jin Nam, "Attitude Towards the Torah and Gentiles in Matthew 28:18–20: End-Time Proselytes, Righteous Gentiles or New People?" (PhD diss., University of St. Michael's College, 2017). The question of whether the author of Matthew expected Gentiles to be Torah-observant is a topic of much scholarly debate.

[12] On "showing and telling," see Wayne C. Booth, *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (Chicago: University Press, 1961), 3–20; cf. Powell, *What is Narrative Criticism?*, 52–53; David Rhoads, Joanna

why Jesus—sent only to "the lost sheep of the house of Israel"—occasionally makes an exception and ministers to them. The reader is left to evaluate Matthew's Gentile characters on the basis of their words and actions, as well as the words and actions of others in the story.

Matthew's Positive and Negative Characterization of the Gentiles and the Gentile World

Matthew's characterization of Gentiles (οἱ ἐθνικοί/τὰ ἔθνη) is both positive and negative.[13] "This countervalence of severity and mercy, of righteous works and humble faith, of stringent demands and generous benefits, walks on two legs all through Matthew, and must be held together to do justice to the interpretation of the book."[14] On the one hand, he presents them as negative examples of people with poor ethical standards whose characteristic behavior is to be avoided (5:46–47). They are considered "outsiders"—the kind of people with whom one does not associate (18:15–17). Their empty prayers and failure to trust God to meet their basic needs serve as examples of what not to do (6:7, 31–32). Jesus warns his disciples that they would eventually be brought before Gentile rulers and handed over for trial on account of him (10:18–19). He later tells them one of the signs of his coming and the end of the age is that they would be oppressed (θλῖψις), killed (ἀποκτείνω), and hated (μισέω) by all the nations/Gentiles on

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Dewey, and Donald Michie, *Mark as Story: An Introduction to the Narrative of a Gospel*, 3rd ed. (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Press, 2012), 101.

[13] For more on the range of views regarding Gentiles within first-century Judaism, see Louis H. Feldman, *Jew and Gentile in the Ancient World: Attitudes and Interactions from Alexander to Justinian* (Princeton: University Press, 1993); Shaye J. D. Cohen, "Was Judaism in Antiquity a Missionary Religion?" in *Jewish Assimilation, Acculturation and Accommodation: Past Traditions, Current Issues and Future Prospects*, ed. Menachem Mor, Studies in Jewish Civilization 2 (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1992), 14–23; Cohen, *The Beginnings of Jewishness: Boundaries, Varieties, Uncertainties*, Hellenistic Culture and Society 31 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999); Terence L. Donaldson, *Judaism and the Gentiles: Jewish Patterns of Universalism (to 135 CE)* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2007); Nam, "Attitude Towards the Torah," 10–16.

[14] Gene R. Smillie, "'Even the Dogs': Gentiles in the Gospel of Matthew," *JETS* 45, no. 1 (2002): 73.

account of his name (24:9). Finally, Jesus himself would be handed over to the Gentiles to be "mocked and flogged and crucified" (ἐμπαῖξαι καὶ μαστιγῶσαι καὶ σταυρῶσαι, 20:19). On the other hand, the author presents several "pro-Gentile" stories in which non-Jewish characters serve as models of exemplary behavior. Even though they are clearly not the target recipients of Jesus's and his disciples' ministry prior to the resurrection (10:5; 15:24), these Gentiles ("outsiders") demonstrate for the implied reader the kind of positive response to Jesus one should expect from God's people Israel ("insiders"). "This rhetorical strategy is meant to shame Jews who did not accept Jesus . . . by saying that even some gentiles recognized who Jesus was and submitted themselves to his authority."[15]

The Magi (μάγοι)

The first Gentile characters to appear in Matthew's story are the magi (μάγοι) from the East (2:1–12). They—not the "shepherds" of God's people—are the first to learn about and announce the birth of Israel's awaited king. Having seen his star rising (αὐτοῦ τὸν ἀστέρα ἐν τῇ ἀνατολῇ), they journey to Jerusalem to pay him homage (προσκυνῆσαι αὐτῷ, "to worship him," 2:2).[16] The first king they meet is Herod, who "correctly deciphers the words of the magi . . . as news of the birth of *Christ*, of *the Messiah*, so that Jesus appears here as a kingly messiah or messianic king (cf. 21.5,9)."[17]

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[15] Anders Runesson, "The Gospel According to Matthew," in vol. 2 of *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Books of the Bible*, ed. Michael D. Coogan (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 66.

[16] R. T. France notes, "The idea that a special star heralded the birth of famous people (and other significant events) was widespread in the ancient world." (France, *Gospel of Matthew*, NICNT, ed. Joel B. Green [Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2007], 57). For more on this, see Raymond E. Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah: A Commentary on the Infancy Narratives in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke* [New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1999], 170–71, 610; Davies and Allison, *Commentary on Matthew*, 1988), 1:233–34.

[17] Konradt, *Israel, Church, and the Gentiles*, 32 (emphasis his).

Herod learns from the Jewish religious leaders where the Christ was to be born (2:4–6). The narrative describes conflict. In contrast to the magi's positive response to the news of Israel's newborn king/Messiah, Herod and "all Jerusalem with him" are alarmed (ἐταράχθη, 2:3). King Herod perceives Jesus as a threat to his position of authority over the Jewish people, and so devises a plan to kill him (2:16). "This unexpected information surely serves as a marker for the development of the rest of the plot. Matthew gives a signal to that which is to take place later in the narrative."[18] While Gentile "outsiders" respond positively to Jesus, Jewish "insiders"—specifically those in positions of leadership in Israel—do not. The magi were able to discern the signs (2:2, 9–10), receive God's guidance (2:1–2, 12), and when they found Jesus were able recognize him as the king/Messiah of the Jews (2:11). They were overjoyed (2:10) and worshiped him (2:11). The Jewish religious leaders, however, are "blind guides" (15:14; 23:16; 23:24), unable to interpret the signs of the times (16:3) or recognize who Jesus is (22:67; 26:63; 27:42). They, like Herod, saw Jesus as a threat to their positions of authority over the Jewish people and plotted to kill him (12:14; 26:3–5). "This positive depiction . . . foreshadows the Gentiles' faith in Jesus during his later ministry (8:5–13; 15:22–28)."[19]

The Roman Centurion (8:5–13)

The account of the Roman centurion in Matthew 8:5–13 is one of two occasions where Jesus commends a Gentile for their faith.[20] The setting is significant. It

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[18] Francois P. Viljoen, "The Matthean Community According to the Beginning of His Gospel," *Acta Theologica* 26, no. 2 (2006): 254.

[19] Ho Jin Nam, "Attitude Towards the Torah, 35.

[20] The centurion character is not explicitly described as a Gentile. However, the term ἑκατόνταρχος is used as a designation for a Roman soldier commanding a hundred men. Michael F. Bird has suggested that "after subtracting the Lucan and Matthean redaction of Q, the centurion could easily be a Jew" (Bird, *Jesus and the Origins of the Gentile Mission*, LNTS 331 [New York: T & T Clark, 2007], 118). However, given the parallels between this account and the account of the Canaanite woman in Matthew 15:21–28 (see below), Bird's suggestion seems most unlikely. Even if he is right about Herod's army being "modelled along Roman lines" (118) or that Herod *could have* employed Jews as well as Gentiles (119),

takes place following the Sermon on the Mount, in which Jesus makes several negative remarks about Gentiles in general (5:46–47; 6:7, 31–32). The Sermon discourse ends with a transitional statement reporting that the crowds were amazed at Jesus's teaching because he taught them with authority, "not as their teachers of the law" (7:28–29). This leads into a section where Jesus demonstrates his authority by performing miracles (8:1–9:34).[21]

When the Roman centurion approaches Jesus asking for healing on behalf of his "servant" (or "son"[22]), the negative attitude toward Gentiles is still fresh in the reader's mind. The topic of Jesus's authority is mentioned again, but this time from the lips of a Gentile (8:9).

Jesus's immediate response to the centurion's request is unclear, due to the ambiguity of the Greek sentence. Ἐγὼ ἐλθὼν θεραπεύσω αὐτόν could be interpreted either as a statement ("I will come and heal him") or as a dismissive question ("And *I* should come and heal him?").[23] Most commentators suggest the latter, noting that the wording

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this does not constitute sufficient evidence to support the notion that the centurion character in Matthew 8:5–13 was Jewish. The author of Matthew clearly casts both characters, the centurion and Canaanite woman, as Gentiles.

[21] Jesus demonstrates his authority over sickness and disease (8:1–17, 28–34; 9:20–22, 32–34), demons (8:16–17, 28–34), the forces of nature (8:23–27), and death (9:18–19, 23–25). He also has the authority to forgive sins (9:1–8). Jesus's authority is challenged by the Jewish religious leaders following the cleansing of the temple (21:12–13, 23–27). The Roman centurion demonstrates faith in Jesus, while they do not.

[22] Scholars are divided on how to translate παῖς in Matthew 8:6. It could mean either "servant" or "son." See Ulrich Luz, *Matthew 8–20: A Commentary*, ed. Helmut Koester, trans. James E. Crouch, vol. 2., Hermeneia 61B (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Press, 2001), 10n17; Donald A. Hagner, *Matthew 1–13*, WBC, 33A. (Dallas: Word Books, 1993), 204; France, *Gospel of Matthew*, 256; Davies and Allison, *Commentary on Matthew*, 2:21; John Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2005), 354.

[23] Konradt suggests that reading Jesus's words as a dismissive question is "positively required in view of the coherence of 8.5–13 and 15.21–28" (*Israel, Church, and the Gentiles*, 67).

and flow of the dialogue seems to point in this direction.[24] What is clear, however, is the centurion's faith in Jesus. He sees himself as an unworthy "outsider" in Jewish society—presumably on the basis of being a Gentile, but approaches Jesus anyway asking for help because he believes Jesus has the authority to heal the sick *just by saying the word* (8:8).[25] "As a commanding officer of the hated Roman army of occupation, this outlander represents the far end of the spectrum of those to whom the Jewish Messiah ministers."[26] Nevertheless, this centurion is confident that Gentiles too may benefit from Jesus's ministry. In contrast to what is said about Gentiles earlier, this "outsider" shows himself to be "surprisingly adept at recognizing and trusting the ways of God"[27] Jesus is amazed by his faith and declares he had not seen such faith in anyone in Israel (8:10). He goes on to say, "many from the east and the west will come and recline (at the table) with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven, but the sons of the kingdom will be thrown out into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (8:11–12). Jesus's (and Matthew's) point seems clear; Gentile "outsiders" will become kingdom of heaven "insiders" in the same way Jewish "insiders" do—through faith in Jesus. Conversely, those who reject Jesus ("the sons of the evil one," cf. 13:37–50) will be thrown outside. Earlier in the narrative, John the Baptist made the point that a

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[24] For more on this see R. T. France, "Exegesis in Practice: Two Samples," in *New Testament Interpretation: Essays on Principles and Methods*, ed. I. Howard Marshall (Eugene, OR: Paternoster Press, 1979), 256–257. See also Luz, *Matthew 8–20*, 10; Nolland, *Gospel of Matthew*, 254–55; Davies and Allison, *Commentary on Matthew*, 2:22; Amy Jill Levine, *The Social and Ethnic Dimensions of Matthean Social History: "Go Nowhere Among the Gentiles . . ." (Matt. 10:5b).* Studies in the Bible and Early Christianity 14 (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 1988), 111; Craig A. Evans, *Matthew.* New Cambridge Bible Commentary (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 187.

[25] He "expresses profound respect for Jesus as a Jew and does not insist that Jesus come under his roof" (Donald Senior, "Between Two Worlds: Gentiles and Jewish Christians in Matthew's Gospel," *CBQ* 61 [1999]: 20).

[26] Smillie, "'Even the Dogs'," 91.

[27] Ingram, "Of Dogs and Disciples," 53.

person's destiny is not determined by one's ethnicity, but rather, one's repentance and faith (3:7–12). "Just as soldiers are subject to the centurion's authority and carry out his orders, so does Jesus as the *kyrios* (8.6) in principle have the power to bring salvation beyond Israel, even if this is not yet a part of his task within the framework of his earthly mission."[28]

The Canaanite Woman (15:21–28).

Matthew's account of the Canaanite woman is placed immediately following a heated debate with the Pharisees and scribes over *halakhic* matters. They question Jesus about why his disciples "transgress (παραβαίνω) the tradition of the elders" by not washing their hands before eating (15:2). Jesus responds with a question/accusation of his own about why they, "transgress (παραβαίνω) the command of God for the sake of [their] tradition" (15:3). After reprimanding the religious leaders for nullifying the word of God, Jesus explains to the crowd and his disciples that "clean" and "unclean" is a matter of the heart (15:11; 15:17–20). Next, Jesus withdraws (ἀναχωρέω) to the region of Tyre and Sidon, where he encounters "a representative of the (unclean) Gentile world."[29] A Canaanite[30] woman approaches Jesus crying out for help on behalf of her daughter who is

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[28] Konradt, *Israel, Church, and the Gentiles*, 72–73.

[29] Brendan Byrne, "The Messiah in Whose Name 'the Gentiles will Hope' (Matt 12:21): Gentile Inclusion as an Essential Element of Matthew's Christology," *ABR* 50 (2002): 68. Tyre and Sidon are frequently mentioned together in the Hebrew Bible as typical heathen cities known for their hostility toward Israel (e.g., Isa 23; Jer 25:22; 27:3; 47:4; Ezek 26–28; Joel 4:4; Amos 1:9–10; Zech 9:2). For more on this, see Robert H. Gundry, *Matthew: A Commentary on His Handbook for a Mixed Church Under Persecution*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1994), 31, 214; Carter, *Matthew and the Margins*, 322; Gerd Theissen, *The Gospels in Context: Social and Political History in the Synoptic Tradition*, trans. Linda M. Maloney (1991; repr., New York: Bloomsbury, 2000), 65–80; France, *Gospel of Matthew*, 592; M. Eugene Boring, *The Gospel of Matthew*. The New Interpreter's Bible Commentary, vol. 3 (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995), 336.

[30] "The term 'Canaanite' would have evoked the rich and complex history between Canaan and Israel to Matthew's audience. Clearly, this would bring to mind her 'otherness' and 'foreignness' in far greater contrast to the Jewish disciples and Jesus than [Mark's] term 'Syrophoenician'" (Daniel N. Gullotta, "Among Dogs and Disciples: An Examination of the Story of the Canaanite Woman (Matthew

"miserably demon-possessed" (15:22). Jesus's initial response seems cold and harsh. At first, he appears to ignore her. The disciples see her as a nuisance and ask him to send her away.[31] Jesus shows little concern for her or his disciples' request. His words, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel" (15: 24), imply that helping her is out of the question. But the Canaanite woman persists. She bows before him and pleads for help (15:25). Jesus's second response to her is a "seemingly dismissive rejoinder that it would be wrong—almost unethical—to do so (οὐκ ἔστιν καλόν): 'It is not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs' (v. 26)."[32] Jesus's words sound derogatory and insulting.[33]

Scholars are divided on whether the statement should be interpreted as an insult or simply as a metaphor illustrating the Canaanite woman's status (religious, social, and ethnic) in relation to the people of Israel.[34] Perhaps it is Jesus's way of testing the woman's faith to see if she would persist in asking (cf. 7:8). Either option is possible. The statement in Matthew 7:6 about not giving what is sacred to "dogs" (κύνες) suggests that

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15:21–28) and the Question of the Gentile Mission within the Matthean Community," *Neotestamentica* 48, no. 2 [2014]: 329).

[31] Some interpret the disciples' request as a petition on her behalf—that is, send her away *by* granting her request (e.g., Davies and Allison, *Commentary on Matthew*, 2:549; France, *Gospel of Matthew*, 593; Hagner, *Matthew 1–13*, 441; Francis W. Beare, *The Gospel According to Matthew: Translation, Introduction, and Commentary* [San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1982], 341; Samuel T. Lachs, *A Rabbinic Commentary on the New Testament: The Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke* [Hoboken, NJ: KTAV Publishing, 1987], 248). Others interpret it as a plea to send her away *without* granting her request (Gundry, *Matthew: Handbook for a Mixed Church*, 312–13; Gerd Theissen, *The Miracle Stories of the Early Christian Tradition* [Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983], 53). The latter seems more plausible. Elsewhere in Matthew, the disciples impede Jesus's ministry by urging him to send people away to fend for themselves (14:15), and by scolding those who brought children to him (19:13). It is unlikely they would treat a Gentile woman any better.

[32] Smillie, "'Even the Dogs'," 93.

[33] Scholars frequently comment on how this passage has long been one of the most difficult in Matthew for expositors, due primarily to Jesus's harsh words against the Canaanite woman. See, for example, Smillie, "Even the Dogs," 93; Kukzin Lee, "Matthew's Community and the Gentile Mission," (PhD diss., North-West University, Potchefstroom, 2010), 75.

[34] For a helpful summary of the argument, see Gullotta, "Among Dogs and Disciples," 332–36.

"dog" (κυνάριον) in 15:26–27 probably should be read as "a deliberately offensive term for Gentiles."[35] Some argue that the diminutive form κυνάριον is not a derogatory term since it refers to a "puppy" or "little dog."[36] But as France commented, "only a pet-loving Western culture would suggest that this reduces the offense; a 'little dog' is no less unclean than a big one!"[37] In the Hebrew Scriptures, whenever the term "dog" (כֶּלֶב) is used metaphorically in reference to human beings it always has a negative connotation (cf. Deut 23:18; 1 Sam 17:43; 2 Sam 16:9; Ps 22:16, 20; Prov 26:11; Isa 56:10–11). Jesus's and his disciples' dismissal and apparent hostility based on the Canaanite woman's ethnicity and religious background seems to underscore the Jewish "suspicion and prejudice against her as a Gentile."[38] Nevertheless, the woman is undeterred. "She tacitly agrees with the conventional nationalistic principles the Jewish Messiah has been articulating ('Yes, Lord'), and yet parries with the riposte, 'but even the dogs feed on the crumbs which fall from their master's table' (v. 27)."[39] This time Jesus responds to her directly. He commends her for having *great* faith and grants her request (15:28).

There are several notable similarities between Matthew's accounts of the Canaanite woman and the Roman centurion (8:5–13): (1) both characters take the initiative to approach Jesus asking for help on behalf of someone else, (2) both were considered unworthy "outsiders" in Jewish society, (3) both are "exceptions to the

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[35] France, *Gospel of Matthew*, 594. See also Bird, *Jesus and the Origins*, 48–49; Theissen, *Gospels in Context*, 62.

[36] For example, Boring suggests that Jesus is "speaking affectionately of 'puppies'" (Boring, *Gospel of Matthew*, 336). Robert H. Gundry argues, while "Jews commonly used "dogs" as an epithet for Gentiles (see Str-B 1. 724–25), the diminutive together with the portrayal of the dogs as eating from the table favors that we have to do with household pets rather than with the street-roaming scavengers referred to in the epithet" (Gundry, *Matthew: Commentary*, 315). See also Luz, *Matthew 8–20*, 340–41.

[37] France, *Gospel of Matthew*, 594.

[38] Gullotta, "Among Dogs and Disciples," 332.

[39] Smillie, "'Even the Dogs'," 93.

normative rule of Jesus limiting his ministry solely to the "lost sheep of Israel" (15:24),[40] (4) both demonstrate humility by acknowledging and accepting Jewish-Gentile socio-religious norms at the time, and (5) in both cases, Jesus does not immediately grant their request, but does so only after they demonstrate remarkable faith in him.[41] As with the Roman centurion, the Canaanite woman recognizes "the ways of God at work in Jesus, something that, as the surrounding narrative demonstrates, the Jewish religious leaders, those who should have recognized it most clearly, do not or will not see."[42] These Gentile characters—as do the magi—show there is a faith at work in those outside the "house of Israel." They are characterized as having "such faith not found in anyone in Israel" (8:10), and as having "great faith" (15:28)—in contrast to the disciples who sometimes show "little faith" (6:30; 8:26; 14:31; 16:8; 17:20), and the Jewish religious leaders who show no faith (21:25, 32; 27:42). They are not presented "merely as 'lucky' exceptions to the Messiah's program but rather as paradigms of the faith that is called for in all of Jesus's disciples."[43] "It is very important to notice that the idea of universal proclamation is not mentioned for the first time in the last text Mt 28:16–20."[44] The author of Matthew uses these Gentile characters to signal to the implied reader that Jesus's mission is a universal event, beginning with Israel and extending to all nations/Gentiles.

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[40] Gullotta, "Among Dogs and Disciples," 335.

[41] Note that the Canaanite woman uses the title "Lord, Son of David" (15:22). Matthew's use of this title elsewhere in the narrative suggests that the implied reader should interpret her profession of faith as an acknowledgement that he is Israel's Messiah.

[42] Angela D. Ingram, "Of Dogs and Disciples: Gentiles and the Discourse of Identity in the Gospel of Matthew," (Master's Thesis, Missouri State University, 2015), 58.

[43] Smillie, "'Even the Dogs'," 95.

[44] Beate Kowalski, "Gentiles in the Gospel of Matthew," *MelTheol* 68, no. 1 (2018): 20.

The Gadarenes (8:28–34)

While the Roman centurion and Canaanite woman show positive responses to Jesus, the Gadarene's response is more typical of the negative Gentile caricature created in the Sermon on the Mount. These characters neither recognize Jesus nor trust the power of God, even though it was clearly demonstrated among them. The reference to the herd of pigs in 8:30 indicates that "Matthew almost certainly regarded the two demoniacs and the townspeople as Gentiles."[45] The demoniacs are described only as "coming out of the tombs," "demon-possessed," and "extremely violent" (8:28). No other character traits are ascribed to them. Their speech is not attributed to them, but to the demons possessing them (8:29, 31). The demons recognize Jesus's identity and his authority over them saying, "What do you want with us (τί ἡμῖν καὶ σοί), Son of God?" Have you come here to torment us before the appointed time (πρὸ καιροῦ)?[46] They "begged" (παρεκάλουν) Jesus, "If you drive us out, send us into the herd of pigs" (8:31). Jesus speaks only one word to them, "Go!" (8:32). This brief encounter not only highlights Jesus's authority, but also conveys the idea that salvation-history involves an "appointed time" (καιρός) for the destruction of demons. The phrase πρὸ καιροῦ "implies a recognition by the demons that their time of opportunity to trouble human beings is limited, and that the arrival of Jesus signals the beginning of the end."[47] In the context of Matthew's "narrative conception, according to which the mission to the Gentiles did not begin until after Easter,"[48] this *pre-Easter* exorcism among the Gentiles is clearly an extraordinary event.

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[45] Konradt, *Israel, Church, and the Gentiles*, 56. In the first century CE, most of the inhabitants of Gadara were Gentile, although there was a partially Jewish population as well. See also Keener, *Gospel of Matthew*, 183; Evans, *Matthew*, 197; D. A. Carson, *Matthew, Mark, Luke*, The Expositors Bible Commentary, vol. 8, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), 217.

[46] "It is not unusual that they are endowed with supernatural perception and thus recognize in Jesus the Son of God" (Konradt, *Israel, Church, and the Gentiles*, 57).

[47] France, *Gospel of Matthew*, 594.

[48] Konradt, *Israel, Church, and the Gentiles*, 58.

"That Jesus was in any sense circumscribing their activity before the appointed time (Matthew only) already shows that Jesus's casting out of demons was an eschatological function, a sign that the kingdom was dawning (cf. 12:28)."[49]

Matthew does not state explicitly why the Gadarene townspeople (πᾶσα ἡ πόλις) "pleaded with Jesus to leave their region" (8:34). Kukzin Lee and Francois P. Viljoen suggest it was because the Gadarenes were in awe of him.[50] But this seems highly unlikely. Evert-Jan Vledder and John Appiah suggest it was for economic reasons.[51] That is, "in taking up the interests of the expendables, (the demoniacs), [Jesus] threatens the vested interests of the pagan city."[52] Carson suggests it was "a way of exposing the real values of the people in the vicinity. They preferred pigs over people, swine over the Savior."[53] But perhaps the best interpretation is that Matthew simply wanted to show that the "appointed time" (καιρός) for the Gentile mission had not yet arrived.[54]

Pilate (27:1–2, 11–26, 62–66)

The Jewish religious leaders bring Jesus to Pilate because as the Roman governor of Judea he had the political and judicial power to execute prisoners.[55] They

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[49] Carson, *Matthew*, 218.

[50] Kukzin Lee and Francios P. Viljoen, "Target Group of the Ultimate Commission," 5n13; Lee, "Matthew's Community and the Gentile Mission," 29. Lee and Viljoen provide no rationale nor cite any textual evidence to support this notion.

[51] Vledder, *Conflict in the Miracle Stories: A Socio-Exegetical Study of Matthew 8 and 9* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 198; John Appiah, "Jesus' Association with Jews and Gentiles in Matthew's Gospel: A Comparative Study," *ERATS* 6, no. 2 (2020): 98.

[52] Vledder, *Conflict in the Miracle Stories*, 198.

[53] Carson, *Matthew*, 219.

[54] See Konradt, *Israel, Church, and the Gentiles*, 59.

[55] "Extrabiblical sources portray Pilate as a cruel, imperious, and insensitive ruler who hated his Jewish subjects and took few pains to understand them (e.g., Jos. *Antiq*. XVIII, 35 [ii.2], 55–62 [iii.1–2], 177–78 [vi.5]; *War* II, 169–77 [ix.2–4]; Philo *ad Gaium* 38; cf. Hoehner, *Herod Antipas*, pp. 172–83)" (Carson, *Matthew*, 559).

have already condemned Jesus but need Pilate's help to achieve their goal to get rid of him (26:65–66; 27:1–2). As the events unfold, however, this Gentile appears to be more interested in keeping the peace than doing the Jewish religious leaders' bidding. Pilate's real motive for "adopting an attitude of resistance when he was asked to condemn the prisoner brought before him" probably had little or nothing to do with maintaining justice.[56] It is more likely he resisted giving these Jewish religious leaders what they wanted because "he despised the Jews, whom he regarded as an obstreperous and rebellious race."[57] The author of Matthew portrays Pilate as at odds with the Jewish religious leaders on how they should deal with Jesus when both sides attempt to use the crowd/people in order to achieve their objective.[58] The Sanhedrin questioned Jesus earlier and had convicted him of blasphemy for claiming to be the Christ [Messiah], the Son of God (26:63–64), but Pilate seems uninterested in Jewish religious matters. He is only interested in determining whether Jesus is a threat to the Roman empire. He asks Jesus, "Are you the King of the Jews?" (27:11).[59] To which Jesus replied, "You say so" (σὺ λέγεις, cf. 26:64, σὺ εἶπας).[60] Apparently, this answer raised no concerns for Pilate. He remains unconvinced that Jesus had committed any crime (27:23). He looks on in amazement as Jesus keeps silent when the Jewish religious leaders bring "many charges" against him. Realizing they had handed him over because of envy (φθόνος, 27:18), and having been warned by his wife to "have nothing to do with that innocent man" on

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[56] William L. Lane, *The Gospel According to Mark: The English Text with Introduction, Exposition, and Notes*, 2nd ed. NICNT (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1974), 555.

[57] Lane, *Gospel According to Mark*, 555.

[58] Konradt, *Israel, Church, and the Gentiles*, 154.

[59] Brendan Byrne points out that in Matthew's narrative only Gentiles refer to Jesus as "King of the Jews" (Byrne, "Messiah in Whose Name," 61). See Matthew 2:2; 27:11, 29, 37.

[60] Most scholars agree that σὺ εἶπας is affirmative. See Konradt, *Israel, Church, and the Gentiles*, 147n323.

account of a disturbing dream she had (27:19), Pilate looks for a way to secure Jesus's release. He "apparently believes the crowds are on his side and therefore sees the custom of the Passover amnesty as a suitable means to make the authorities' effort come to nothing."[61] He asks the crowds to choose between the "notorious prisoner" Barabbas and "Jesus who is called the Christ [Messiah]," probably believing they would release Jesus. But the plan backfires. The Jewish religious leaders seize the opportunity to persuade (πείθω) the crowds to ask for Barabbas to be released and to demand that Jesus be crucified (27:21–23). Wishing to avoid a riot, Pilate washes his hands in front of the crowds proclaiming, "I am innocent of this man's blood" (27:24).

Matthew characterizes Pilate as a reluctant participant in Jesus's death. He gives in to the crowds but only after he "saw that he could do nothing, but that instead a riot was starting" (27:24). This Gentile character functions in the narrative as a foil; in this case, a character who contrasts with the antagonists. His interactions with the Jewish religious leaders highlight their envy, injustice, and evil intent as they manipulate the crowd/people in order to achieve their goal to kill Jesus (cf. 12:14; 26:4). "The seduction of the people gathered before Pilate becomes a model for any kind of misleading of the people by authorities and thus, on the evangelist's level of communication, serves as a severe warning against trusting [these] authorities."[62]

The Roman Soldiers (27:27–37; 54)

The Roman soldiers depicted in Matthew's Passion narrative function as a single "prototypical" character. In Matthew 27:27–37, they are characterized as

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[61] Konradt, *Israel, Church, and the Gentiles*, 154. For more on the Passover amnesty, see Josef Blinzler, *The Trial of Jesus: The Jewish and Roman Proceedings Against Jesus Christ Described and Assessed from the Oldest Accounts*, trans. Isabel McHugh and Florence McHugh (Westminster, MD: Newman Press, 1959), 205–8, 218–21; Lane, *Gospel According to Mark*, 552–53.

[62] Konradt, *Israel, Church, and the Gentiles*, 155.

tyrannical "outsiders" who demonstrate open hostility toward Jesus.[63] The Roman soldiers take an active role in Jesus's arrest and crucifixion. After beating and mocking him, they lead him to the place of execution. They crucify him, placing above his head the written charge against him: "This is Jesus, the King of the Jews" (27:37). As Jesus hung on the cross, they seem indifferent to his suffering as they divide his clothes by casting lots (27:35; cf. Ps 22:18).

The implied author's vivid descriptions of the Roman soldiers' brutality and lack of compassion for Jesus may arouse one's sense of antipathy and aversion toward them, but the implied reader is privy to information that affords him or her a better perspective on what is really happening. The dominant evaluative point of view espoused by the narrative allows the implied reader to see the irony as these tyrannical "outsiders" unwittingly help bring about God's plan of salvation through the death of his Son (1:22; 4:14; 12:17; 26:24, 28). The implied reader knows, for example, that when they perform their sham coronation giving Jesus a robe, a crown, and a scepter, and hail him as "king of the Jews" (27:27–31), they are in fact crowning the real king. The "written charge" they place above Jesus's head on the cross is indeed true; he is "the king of the Jews" (27:36; cf. 2:2; 27:11). The Roman soldiers fulfill OT prophecies about what would happen to the Messiah (cf. Isa 53:3, 5, 7, 12; Pss 22:1, 7, 18; 69:21; 109:25; Lam 2:15), despite their lack understanding and insight into the meaning of Jesus's suffering.

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[63] It is possible these Roman soldiers also possessed some positive character traits such as showing mercy when they offer Jesus οἶνον μετὰ χολῆς μεμιγμένον to drink (27:34), but this cannot be confirmed. The term χολή could refer to a drug used to produce a narcotic effect to ease the pain of crucifixion (Keener, *Gospel of Matthew*, 874–678), or a poison making the wine "an invitation to commit suicide" (Davies and Allison, *Commentary on Matthew*, 3.613), or a way of making the wine unpalatable—that is, as a cruel act intended to further mock Jesus (Raymond E. Brown, *The Death of the Messiah: From Gethsemane to the Grave: A Commentary on the Passion Narratives in the Four Gospels*, vol. 2 (New York: Doubleday, 1994), 940–43). Given the brutality shown by the Roman soldiers earlier (cf. 27:27–31), it seems unlikely they would have shown any compassion or pity for Jesus. Of course, the act could have been a routine part of the crucifixion process, but there is no historical evidence for this (France, *Gospel of Matthew*, 1066).

The author of Matthew offers no narrative "aside" explaining the meaning and significance of the centurion's and the guards' "confession." Scholars disagree on how it should be interpreted. For example, Donald H. Juel (commenting on Mark's version of the account) argues it should be taken as a sarcastic remark, much like when the soldiers mock Jesus saying, "Hail, king of the Jews!" or when the passers-by taunt him saying, "If you are God's Son, come down from the cross!"[64] David C. Sim sees it as an expression of their utter defeat at the death of Jesus. He contends that the centurion's and the guards' "terrified acknowledgement of Jesus as Son of God bespeaks their sense of *guilt* and concession of *defeat* in the face of the divine, and foreshadows the attitude of the wicked on the day of judgement."[65] Sim goes on to argue that Matthew's opposition to Roman imperial power (of which the soldiers are part) would have prevented him from depicting these soldiers as expressing true repentance.[66] But Sim's argument that Matthew 27:54 is

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[64] Donald H. Juel, *The Gospel of Mark*, Interpreting Biblical Texts Series, ed. Charles B. Cousar (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1999), 227–28. In response to Juel, Joel Marcus provides three convincing reasons for not reading the centurion's statement as sarcastic. First, "the story places the centurion alongside the women after Jesus' death, not alongside the mockers before that event" (Marcus, *Mark 8–16: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, The Anchor Yale Bible, vol. 27A [New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009], 1059). Second, "with regard to the messianic secret, its disclosure at Jesus' death is consonant with Markan Christology" (1059). That is, the confession at the foot of the cross reflects the "revelatory moment" when "Jesus' messiahship and divine sonship have been decisively qualified by his crucifixion" (1059). And third, "the centurion's confession is one of three architectonic acclamations of Jesus as the Son of God, which are similar in form and seem to structure the whole Gospel" (1059).

[65] Sim, "The 'Confession' of the Soldiers in Matthew 27:54," *HeyJ* 34, no. 4 (1993): 422 [emphasis his].

[66] Sim, "Rome in Matthew's Eschatology," in *The Gospel of Matthew in its Roman Imperial Context*, ed. John K. Riches and David C. Sim (New York: Bloomsbury, 2005), 91–106. For a similar approach to interpreting the NT through the lens of Roman imperialisms, see also Robert L. Mowery, "Son of God in Roman Imperial Titles and Matthew," *Biblica* 83 (2002): 100–10; Michael Peppard, *The Son of God in the Roman World: Divine Sonship in its Social and Political Context* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012). This approach to NT interpretation tends to overemphasize the first-century Roman social and political context while downplaying the "Jewishness" of the NT.

Donald Senior points out that Sim's interpretation of Matthew prioritizes those texts which portray Gentiles in a negative light and gives insufficient attention to those texts that portray Gentiles in a positive light (Senior, "Between Two Worlds," 10–11). Kenneth Clark does the same in his article "Gentile Bias in Matthew," 165–68.

"a proleptic judgement scene"[67] is unconvincing. The main plotline of Matthew's story involves conflict between Jesus (the protagonist) and the Jewish religious leaders (the antagonists), not with imperial Rome. *Before* witnessing the "signs" following Jesus's death, the Roman soldiers did not recognize who Jesus is. They aligned themselves with the antagonists by carrying out their wishes, but did so out of ignorance. In 27:54, the centurion and the guards are commenting on the preceding events described in 27:51–53, which prompted them to exclaim, "Surely, this man was the Son of God!" Just a few verses earlier Matthew reports that those passing by, the chief priests, scribes, and elders all (mockingly) use the title "Son of God" (arthrous θεοῦ τοῦ υἱός in 27:40; anarthrous θεοῦ υἱός in 27:43) with reference to Jesus.[68] Specifically, they were saying that Jesus claimed to be "God's Son" (27:43b) Thus, the implied author prepares the implied reader for interpreting the meaning of "Son of God" when it is used by the centurion and the guards. *After* witnessing the "signs" following Jesus's death, they confess that what Jesus had said about himself (as reported by those mocking him, cf. 27:40, 43) "surely" (ἀληθῶς) must be true. This is not a "cry of defeat in the face of divine power" (contra Sim),[69] nor a sarcastic remark (contra Juel),[70] but an acknowledgement of who Jesus is.

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[67] Boris Repschinski, "Matthew's Perspective on Roman Political Authority," in *Matthew, Paul, and Others: Asian Perspectives on New Testament Themes*, ed. William R. G. Loader, Boris Repschinski and Eric Wong (Innsbruck, Austria: University Press, 2019), 18.

[68] Some argue that the anarthrous θεοῦ υἱός indicates the centurion and the guards meant "a son of a god" (a rank shared by other human beings). That is, it was merely an expression of honor, but not a confession of faith in Jesus as the Son of God (of Israel). But as Brown explains, the author of Matthew "used the anarthrous and arthrous titles interchangeably" (Brown, *Death of the Messiah*, 1147).

[69] Sim, "The Gospel of Matthew and the Gentiles," *JSNT* 17, no. 57 (1995): 24. Matthew says nothing about the defeat of Roman soldiers nor Roman imperial power. Moreover, from the centurion's and the guards' perspective, Jesus had just died. God did not come to rescue him (27:43a), and neither did Elijah (27:47–50). Despite the supernatural events that happened, Jesus himself seems to have been defeated. He is still dead at this point in the story. The immediate context suggests something other than Roman imperial power is in view here.

[70] Juel, *Gospel of Mark*, 227–28.

Matthew explicitly mentions that the centurion and those with him ἐφοβήθησαν σφόδρα after having witnessed the earthquake and the things that happened (27:54). "As the immediate executioners of Jesus, they might well be terrified by their discovery of the true identity of this man."[71] The same phrase ἐφοβήθησαν σφόδρα appears earlier in Matthew's narrative in the account of the Transfiguration. The author reports that when the disciples heard God's voice from the cloud declaring, "This is my beloved Son" (17:5), they were "*extremely terrified* (ἐφοβήθησαν σφόδρα) and threw themselves down with their faces to the ground" (17:6). In both passages, this phrase describes a reaction to divine revelation.[72] At the Transfiguration the disciples were told directly about *Jesus's identity*, at the cross the Gentile Roman soldiers were able to interpret the "signs" to come to the same conclusion—something the Jewish religious leaders were unable to do, even after receiving the "sign of Jonah" (cf. 12:39–40; 16:3–4; 28:11–15).

Several scholars have argued that the centurion's and the guards' "confession" should be translated as "*a* son of God," not "*the* Son of God." Such arguments are made on the basis of Greek syntax, and/or the socio-religious historical background of the Roman soldiers. Philip B. Harner and Tae Hun Kim argue that since θεός and υἱός are anarthrous, the statement must be interpreted in terms of ascribing to Jesus a rank shared by other human beings (e.g., the Roman emperor).[73] But as Robert Mowery and Raymond Brown point out, Matthew uses the anarthrous and arthrous titles

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[71] Nolland, *Gospel of Matthew*, 1219.

[72] Fear is a common reaction to divine revelation in Matthew (cf. 1:20; 9:8; 28:5, 8, 10).

[73] See, for example, Philip B. Harner, "Qualitative Anarthrous Predicate Nouns: Mark 15:39 and John 1:1," *JBL* 92, no. 1 (1973): 75–87; Tae Hun Kim, "The Anarthrous υἱὸς θεοῦ in Mark 15,39 and the Roman Imperial Cult," *Biblica* 79, no. 2 (1998): 221–41. This view has not been widely held among scholars since Ernest C. Colwell argued convincingly that the anarthrous predicate is best translated "the Son of God" (Colwell, "A Definite Rule for the Use of the Article in the Greek New Testament," *JBL* 52, no. 1 [1933]: 12–21).

interchangeably.[74] Mowery's suggests that the "real" author of Matthew "already knew these words as a christological title" before writing his Gospel.[75] This seems plausible given that "Son of God" is used this way in other NT documents predating the Gospel of Matthew (e.g., Mark 1:1; 3:11; Rom 1:4, 1 Cor 1:19; Gal 2:20; Eph 4:13). The words θεοῦ υἱός occurs three times in Matthew (14:33; 27:43; 27:54). The phrase ἀληθῶς θεοῦ υἱὸς ἦν οὗτος (27:54) spoken by the Roman soldiers at the foot of the cross is almost identical to the phrase ἀληθῶς θεοῦ υἱὸς εἶ (14:33) spoken by the disciples when they worshipped Jesus. "Surely Matt[hew] was not having the disciples confess, 'You are a son of God' (like other human beings), after Jesus walked on the water and calmed the storm."[76]

Those who contend that the Roman soldiers at the cross would not have had the religious background to confess Jesus as the true Son of the God of Israel assume they know the historical situation. But there is no way of knowing for certain what a centurion and his companions at Golgotha in the year 30 or 33 CE meant.[77] The implied reader is to understand the "confession" of the characters in Matthew's narrative *in the context of Matthew's narrative*. "If the scene is historical and [they] spoke this sentence, did [they] speak Latin, where there is no definite article (*filius Dei*), or Greek? If the latter, would [they] have known the niceties of Greek grammar (Colwell's rule)?"[78] "While they may

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[74] Ronert L. Mowery, "Subtle Differences: The Matthean 'Son of God' References," *NT* 32, no. 3 (1990): 193–200; Brown, *Death of the Messiah*, 1146–48.

[75] Mowery, "Subtle Differences," 199–200.

[76] Brown, *Death of the Messiah*, 1147n11.

[77] Earl S. Johnson, for example, argues that the authenticity of the confession would not have harmonized with the historical data. Johnson, "Is Mark 15:39 the Key to Mark's Christology?" *JSNT* 10, no. 31 (1987), 3–22; Johnson, "Mark 15,39 and the So-Called Confession of the Roman Centurion," *Biblica* 81, no. 3 (2000): 406–13.

[78] Brown, *Death of the Messiah*, 1148.

have had little understanding of how momentous a claim this would be in a Jewish context, they have seen enough now to conclude that the truth is on the side of Jesus rather than of his mockers."[79] "Even if they were Romans who had been assigned to Palestine for some time, they may well have understood 'Son of God' in a messianic sense."[80] In any case, the implied author clearly prepares the implied reader for understanding "Son of God" as a christological title before it is heard from the lips of the Roman soldiers at the foot of the cross. "Son of God" is one of the titles used frequently by the author to identify Jesus (cf. 3:17; 4:3, 6; 8:29; 11:27; 16:16; 17:5; 21:37; 26:63) (see chapter 4 of this study). There is no indication in the text that the implied author intended the implied reader to interpret it any differently in 27:54.

Matthew's Gentile Characters as a Rhetorical Device

The Gentile characters in Matthew's narrative function as a rhetorical device. The Gadarenes and Pilate are typical of the kind of response to Jesus one might expect from "outsiders" who do not understand the ways of God. They are hostile and/or indifferent. They represent the stereotypical negative Gentile caricature created in the narrative. Others are foils used by the author to contrast the Gentile "outsider's" positive response to Jesus with the Jewish "insider's" negative response to Jesus. The former see hope where the latter see only a threat. The Roman centurion at Capernaum (8:5–13) and the Canaanite woman from the region of Tyre and Sidon (15:21–28) show great faith, while the Jewish religious leaders and those led astray by them show no faith (21:25, 32; 27:42). The magi from the East come to worship "the king of the Jews," while King

[79] France, *Gospel of Matthew*, 1084.

[80] Carson, *Matthew*, 582.

Herod and the Jewish religious leaders (2:3) plot to kill him (12:14; 26:3–5).[81] "The devotion of the Gentile magi is set in stark relief by comparison with the attitude of the Jerusalem hierarchy."[82]

In terms of the *degree of complexity*, most of the Gentile characters in Matthew are toward the lowest end of the continuum. They have few character traits ascribed to them, nothing is said about their inner thoughts or feelings, and they show no signs of change. On this last point, however, the centurion and those with him described in the Passion Narrative are the exceptions. Before Jesus's death they are characterized as a group of brutal, callous, unmerciful soldiers who seemed to take pleasure in carrying out their orders in a most cruel manner. The implied reader knows they are blind to what is really happening and unwittingly aligned themselves with the Jewish religious leaders by taking an active role in carrying out their plot to kill Jesus. But after Jesus dies, they come to realize that what he had been claiming about himself was indeed true. The centurion and those with him reacted to the "signs" surrounding Jesus's death with a confession, "Surely, this man was the Son of God" (27:54). Their response after Jesus's death is contrasted with the Jewish religious leaders who persisted in their unbelief, even after Jesus's resurrection—the "sign of Jonah" (12:39; 16:4).[83] "Jewish rejection of what the Roman [soldiers] affirmed is heightened by the fact that Matt[hew]'s Sanhedrin trial had the high priest using this very title 'the Son of God'" (ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ, 26:63).[84] "The

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[81] The plural in Matthew 2:20 (οἱ ζητοῦντες τὴν ψυχὴν τοῦ παιδίου) indicates all the chief priests and scribes of the people mentioned in Matthew 2:4 were involved. Brown, *Death of the Messiah*, 1151n22.

[82] Smillie, "Even the Dogs," 85.

[83] The phrase ἔχετε κουστωδίαν (27:65) indicates that the soldiers referred to are not to Pilate's Gentile soldiers but to the Jewish temple guards. "The Jewish leaders want Pilate to deploy his own troops, but he prefers to leave the responsibility to them . . . It is their problem; let them take care of it with their own resources" (France, *Gospel of Matthew*, 1094).

[84] Brown, *Death of the Messiah*, 1151.

confession by the centurion and the guards is a continuation of the confession of believers."[85]

God's Plan of Salvation Includes Gentiles

Martin Goodman, in his book *Mission and Conversion*, shows that Jewish sources prior to 100 CE reflect a generally negative attitude toward any sort of organized and active mission to Gentiles.[86] While there are a few recorded instances of Jews *proselytizing* Gentiles,[87] such efforts were not normally carried out before or during the Second Temple period. Moreover, the idea that Gentiles could be included in God's plan of salvation without converting to Judaism was not something any typical first-century CE Jew would have imagined. This would have seemed to them a completely novel idea.[88] The author of Matthew, however, provides for his implied reader "evidence" from the Jewish Scriptures showing that this was part of the plan all along.

The Gospel of Matthew begins with the genealogy of Jesus which provides a precedent from biblical history for the inclusion of Gentiles. The story opens with the mention of Abraham, the patriarch of the Jewish nation (1:1–2) and closes with Jesus's commission to "go and make disciples of all nations/Gentiles" (28:19). While the narrative focuses primarily on Jesus's ministry to the "lost sheep of the house of Israel" (15:24), the author occasionally signals to the implied reader that Jesus's mission is in

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[85] Brown, *Death of the Messiah*, 1147.

[86] Martin Goodman, *Mission and Conversion: Proselytizing in the Religious History of the Roman Empire* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), chaps. 1 and 4. Goodman argues that Jesus's criticism of the Pharisees' proselytizing in Matt 23:15 concerns their efforts to persuade other Jews to follow Pharisaic *halakha*, not converting Gentiles to Judaism (Martin Goodman, *Mission and Conversion*, 69-74).

[87] See, for example, 2 Macc 9:17; Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, 13.257-258; 319; 20.17-96.

[88] Cf. Eph 3:4. The apostle Paul calls this idea—"namely, that through the gospel the Gentiles are fellow heirs, fellow members of the body, and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus"—a mystery (μυστήριον) not made known to people in former generations.

fact a universal eschatological event. The mention of Israel's first patriarch along with three (or possibly four[89]) Gentile women in the opening lines of the narrative helps prepare the implied reader for those passages in which the author later alludes to the inclusion of Gentiles in God's plan of salvation.

The implied reader familiar with the Abrahamic covenant knows, for example, that God's promise to Abraham is that through him (and his "seed," זֶרַע) "all the nations of the earth will be blessed" (Gen. 12:2–3; 18:8; 28:14; cf. 22:18; 26:4). In chapter 12, Matthew reports that the Jewish religious leaders accost Jesus and his disciples for picking grain on the Sabbath (12:1–8), and later plotted to kill him because he healed on the Sabbath (12:9–14). Jesus continues his healing ministry but "warns" (ἐπιτιμάω) the crowds not to make him known (12:15–16). Matthew then tells the implied reader, "This was to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet Isaiah" (12:17). He quotes from Isa 42:1–4 (LXX), which explicitly states that God's "servant" (ὁ παῖς) would "proclaim justice to the nations/Gentiles (τοῖς ἔθνεσιν = MT לַגּוֹיִם)" (Matt 12:18 = Isa 42:1) and "in his name the nations/Gentiles will put their hope" (Matt:12:21; cf. LXX Isa 42:4[90]). This prophecy is part of a broader context in which the prophet Isaiah speaks of the time of Israel's restoration when "the glory of the Lord would be revealed, and all people ("all flesh," MT כָּל־בָּשָׂר = LXX πᾶσα σὰρξ) will see it together" (Isa 40:5). Earlier, in Isa 9–11 the prophet announces the coming Davidic king (9:7) who "will honor Galilee of the nations/Gentiles (הַגּוֹיִם = LXX τῶν ἐθνῶν)" (9:1 [= LXX 8:23]) and serve as light to "the people (הָעָם = LXX ὁ λαὸς) walking in darkness" (9:2 [= LXX 9:1]). This passage is

[89] The OT is silent about Tamar's ethnicity. In early Jewish traditions, however, Tamar is depicted as non-Jewish (e.g., Jubilees 41:1–2, *Testament of Judah* 10:1–2, 6; *bSotah* 10a, 43; *Targum Pseudo Jonathan Genesis* 28:24; *Genesis Rabbah* 85:10).

[90] Note: In Isa 42:4, the LXX reads καὶ ἐπὶ τῷ ὀνόματι αὐτοῦ ἔθνη ἐλπιοῦσιν. The MT reads, וּלְתוֹרָתוֹ אִיִּים יְיַחֵלוּ ("and for his Torah the islands will hope"). The piel יְיַחֵלוּ suggests "waiting" or "hoping" for someone for something. See "יָחַל," in vol. 6 of *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, eds., trans. John T. Willis, David E. Green, and Douglas W. Stott, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2018).

quoted in Matt 4:15–16. The prophet goes on to say that God's "servant" (ὁ παῖς) would "stand as a banner (נֵס) for the peoples (עַמִּים = LXX ἐθνῶν)" (11:10a), and "the nations (גּוֹיִם = LXX ἔθνη) will rally to him" (11:10b). Thus, he will not only gather the exiles of Israel but also "raise a banner (נֵס) for the nations (גּוֹיִם = LXX ἔθνη)" (11:12). In Isa 49:6, God says regarding his servant, "I will make you a light for the nations/Gentiles (גּוֹיִם = LXX ἐθνῶν), that my salvation may reach to the ends of the earth."[91]

There are three (or possibly four) Gentile women listed among Jesus's ancestors: Tamar, Judah's daughter-in-law who pretended to be a prostitute and slept with him and became pregnant (Gen 38:12–30), Rahab, a Canaanite harlot who hid the spies during the conquest of Jericho (Josh 2:1–24; 6:22–25), Ruth, a Moabite woman who appears to have seduced Boaz (Ruth 3:2–4:17), and Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah the Hittite, with whom King David had committed adultery (2 Sam 11:1–12:25). As R. Larry Overstreet observes, what makes the inclusion of these three (or four) women in Jesus's genealogy unusual is not that they are women—for there are several examples in the OT where women are included in genealogies (cf. Gen 25:1; 36:10; 36:22; 1 Chr 2:4, 18–19; 49), but that they are non-Jews.[92]

In the baptism scene in Matt 3:17, the author alludes to Psalm 2. In this Psalm the LORD says to his Son, "I will give you the nations (גּוֹיִם = LXX ἔθνη) as your inheritance" (Psa 2:8). He concludes with an exhortation urging the kings and rulers of the earth to submit to the LORD (v. 11) and to his Son (v. 12a, *lit.* "kiss the Son," נַשְּׁקוּ־

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[91] The prophet Jeremiah also anticipates a universalistic dimension of God's plan of salvation. For example, after forty-six verses condemning the Gentile nation Moab for its wickedness, Jeremiah offers a word of hope proclaiming that God "yet will restore the fortunes of Moab in days to come" (Jer 48:47). He uses similar language to describe the restoration Ammon and Elam (Jer 49:6, 39). Most noteworthy is that these prophecies are made in the context of the restoration of God's covenant people Israel (cf. Jer. 30:18; 32:44; 33:11, 25-26). Similarly, the prophet Zephaniah proclaims that "all the distant nations (גּוֹיִם) will worship him [the God of Israel], each in their own land" (Zeph. 2:11b).

[92] R. Larry Overstreet, "Difficulties of New Testament Genealogies," *GTJ* 2, no. 2 (1982): 132.

בַּר).[93] Blessing, says the Psalmist, comes to "all who take shelter in him!" (v. 12b). "In the perspective of salvation history, the rebellious nations, including Jews, become the blessed people of Yahweh through their submission to Yahweh's Son, the Messiah."[94]

In the Passion narrative, Matthew alludes to Psalm 22 [= LXX 21]. In Matt 27:35, the soldiers "divide [Jesus'] clothes by throwing dice" (cf. Psa 22:18 [LXX 21:19]). In Matt 27:39, those passing by mock and "shake their heads" at Jesus (cf. Psa 22:7 [LXX 21:8]). In Matt 27:43, the religious leaders taunt him to come down from the cross, stating, "Let God rescue him now, if he desires him" (cf. Psa 22:8 [LXX 21:9]). Finally in Matt 27:46, Jesus quotes the opening lines of the Psalm, "My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?" (22:1, אֵלִי אֵלִי לָמָה עֲזַבְתָּנִי).[95] In Psa 22:27 [= LXX 21:28], the Psalmist declares, "Let all the ends of the earth remember and turn to the Lord. Let all the families of the nations (מִשְׁפְּחוֹת גּוֹיִם = LXX αἱ πατριαὶ τῶν ἐθνῶν) worship before you." That is, the nations/Gentiles too will one day come to acknowledge the glory of the LORD and his divine rule on the earth (cf. Isa 66:19). By the time the implied reader reaches the Great Commission scene (28:18–20), therefore, the inclusion of the Gentiles in God's plan of salvation would come as no surprise. Nor would it signal a break with Judaism. In France's words, "This extension of God's purpose beyond Israel was not a new decision by God at the time of Jesus, but part of his long-declared purpose of salvation which Jesus, his 'beloved,' has now come to implement."[96]

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[93] Note that Psalm 2 is quoted and interpreted as a messianic Psalm by Paul (Acts 13:33) and by the author of Hebrews (1:5; 5:5).

[94] Young Jin Kim, "Jesus and the Gentiles in the Gospel of Matthew: A Historical Study of the Redemption Motif," (ThD diss., Concordia Seminary, St. Loius, MO, 1992), 22.

[95] By transliterating the Hebrew text and then translating it for the reader, Matthew not only explains the bystanders' misunderstanding about Jesus having called for Elijah, but also draws attention to the Psalm itself.

[96] R. T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, NICCNT (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2007), 472.

When Jesus instructs his disciples to restrict their mission to Israel (10:5–6) and declares that he himself "was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (15:24), the implied reader is expected to recognize there is a line drawn between "insiders" (the people of Israel) and "outsiders" (the Gentiles). As the story unfolds, however, the reader learns that this inherent "otherness" of non-Jews, which prior to Jesus's resurrection had excluded them from the blessings of the kingdom, will not always be so. The boundary marking mechanisms used to identify "insiders" and "outsiders" is redefined after the resurrection. It is no longer a matter of one's ethnicity. According to Matthew, Gentile "outsiders" become kingdom of heaven "insiders" in the same way Jewish "insiders" do; namely, through faith in Jesus, the Messiah. Conversely, those once considered "insiders" are excluded due to their rejection of Jesus (cf. Matt 8:12; 13:42, 51). "The teachings of John the Baptist and Jesus call the people of Israel to repentance, and they emphasize fruit, 'doing the will of God,' as the defining characteristic of those who will inherit the kingdom of God."[97] The implied reader (= the *ideal* disciple who bears fruit) in Matthew is a person who not only hears the words of Jesus, but also puts them into practice (Matt 7:24–26).[98]

[97] Angela D. Ingram, "Of Dogs and Disciples: Gentiles and the Discourse of Identity in the Gospel of Matthew," (Master's Thesis, Missouri State University, 2015), 103.

[98] See David B. Howell, *Matthew's Inclusive Story: A Study in the Narrative Rhetoric of the First Gospel*, JSNTSup 42 (Sheffield: Academic Press, 1990), 249-259.

CHAPTER 7

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The Gospel of Matthew has long been recognized as having both "pro-Jewish" and what appears to be "anti-Jewish" elements. It is not surprising that Jews would be offended by Matthew's negative characterization of the religious leaders in his narrative, especially given that Christians have historically *mis*interpreted and *mis*used these texts to justify their appalling treatment of Jews. When the disturbing events of the Holocaust (Shoah) came to light at the end of WWII, many Christians felt a deep sense of moral failure and "need for deeper introspection," which compelled them "to reassess their identity, responsibility, theological practices and doctrines."[1] The past seven decades have witnessed a growing interest among both Christians and Jews to work toward promoting good Christian-Jewish relations. Scholars such as Rosemary Radford Ruether, A. Roy Eckardt, and others mentioned in chapter 1 of this study may be commended for their desire to foster positive open dialogue. However, the approach they take to achieve this is problematic because it distorts the message of the Bible and misrepresents the Christian faith. These seemingly well-intentioned scholars suppose the best way to engage in positive open dialogue with Jews is to avoid anything about the Christian message that some Jews may find offensive. Accordingly, they suggest "toning down" the language and redefining the Christology of the NT to say that Jesus—the "Christian Savior"—is not necessary for the salvation of Jews. This not only fails to do justice to the "Jewishness" of Jesus and the Gospel writers, but also disregards the message of God's

[1] Peter Admirand, "The Future of Post-Shoah Christology: Three Challenges and Three Hopes," *Religions* 12, no. 6 (2021): 1.

plan of salvation for his ("Jewish") people through Jesus the ("Jewish") Messiah. *Open dialogue* requires that even the major points of contention between Christians and Jews be addressed honestly and reasonably.

Those who contend that the Gospel of Matthew is "anti-Jewish" or "anti-Semitic" because of the author's negative characterization of the religious leaders in his narrative are in fact reacting to later (post-first-century CE) reader responses by those who *mis*appropriated Matthew to fit their own historical socio-religious situations and address their own concerns (e.g., some Early Church Fathers, some sixteenth-century Reformers). This study has demonstrated that the means to legitimize interpretations of Matthew's Gospel is provided by the text itself. In the same way that the "real" author's most probable meaning and intention can be inferred from the text by observing the "implied author" (a creation of the "real" author), so also the appropriate reader response expected by the "real" author can be determine with some degree of confidence by observing the "implied reader" (also a creation of the "real" author). Matthew's narrative must be allowed to speak for itself as a self-contained, internally coherent, literary work. It is a *rhetorically shaped* narrative argument designed to persuade and affirm the acceptability of the author's claim that God's plan of salvation for Israel, and indeed for all people/nations, is realized in and through Jesus the Messiah. Accordingly, Matthew's so-called "anti-Jewish" elements are to be understood not as commentary on ethnic Jews, nor as a sign of rejection of Judaism, but rather as heated rhetoric used to describe and highlight certain details about some characters in his story who represent the antithesis to his argument. These characters are not symbolic of Jews in general nor of Israel as a corporate entity, but rather of those who reject the claim that Jesus is Israel's Messiah, and that through him God restores all humankind to a right relationship with himself. From this perspective, any reader of Matthew's Gospel who rejects this claim would identify with the antagonists in the story, regardless of his or her historical or socio-religious context, ethnicity, or religious affiliation.

In an open letter published in *The Pennsylvania Journal* in 1776, the influential eighteenth-century writer and political philosopher Thomas Paine reminded his readers of the difficulty of trying to speak the truth without offending the hearer who does not wish to hear it. The dilemma, says Paine, is that in certain situations one cannot be truthful and at the same time avoid making statements which others may find offensive. In his words, "he who dares not offend cannot be honest."[2] It seems inevitable some will still be offended by and reject the New Testament messianic claims about Jesus, even after reading or hearing a well-formulated argument to support it such as the Gospel of Matthew. But at the very least, Christians are responsible for presenting the message truthfully and as clearly and respectfully as possible. Part of that responsibility is, of course, making every effort to interpret the biblical text as accurately as possible. This includes dealing sufficiently not only with the socio-religious historical context in which the New Testament was written, but also its literary and rhetorical character.

The Gospel of Matthew is "an elaborate argument for the standpoint that Jesus is the Son of God, the Messiah."[3] When characters in the narrative speak and act in ways consistent with the different standpoints they represent, they serve as rhetorical devices to assist the author in reaching his argumentative objective. The character Jesus is presented as the exemplar *par excellence* of what it means to be "in complete accord with God's system of values."[4] The entire narrative revolves around him. The primary role of the other characters is to model for the implied reader what it looks like to be "for" or "against" Jesus (12:30). The dominating evaluative point of view from which value judgments are to be made regarding the different responses to Jesus is ultimately God's

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[2] Thomas Paine, *Collected Writings: Rights of Man, The Age of Reason, Pamphlets, Articles, and Letters*, ed. Eric Foner. Library of America 76. (New York: Library of America, 1995), 74–75.

[3] Mika Hietanen, "The Gospel of Matthew as a Literary Argument," *Argumentation* 25 (2011): 63.

[4] Jack Dean Kingsbury, *Matthew as Story* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986), 10.

viewpoint. This is established not only by citing passages from the Jewish Scriptures which are fulfilled in Jesus (e.g., 4:14–16; 8:17; 12:17–21; 13:14–15, 35; 21:4–5; 27:9), but also by the voice of God spoken from heaven declaring "this is my beloved Son" (3:17; 17:1–13). The religious leaders represent the antithesis to the argument. They are characteristic of the sort of people who espouse an evaluative point of view diametrically opposed to that of God. The disciples represent those who believe in Jesus as Israel's Messiah. These *imperfect* models demonstrate for the implied reader what it means to follow Jesus, even despite their failures. The crowds/people represent the "middle ground" in Matthew's rhetorical argument. These characters are presented as well-disposed toward Jesus but are not convinced he is Israel's Messiah. They fail to grasp fully who Jesus is and the significance of what he is doing for them. Their lack of understanding makes them susceptible to being misled and taken advantage of by their leaders. Eventually they succumb to the negative influence of the antagonists and join them in rejecting Jesus. The author places the blame for the crowds'/people's rejection of Jesus squarely on the religious leaders. Nevertheless, Matthew's account is an open-ended story in which there is still hope of salvation for anyone who learns the truth about what had happened (27:64) and puts their faith in Jesus as Israel's Messiah (16:16).

The Gentile characters help strengthen the author's argument by modelling for the implied reader the kind of response God desires from his people Israel. Matthew creates rhetorical effect using contrast. This is achieved (1) by setting the positive characterization of certain individual Gentile characters against the backdrop of a negative characterization of Gentiles and the Gentile world in general,[5] and (2) by

[5] Scholars are divided on whether the anti-Gentile passages in Matthew reflects his own perspective (e.g., David C. Sim, "The Attitude to Gentiles in the Gospel of Matthew," in *Attitude to Gentiles in Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity*, ed. David C. Sim and James S. McLaren, LNTS 499 [New York: Bloomsbury, 2013], 176–82), or that of Jews in general—but not necessarily his own (e.g., John Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, NIGTC [Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2005], 270, 313, 747–48; Warren Carter, "Matthew and the Gentiles: Individual Conversion and/or Systemic Transformation?" *JSNT* 26, no.3 [2004]: 280–81). Robert H. Gundry argues that the First

juxtaposing the Gentiles' positive response to Jesus with the negative response from the Jewish religious leaders and their followers. The Gentile characters in Matthew demonstrate that rejection and acceptance of Jesus was not limited to Israel. Just as some Jews accepted Jesus while others rejected him, so too Gentiles show a mixed response. A person's acceptance or rejection of Jesus is not related to his or her ethnic identity.[6] "Rejection of Jesus was a universal phenomenon, as much as reception of him was also universal."[7]

The main plot line of Matthew's story involves conflict between Jesus and the religious leaders, not with the people of Israel.[8] Conflict between Jesus and the crowds/people erupts only when they follow the religious leaders and adopt their evaluative point of view. The religious leaders are at odds with Jesus not because they are "Jewish"—for all the main characters in the story are "Jewish"—but because they do not accept Jesus as their Messiah and align themselves with what God is doing through him. These "blind guides" reject God's plan of salvation for his people and see Jesus only as a threat to their positions of leadership and authority. The criticisms launched against them echo those found in the writings of some OT prophets such as Jeremiah (cf. 23:1–2, 5,

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Gospel has no anti-Gentile passages. He maintains that the terms τὰ ἔθνη and ὁ ἐθνικός in Matthew refer only to "non-disciples," not "Gentiles" in the ethnic sense (Gundry, *Matthew: A Commentary on his Literary and Theological Art* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982], 99, 103–4, 122–23, 368). But this seems unlikely, given that these terms were generally understood during the Second Temple period as referring to "non-Jewish people." For helpful summaries of the various views on this topic, see Sim, "Attitude to Gentiles," 176–82; Ho Jin Nam, "Attitude Towards the Torah and Gentiles in Matthew 28:18–20: End-Time Proselytes, Righteous Gentiles or New People?" (PhD diss., University of St. Michael's College, 2017), 67–72.

[6] For more on ethnicity in the Gospel of Matthew, see John Appiah, "Jesus' Association with Jews and Gentiles in Matthew's Gospel: A Comparative Study," *ERATS* 6, no. 2 (2020): 94–104.

[7] Kukzin Lee and Francois P. Viljoen, "The Target Group of the Ultimate Commission (Matthew 28:19)," *HTS* 66, no. 1 (2010): 5–6.

[8] See Matthias Konradt, *Israel, Church, and the Gentiles in the Gospel of Matthew*, trans. Kathleen Ess, BMSEC 2 (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2014), 264.

11–12), Ezekiel (cf. 34:2–10), and Zechariah (cf. 10:2–3a). Like their predecessors, these religious leaders fail in their duties as "shepherds" of God's covenant people. "As a backdrop to those story lines, there is another major plot line involving an almost hidden conflict, namely the conflict between God and Satan—and this conflict is actually definitive for everything else in the world of this story."[9]

In their *Strategies of Polemics in Greek and Roman Philosophy*, Sharon Weisser, Naly Thaler, André Laks, Christopher Shields, et al., discuss how ancient Greek and Roman authors used polemics as a means of persuasion when demarcating and fortifying the boundaries of self-definition. They note that "from the Hellenistic period onward, . . . polemic clearly plays a role in the dynamic process of negotiating and consolidating one [philosophical] school's identity *vis à vis* the other."[10] Isaac Kalimi's recent study on Jewish writings from the Second Temple period to the sixteenth century shows that Jewish writers also frequently used polemics to express their views as they engaged in disputes over biblical interpretation in the context of sectarian rivalry.[11] "One can generalize and say that polemics appears to be justified whenever something really vital is at stake."[12] It is not surprising, therefore, to find the author of Matthew using polemics when he presents the opposing standpoint to his argument—informing the implied reader of both the root cause and consequences of the antagonists' decision to

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[9] Mark Allen Powell, *Methods for Matthew* (Cambridge: University Press, 2009), 70.

[10] Sharon Weisser and Naly Thaler, eds., *Strategies of Polemics in Greek and Roman Philosophy*, Jerusalem Studies in Religion and Culture 21 (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 6-7.

[11] Isaac Kalimi, *Fighting Over the Bible: Jewish Interpretation, Sectarianism and Polemic from Temple to Talmud and Beyond* (Leiden: Brill, 2017); cf. James D. G. Dunn, "Echoes of Intra-Jewish Polemic in Paul's Letter to the Galatians," *JBL* 112, no. 3 (1993): 459–77.

[12] André Laks, "The Continuation of Philosophy by Other Means?" in *Strategies of Polemics in Greek and Roman Philosophy*, ed. Sharon Weisser and Naly Thaler, Jerusalem Studies in Religion and Culture 21 (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 25.

reject Jesus.[13] "Polemical texts often reflect, or at least crystalize, a historical rivalry between thinkers, schools, or movements that is in turn nourished and amplified by those texts. In this sense philosophical polemic does not merely create philosophical momentum but also consolidates the identities it opposes."[14] Matthew's "negative contrasts [e.g., 12:9–13, 22–24], dissuasions from alternative points of view [e.g., 23:2–12], charges against those of opposing views [e.g., 23:13–35], dialectical maneuvers in the interest of verifying the logic of a proposition [e.g., 9:2–8], censure of the opposite proposition [e.g., 11:28–30; cf. 23:4], showing that the opposite case would not make any sense [e.g., 12:25–30], and so forth,"[15] all serve to enhance the plausibility of his claim. For the author of Matthew, "what is at stake is not only the preservation of *one's* life but even, especially in the Christian world, the salvation of *one's* soul."[16] "These are topics where dispassionate critical argumentation reaches its limits, where minds divide, and you have to choose your camp."[17] The characters in Matthew speak and act in ways that demonstrate for the implied reader the best course of action in light of the evidence provided.

How this Study May Contribute to Further Matthean Research

This study is intended to complement the historical-critical and socio-critical studies done by others on the First Gospel by employing literary-critical methods such as narrative criticism and rhetorical criticism to determine the meaning of Matthew's so-

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[13] The antagonists in Matthew's narrative are essentially "evil" (Matt 9:4; 12:34, 39, 45; 16:4; 22:18), excluded from the kingdom (Matt 21:43), and condemned to hell (Matt 23:33; 25:41).

[14] Laks, "Continuation of Philosophy, 13.

[15] Burton L. Mack, *Rhetoric and the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1990), 43.

[16] Laks, "Continuation of Philosophy," 26.

[17] Laks, "Continuation of Philosophy," 26.

called “anti-Jewish” elements. Questions about how the text aligns with the author’s *Sitz im Leben* historically were suspended temporarily to allow the text to speak for itself as a self-contained literary work. An examination of the interpretive clues found in the text itself showed that Matthew is a rhetorical argument presented in narrative form. The author’s negative characterization of the religious leaders in his narrative, therefore, should not be interpreted as indicators he had given up on his own people as a lost cause, or that his ἐκκλησία had split from the rest of Judaism entirely, or that this mixed group of (mostly) Jewish and Gentile believers in Jesus now considered themselves as a replacement for Israel. Jewish writers frequently used polemics to express their views as they engaged in disputes over biblical interpretation in the context of sectarian rivalry. The polemical language in Matthew should be understood accordingly. In all probability, the conflict in the narrative in some way reflected the conflict between the Matthean community and other rival groups within Second Temple Judaism—particularly those holding official positions of power and influence. But there are gaps in the historical record which leave many questions unanswered regarding the exact nature of Matthew’s relationship to the rest of Judaism. What can be said with a high degree of certainty is that the main point of contention between these sectarian rival groups was the Christian claim that Jesus is *Israel’s* Messiah. Studies on the Gospel of Matthew, therefore, should focus first and foremost on this central issue—especially in the interest of fostering open Christian-Jewish dialogue. While topics such as whether the Gentile believers in Matthew’s ἐκκλησία were expected to be Torah-observant are important, they are secondary. The hope is that this study will help *re*focus discussions in Matthean scholarship back to this *main* point.

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ABSTRACT

RESPONSES TO THE MESSIANIC CLAIM:
CHARACTERIZATION AS RHETORICAL DEVICE
IN THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

Allan Thomas Loder, PhD
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2023
Chair: Dr. Robert L. Plummer

While the Gospel of Matthew has long been recognized as having a distinctly "Jewish" orientation, the decades following World War II witnessed a growing interest among scholars asking whether Matthew could be regarded as "anti-Jewish," or as some would argue, "anti-Semitic." A survey of scholarly works published in recent decades dealing with this issue reveals that most use the historical-critical and socio-critical methods to determine the most plausible explanation for the presence of so-called "anti-Jewish" elements in Matthew. This study is intended to complement historical-critical and socio-critical studies done by others by employing literary-critical methods to support further the conclusion that Matthew's so-called "anti-Jewish" elements are best understood as a thoroughly Jewish critique of Jewish opponents *within* the context of Jewish sectarian rivalry.

This study employs the basic principles of narrative criticism, as outlined by Mark Allan Powell, along with the basic principles of rhetorical criticism, as outlined by modern literary theorists such as George A. Kennedy, Burton L. Mack, and Sonja K. Foss. Special attention is given to the author's use of *character* and *characterization* as rhetorical device. Using a more nuanced approach, this study argues that the Gospel of Matthew may be read as a two-sided rhetorical argument presented in narrative form in which the author uses characters and characterization to represent divergent standpoints and different responses to the claim that God's plan of salvation for Israel, which now

also encompasses all the nations/Gentiles, is realized in and through Jesus the Messiah. Accordingly, Matthew's so-called "anti-Jewish" elements are to be understood not as commentary on ethnic Jews, nor as a sign of rejection of Judaism, but rather as heated rhetoric used to highlight and explain certain details about the antagonists in his story who represent the antithesis to his argument.

VITA

Allan Thomas Loder

EDUCATION

BTh, Master's College and Seminary, 1994.
MDiv, Providence Theological Seminary, 2000.

PUBLICATIONS

"The Classical Pentecostal Doctrine of Spirit-Baptism: Some Exegetical Considerations," *Didaskalia* (Spring 2002): 41–54.
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ORGANIZATIONS

Society of Biblical Literature
Evangelical Theological Society
Canadian Association for Distance Education

ACADEMIC EMPLOYMENT

Guest Lecturer (Seminar), Miller College of the Bible, Pambrun, Saskatchewan, 2000
Instructor (1 course), Providence Theological Seminary, Otterburne, Manitoba, 2001
Adjunct Faculty, Wycliffe College, University of Toronto, 2006–2016

MINISTERIAL EMPLOYMENT

Youth Pastor, Zion Pentecostal Church, Stephenville, Newfoundland and Labrador,1993–1995
Assistant Pastor, Sackville Pentecostal Church, Lower Sackville, Nova Scotia, 1997–1998
Associate Pastor, Word of Life Mission Church, Niverville, Manitoba, 1999–2001