

EDWIN K. BROADHEAD

The Gospel of Matthew on the Landscape of Antiquity

*Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen
zum Neuen Testament*

378

Mohr Siebeck

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ISBN 978-3-16-154454-5 eISBN 978-3-16-154623-5

ISSN 0512-1604 (Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament)

Die Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliographie; detailed bibliographic data is available on the Internet at <http://dnb.dnb.de>.

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The book was typeset by Martin Fischer in Tübingen, printed by Gulde-Druck in Tübingen on non-aging paper and bound by Buchbinderei Spinner in Ottersweier.

Printed in Germany.

dedicated to

Janet Broadhead Tidmore

strong advocate
lifelong friend
beloved sister

and to

Pat Tidmore
friend and family

Preface

Recent years have seen intense focus on the Gospel of Matthew, particularly in terms of redactional studies and narrative analysis. I have sought here to push out into broader streams of interpretation and to investigate the Gospel of Matthew within a much larger perspective and landscape. Here I have considered the Gospel of Matthew from the perspective of the normative compositional patterns in antiquity, and I have concluded that the claim of a privileged position for authorship of New Testament materials can no longer be presumed.

This means that I have interpreted the Gospel of Matthew not as the work of a single author in a limited time period that produced a foundational text, but rather, along with much of ancient literature, as an *oeuvre mouvante* – as a work in process. The key focus then falls upon the history of the tradition, both in terms of composition and transmission. Moreover, I will argue that this Tradition History not only tells us how this gospel was made, but it also defines what it is and what it does.

As with much of recent interpretation, I have sought to move beyond theological questions to ask as well about historical context, sociological dynamics, and patterns of identity formation at work in the literary construction of this gospel. Moreover, I have sought to look beyond the simpler, rather stereotypical descriptions of setting (within the church or between church and synagogue) described in early stages of scholarship and to locate the Gospel of Matthew amidst the broader lines of conflict and collaboration that characterized the ancient landscape. The result is a more dynamic and extensive concept of the identity and function of this gospel tradition. My hope is to sponsor among critical scholars a broader discussion and re-evaluation of how such texts were made and how they function – and thus of what they are.

I am grateful for those who helped me on my way. This research was done in a sabbatical at Oxford, primarily within Jewish Studies, and I am grateful to Berea College for granting a research semester. I am particularly grateful to hosts and colleagues within Oxford for their friendship and support. Martin Goodman, amidst a very busy schedule, provided invitations and introductions that were important. As a Visiting Fellow of Wolfson College, I found there a warm social circle and helpful facilities. I am particularly grateful to Hermione Lee, president of the college, for her interest in my work and my ideas.

I am grateful, of course, for the love and support of family. I learned the paths of scholarship while watching my father, Dempsey Broadhead, pursue his own career of scholarly research and publication. From my mother, Louise Graham Broadhead, I learned the habits and industry that sustain a life and a career. I have been blessed with a sister, Janet Broadhead Tidmore, who offers equal amounts of listening and advice, and both are treasured. Pat Tidmore, her husband, has followed my work with interest, questions, affirmation, and friendship.

As my career advances, so does my respect for the teachers who helped me on my way. I have been fortunate to study with a wide array of competent, concerned, and interesting mentors. Among these are Robert Shurden, Bradley Pope, Frank Stagg, Eduard Schweizer, Ulrich Luz, Hans Weder, Jean Zumstein, Martin Hengel, Peter Stuhlmacher, Jürgen Moltmann, Ulrich Gäßler. I add to this my continuing joy in the collegiality and the challenges offered by fellow members within the *Studiorum Novi Testamenti Societas*.

Special gratitude is due to my colleague and wife, Rev. Dr. Loretta Reynolds. She has listened to my theories and supported my research and shared with me in the ministry of the gospel through three decades of married life. She brings much joy and great adventure to our life together, and I am grateful for each day of that journey.

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How I Changed My Mind about Matthew: Theses for Consideration and Debate

1. Redactional criticism, which began as a *literary* science (focused on the reappropriation of tradition and source materials) has become increasingly focused on the *persona* of Matthew. Linguistic and literary operations have been interpreted more and more as markers for the psychological profile and theological intent of an individual author named Matthew. In recent studies, Matthew has become a conscious theologian and a literary genius.

2. The form of the narrative from the 4th century (primarily Codex Sinaiticus and Codex Vaticanus) has been projected – in a largely uncritical and almost comprehensive way – back onto the desk of a 1st century author.

3. The same is true of the major traditions employed by the Gospel of Matthew (the Gospel of Mark and the Sayings Tradition), which also are known largely from 4th century texts.

4. Reference to the psychological profile, theological agenda, or literary skills of Matthew and to his (retrojected) 1st century text has failed to resolve the multiple layers of conflict and contradiction present in the narrative. This is reflected in the wildly divergent positions taken in current scholarship.

5. Reference to the psychological profile, theological agenda, or literary skills of Matthew has failed to clarify the contradictory markers for the social and theological setting of this gospel. This too is reflected in the wildly divergent positions taken in current scholarship.

6. The Gospel of Matthew, as it is available to us, does not reflect a single redactional process leading to one text. It rather reflects multiple stages of redactional activity and an evolving text. This is true as well of the sources and traditions employed in the production of this text. This complexity makes it difficult to identify a unified line of editorial design or intent or to describe a single social setting for this gospel.

7. Scholarly construction and retrojection of a fixed gospel text (usually in the form of the Nestle-Aland 28th edition from the 21st century) tends to reify the dynamics of the compositional process of this narrative tradition.

8. The Gospel of Matthew has been evaluated in stark contradiction to what is known of the compositional process at work in the larger environment from which it emerged (exemplified in Qumran materials, the Pauline corpus, Johan-

nine writings, rabbinical materials). This privileged position can no longer be presumed.

9. This projection of a fixed and final text consciously shaped by an author in control of his sources (whether as apostle, evangelist, theologian, or literary genius) functions in an apologetic role: it generates an aura of authority for the author, for the text, and for the interpreter.

10. Since reference to a singular author or to a unified redactional strategy or to a fixed form of the text cannot account for the narrative profile of the Gospel of Matthew and has failed to clarify its social and theological location, the narrative profile and social/theological location of the Gospel of Matthew are best explained by its larger history of composition and transmission.

11. The characterization of the Gospel of Matthew as a Living Tradition (a term developed and explored throughout this work) generates a starkly different image of the composition, setting, and transmission of this gospel. I will argue that the Gospel of Matthew emerges from a dialogical and dialectical process of competing traditions within Judaism.

12. These qualities of flexibility and fluidity are not simply anecdotal; they are essential and generative in nature. They are central to what this gospel is and to how it operates.

13. These traits suggest the Gospel of Matthew, which has been read as a personified and punctiliar text, is more properly understood in light of the collective and durative process (Tradition History) through which it was produced. The Gospel of Matthew represents the dialectical engagement and appropriation of competing traditions sponsored by differing communities within the early Jesus movement.

14. The Gospel of Matthew is thus an example of *oeuvre mouvante* – a work in process. This process explains how this text was produced, but it also clarifies what it is and how it functions. I will argue that the Gospel of Matthew emerges in a conflicted environment that is wholly Jewish and that it engages this environment through a strategy that is both reflective and prospective in nature.

Introduction

The text of the Gospel of Matthew is, in its own right, a worthy object of investigation. At the same time, however, a critical analysis of this gospel can provide a window through which to observe the construction and transmission of ancient texts and traditions and to raise key questions about the dynamics of that process. Such an investigation can also bring to the foreground the dynamics involved in the construction of identity, and it can provide insight into the process by which a group of people establish their place on the map.

Who wrote the Gospel of Matthew? When and where was it composed? Why was it penned? To whom was it written and for what purpose? These questions, asked long before the modern era, are the concerns at the heart of current scholarship on the Gospel of Matthew. Recent scholarship shares in common, almost without exception, a focus on the author Matthew as the key to understanding this text and its social and theological location. Despite this nearly universal focus on the role of Matthew, every major question is answered in contradictory ways, and this by competent scholars citing supportive evidence from the same text.

This narrow approach to the composition of the text not only leads to contradictory answers; it also flattens out the underlying question of social and cultural dynamics, transmission of tradition, and construction of identity. If Matthew is a conscious author in control of the text, he has, for the most part, taken care of these complexities.

Here I wish to explore a different understanding of how the Gospel of Matthew was produced. I will suggest that the primary dynamic behind the construction of this gospel is not its author, but other factors. If this is shown to be the case, the conflicting answers to the key questions raised by scholars may be seen in a different light. Furthermore, as the image of Matthew the author moves to the background, other key dynamics move to the foreground of investigation.

I wish to suggest that the *primary* key to the identity and strategy of the Gospel of Matthew lies not in some form of authorial intent or design, but in a two-way conversation, even negotiation, between community and composer – or communities and composers. Beyond the issue of “who wrote Matthew”, this suggestion goes to the heart of the question about the dynamics for the development of early Christianity, particularly in relationship to the historical Jesus and to its Jewish matrix. In particular, I wish to challenge, once again, the myth

of an incipient orthodoxy – an early church driven toward unity and orthodoxy by literature forged under the didactic hand of apostles or evangelists. I also wish to challenge the myth that Christianity defined itself primarily against external challenges from groups such as rabbinic Judaism and Gnosticism.

I will argue that the Gospel of Matthew is a Living Tradition – a debate among competing voices – both in its composition and in its endurance. This developmental process provides the key to its identity, and this identity explains the disjunctive nature of both its presentation and its history of interpretation. I also wish to argue that the process observed in the Gospel of Matthew gives insight into the way in which ancient groups sought to establish their place and identity on the map of antiquity.

At the heart of this story is a world run by Rome, with its armies and roads and its Hellenistic mindset. In the aftermath of the Roman destruction of the Temple (70 ce), various groups are seeking to recover the heritage of conquered Israel and to posit themselves as its continuing voice. Two of these groups, both with imperial patronage, will eventually impose their grand narrative upon the ideological map of antiquity. The rabbis will begin to record their traditions in the form of the Mishnah and eventually gather it into the Talmud. In this act they lay claim to be the sole authentic voice and the face of Judaism – and thus the continuation of the story of Israel. Christian orthodoxy will also claim to speak with one voice as the authentic bearer of the tradition of Jesus, the Jewish messiah – and thus to be the fulfillment or the replacement of Israel.

In the last decades of the first century of the common era, those voices are not yet established, but the race has begun. I will argue here that the Gospel of Matthew stands at the crossroads – in temporal, geographical, and ideological terms – of that developmental process. I will argue that the Gospel of Matthew not only stands at the crossroads of that debate, but that it already contains within itself the voices of competing traditions that will eventually redraw the landscape of antiquity. These voices will prove louder, more important, and more enduring than any of the myriad reconstructions of Matthew the author.

Chapter One

The History of Matthew

Who wrote the Gospel of Matthew? When and where was it composed? Why was it penned? To whom was it written and for what purpose? Such are the concerns at the heart of current scholarship on the Gospel of Matthew. These questions were raised, however, long before the advent of critical study of the Bible in the 16th century.

1.0 Matthew the Apostle

The church historian Eusebius (4th century ce), concerned with the distinction between the gospels, quotes Papias, the bishop of Hieropolis (from c. 110–125 ce). Papias said that

Matthew made an ordered arrangement of *logia* of the Lord in the Hebrew dialect, and everyone interpreted them as they were able.¹

For Papias, Matthew's collection of the *logia* (sayings) of Jesus distinguishes it from the Gospel of Mark.

Mark, having become the interpreter of Peter, wrote down accurately whatever he remembered of the things said and done by the Lord, but not however in order. For neither did he hear the Lord, nor did he follow him, but afterwards, as I said, Peter, who adapted his teachings to the needs of the hearers, but not as though he were drawing up a connected account of the Lord's *logia*.²

Papias, as reported by Eusebius, seems to defend the Gospel of Mark for its lack of order in relation to the Gospel of Matthew. For Papias, Mark is not an eyewitness, but one who interprets the memories of what Peter adapted for "the needs of his hearers." Papias also distinguishes between the "ordered arrangement of *logia*" in the Gospel of Matthew and the fact that Mark was not "drawing up a connected account of the Lord's *logia*." Papias credits this, in part, to the fact that Mark is not a witness to the teaching of Jesus, and this probably means that Papias thought Matthew was a firsthand witness. Is the difference for Papias simply a matter of organization – both wrote *logia* but Matthew's account was

¹ Eusebius, *HE*, 3.39.16

² Eusebius, *HE*, 3.39.15

in order? The saying could also mean that Matthew wrote the *logia* (sayings) of Jesus, but Mark did not. Mark, says Papias, wrote down what Peter remembered of “the things said and done by the Lord.”

While this may appear to be something of an apology or explanation for Mark’s work, what Papias says about the Gospel of Matthew is equally important. First, Papias says that this work is a gospel, suggesting this term is recognized early in the 2nd century – in some places at least – as a written version of the story of Jesus. Secondly, Papias seems to describe a carefully arranged account. Thirdly, Papias says this account centers on the sayings (*logia*) of Jesus. If these descriptions are not pressed too much, then they are in basic agreement with how the Gospel of Matthew is typically seen in modern scholarship. Almost no scholars, however, accept that the Gospel of Matthew, as currently known, was written in Hebrew and then translated.

While Eusebius says that Papias was talking about the Gospel of Matthew and the Gospel of Mark, it appears that Irenaeus, in the second half of the 2nd century ce, first speaks of all four of the New Testament gospels. A great deal of scholarship has sought to find citations of the Gospel of Matthew in the apostolic fathers and even within the New Testament itself. While early traditions are certainly used, this evidence is ambiguous and inconclusive. Hans Dieter Betz concludes that “An influence of the entire Gospel of Matthew, as we have it at present, is impossible to demonstrate up to and including the time of Justin Martyr (died c. 163 or 167).”³

Among the early writers to comment on the Gospel of Matthew are Irenaeus (died c. 200); Clement of Alexandria (c. 140 or 150 to 215?); and Tertullian (c. 160–220). For these and the stream of commentaries and sermons that followed, the key issues were: 1) how Matthew had conveyed to the church the central teaching of Jesus, and 2) how this contrasted with Jewish ideas and practices.

Differences and contradictions within the Gospel of Matthew were generally not an issue. Many noticed, however, the differences between the Sermon on the Mount (Mt 5–7) and the Sermon on the Plain (Lk 6.20–49). Among early interpreters, Origen, Chrysostom, Euthymius, and Theophylactus believed Jesus had given two versions of the same speech.⁴ Augustine, in contrast, argued there were two speeches: the Sermon on the Mount is esoteric instruction for the apostles only, while the Sermon on the Plain is shorter, clearer, and intended for the public.⁵ It was likely John Calvin (1509–1564) who first recognized the composite nature of the material. Calvin saw that both accounts are collections that seek to bring together things Jesus taught on various occasions and thus provide a guide for discipleship:

³ Hans Dieter Betz, *The Sermon on the Mount* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), p. 7.

⁴ This is discussed by Betz, *The Sermon on the Mount*, pp. 17,20.

⁵ Betz, *The Sermon on the Mount*, p. 20.

Both evangelists had the intention of gathering into one single passage the chief headings of Christ's teaching It should be enough for reverent and humble readers that here, before their eyes, they have set a short summary of the teaching of Christ, gathered from many and various discourses ...⁶

Two questions are consistent in this developing line of interpretation. The first concern is with what Jesus taught – especially in contrast to Judaism. The second interest is how Matthew conveyed Jesus' teaching to the church. Thus, the Gospel of Matthew was seen as an apostolic text that faithfully records the teaching of Jesus and transmits it to the church.

Even at the beginning of the Enlightenment, scholars still defended the idea that Matthew, in the Sermon on the Mount, had presented the words of Jesus. Johann Jakob Hess (1741–1828) said:

The main purpose of it was to hand over to his (not yet completed number of) devotees a religious doctrine and ethics, thoroughly anti-Pharisaic in nature, which took the form of easily memorable maxims and sayings arranged under certain main rubrics. And this was done in such a practical manner and presented in a form so completely adaptable to their situation at that time, as well as in the future, that it could shape their religious minds completely in accordance with his.⁷

The emphasis on the distance from Judaism also continues:

No synagogue, not even the temple in the capital, could make a solemn impression such as this. Nothing in this circumstance belonged to the formalities that accompanied the customary lecturing of Jewish teachers.⁸

Even when scholars began to recognize redactional intrusions into the Sermon on the Mount, some argued that these did not diminish this text as a direct account of the teaching of Jesus.⁹ This line of interpretation, despite the critical standards of the Enlightenment, would encourage the 19th century lives of Jesus. These writers believed their task was to separate out the true images of Jesus from the accoutrements of the culture and the worldview of the writers.

Before this movement, however, Thomas Jefferson made an extraordinary attempt to isolate the true teaching of Jesus. Jefferson believed that Jesus was the greatest moral teacher of all history. While the lives of Jesus typically construct a social and psychological profile, Jefferson sought to separate out Jesus' true teaching. To do so, he produced the Jefferson Bible. Trained in classics, Jefferson compared six accounts of the Bible, including French, Latin, Greek, and the English King James Version. He cut out what he considered the authentic teaching of Jesus and pasted the various versions side by side to create a new text.

⁶ Cited by Betz, *The Sermon on the Mount*, p. 17. Betz notes that Augustine took the position that Jesus delivered two addresses.

⁷ Cited and discussed in Betz, *The Sermon on the Mount*, p. 19.

⁸ Cited and discussed in Betz, *The Sermon on the Mount*, p. 20.

⁹ Betz, *The Sermon on the Mount*, pp. 21–22.

For Jefferson, these authentic teachings, when removed from the superstitious additions of the apostles, contained “the most sublime and benevolent code of morals which has never been offered to man.”¹⁰

While various lines of development may be seen, there is a strong common cord. Almost without exception, Matthew was seen as an apostolic figure who is giving direct testimony to the teaching of Jesus.

2.0 Matthew the Compiler (Source Criticism)

In the 19th century Heinrich Julius Holtzmann and others opened a new stage in scholarship.¹¹ The quest for Jesus’ first speech was redirected to the sources employed in the presentation of those words.¹² The Sermon on the Mount and the Sermon on the Plain were seen not as variations of each other, but as different appropriations of a common source. Beyond the fact that both were constructed, this further meant that neither was a direct account of the teachings of Jesus – they were revisions of a common text.

The focus thus shifted from Jesus to the traditions about him, but it also shifted from Matthew the Apostle to Matthew as a compiler, arranger, and manager of early Christian tradition. In the era that followed, it was Matthew who was in charge of the Sermon on the Mount: he had expanded an earlier source, organized it around a new theme, and relocated it to the beginning of Jesus’ ministry to illustrate his teaching.¹³ Holtzmann believed that Matthew still retained the teaching of Jesus: “To Matthew, therefore, belong the disposition and association of ideas, to Jesus the individual apophthegmata that fill out the plan of composition.”¹⁴

This focus quickly moved to the question of how Matthew had done this. The first answer was sought in the sources employed. The relation between the two versions of the Sermon was considered, but also the relationship among the gospels themselves.

Scholars soon realized there was some form of interdependence between the first three of the gospels and that the Gospel of John stood in a category by itself. Extensive time and effort was given to the interrelationship of the three synoptic gospels, with Markan priority winning the day.

¹⁰ “How Thomas Jefferson created his own Bible,” <http://www.smithsonianmag.com/arts-culture/how-thomas-jefferson-created-his-own-bible-5659505/>. The 1804 version, now lost, contained some 46 pages of what Jesus said and was entitled *The Philosophy of Jesus of Nazareth*. The 1840 version was entitled *The Life and Morals of Jesus of Nazareth*. It was 84 pages long and contained both words and deeds of Jesus that Jefferson thought authentic.

¹¹ Holtzmann’s work appeared in 1863: *Die synoptischen Evangelien, ihr Ursprung und geschichtlicher Charakter* (Leipzig: Engelmann, 1863). See the discussion in Betz, *The Sermon on the Mount*, pp. 22–24.

¹² Betz, *The Sermon on the Mount*, p. 22.

¹³ Betz, *The Sermon on the Mount*, p. 24.

¹⁴ Cited in Betz, *The Sermon on the Mount*, pp. 24–25.

Once Markan priority was established, the material shared between the Gospel of Matthew and the Gospel of Luke suggested a common written source. Johann Gottfried Eichhorn (1752–1827) argued that Matthew and Luke drew their common material from two different forms of a written source; thus, this source was already edited before they received it and deployed it in their own gospels. Eichhorn further argued that the version used by Matthew was a redactional work that addressed the needs and interests of Jewish Christianity.¹⁵

This tradition, composed primarily of the sayings of Jesus, would come to be labeled as the Sayings Source and designated by the letter Q. The recognition of Q goes back to the work of Christian Hermann Weisse (1801–1866).¹⁶ Scholars would eventually concede the point of Eichhorn by designating two forms of the Sayings Tradition (Q^{mt} and Q^{lk}). Even these give no direct access to the words of Jesus, since they are written Greek translations of what was originally oral material in Aramaic.

Scholars thus came to the realization that most of the issues about the interrelationship of the three synoptic gospels could be explained by a reference to two sources. The Gospel of Matthew and the Gospel of Luke each based their work on the Gospel of Mark, but supplemented this framework by inserting the sayings of Jesus, drawn from their own versions of the Sayings Tradition (Q). Eventually, scholarship would designate the special materials unique to the Gospel of Matthew as M and those unique to the Gospel of Luke as L. Scholars presumed that sources were also employed in the Gospel of Mark, but these remained largely beyond the reach of scholarship.

These new insights realigned the interpretive grid. The key to the Gospel of Matthew was now found in the way ancient traditions had been preserved, then expanded and shaped into a distinct narrative to address a specific audience. For many, these ancient traditions contained, at least at some level, the teaching of Jesus. Matthew was thus seen as the mediator of these primitive traditions of Jesus. In the eyes of the Form Critics, however, the issue was more complicated than that.

3.0 Matthew the Stage Manager (Form Criticism)

For Form Critics, another stage stood between the reader and the teaching of Jesus. They argued that the gospel material had circulated in specific forms and according to standard rules among early followers of Jesus.¹⁷ The key to this

¹⁵ Betz, *The Sermon on the Mount*, p. 25.

¹⁶ See the discussion by Betz, *The Sermon on the Mount*, p. 26, especially note 199.

¹⁷ Hermann Gunkel used Form Criticism to categorize the components and the dynamics of the Psalms. Rudolf Bultmann, Karl Schmidt, Martin Dibelius and others developed Form Criticism for New Testament materials, especially the Synoptic Gospels.

process was the formal shaping of the texts and their use in specific life settings such as worship, debate, missions. Thus, the teaching of Jesus had already been adapted – in its use within early Christian communities – before it was passed on to the gospel writers.¹⁸

This impacted how the tradition was seen in two significant ways. This was no longer considered the direct teaching of Jesus, and it was now seen as a Christian tradition operating mostly in isolation from Judaism. This view also changed the role of Matthew. Matthew was no longer simply passing on the words of Jesus; he was instead charged with the task of sorting out and arranging the various traditions into a coherent narrative. This was done through selection, ordering and arranging, but also through the construction of narrative frameworks, introductions, transitions, and conclusions.¹⁹

For Form Critics, the traditions followed definitive patterns and had a specific setting in the life of the early churches. Having isolated these traditions within the gospels, Form Critics were primarily interested in the role these smaller traditions played in primitive Christianity. They gave less attention to the larger framework of the gospel narratives. That task would be taken up by the proponents of redaction criticism, and a new understanding of Matthew would emerge.

4.0 Matthew the Editor and Theologian (Redaction Criticism)

Redaction critics gave attention to the language and style of the Gospel of Matthew and to the framing of the blocks of material. Redaction critics also investigated ways in which editorial activity might be a tool of theological construction by the evangelists. They did this by focusing on patterns and changes within the narrative that could portray the evangelist's interests and designs.

The groundbreaking study of Bornkamm, Barth, and Held²⁰ developed and applied the model to the Gospel of Matthew.²¹ Noting the work of the source

¹⁸ This was already seen by Carl Georg Friedrich Heinrici (1844–1915), who argued that the Sermon on the Mount and the Sermon on the Plain are not reproductions of the teaching of Jesus, but rather reconstruction. Furthermore, there is no one source common to the two. Both are secondary “reconstructions of a foundational speech of Jesus, in two versions, and not dependent on a common source.” Heinrici believed the Sermon on the Mount belongs to a Jewish and Palestinian ethos, while the Sermon on the Plain does not. This is cited and discussed in Betz, *The Sermon on the Mount*, pp. 27–28.

¹⁹ Luke, for example, was said to have moved the sermon at Nazareth to the beginning of Jesus' ministry in order to make it a paradigmatic account of who Jesus was and what he taught. Matthew moved the acclamation of Jesus as one who “teaches with authority” from its Markan connection to miracles and (re)associated it with the words of Jesus – a more natural connection.

²⁰ Gunther Bornkamm, Gerhard Barth, and Heinz Joachim Held, *Tradition and Interpretation in Matthew* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1963).

²¹ The Gospel of Luke was analyzed by Hans Conzelmann, and the Gospel Mark was analyzed by Willi Marxsen.

critics in separating tradition and redaction, Bornkamm, Barth, and Held argued that form-critical work must be “continued in a new direction.”²² This is because the Synoptic writers show – all three and each in his own special way – by their editing and construction, by their selection, inclusion and omission, and not least by what at first sight appears an insignificant, but on closer examination is seen to be a characteristic treatment of the traditional material, that they are by no means mere collectors and handers-on of the tradition, but interpreters of it.²³

Bornkamm, Barth, and Held saw Matthew consciously shaping the the narrative for theological purposes:

... Matthew presents Jesus at the beginning of his Gospel not only as the ‘Messiah of the word’ and the ‘Messiah of deed’ but also as the one who commissions, who gives his disciples authority to do the same Messianic work.²⁴

The theological contribution of Matthew is also described:

... Matthew has collected the miracle narratives of Jesus in only one passage (Matt. 8–9). In light of the evangelist’s composition it is easy to see why he has proceeded in this way. The similarly worded verses in Matt. 4.23 and 9.35 show by their contents ... and their position ... that Matthew’s purpose in the chapters enclosed by these verses is to portray the double office of Christ: his teaching and his healing activity. His collection of the miraculous deeds of Jesus thus has a Christological function. The evangelist presents Jesus at the beginning of his Gospel not only as the Messiah of the word (in the Sermon on the Mount) but also as the Messiah of deed (by his miraculous deeds). ... The conclusion of the collection of miracles also shows that the evangelist has arranged them under the theme of Christology.²⁵

Redaction critics eventually began to ask why Matthew made such changes and what audience or situation the evangelist addressed with this construction. W.D. Davies opened a new era of investigation in *The Setting of the Sermon on the Mount*.²⁶ Davies argued, along with many others, that the Gospel of Matthew was written in the period after the fall of the Temple (70 ce) – a period in which Judaism was in disarray. Taking his clues from Josephus and later rabbinic works, Davies noted that Pharisaic Judaism was establishing itself through the synagogues as the new norm and authority for Jewish identity. While Essenes, Sadducees, and Zealots were largely a thing of the past, the Pharisaic forms of Judaism were exerting their authority through rabbinic codes later found in the Mishnah. The center of this authority, says Davies, was the academy of rabbis in Jamnia. From here rabbis could assert their authority as interpreters of Jewish

²² Bornkamm, Barth, and Held, *Tradition and Interpretation in Matthew*, p. 11.

²³ Bornkamm, Barth, and Held, *Tradition and Interpretation in Matthew*, p. 12.

²⁴ Bornkamm, Barth, and Held, *Tradition and Interpretation in Matthew*, p. 252.

²⁵ Bornkamm, Barth, and Held, *Tradition and Interpretation in Matthew*, pp. 246–47.

²⁶ W.D. Davies, *The Setting of the Sermon on the Mount* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1964).

Law and as the regulators of daily life. As such, they could sanction those who disagreed or opposed them.

Davies argued that Jewish Christians were seen as heretics by the rabbis and they, along with other groups, were expelled from the synagogues. One of the ways of doing this, said Davies, was imposition of the *birkhat ha minim*, a curse against heretics, into the synagogue liturgy.²⁷ This had the effect of requiring followers of Jesus to identify themselves and made them subject to expulsion.

Davies argued that the Gospel of Matthew, and especially the Sermon on the Mount, is “a Christian response to Jamnia.”²⁸ While various aspects of Davies’ position would be challenged, it provided a new way of reading the Gospel of Matthew. Matthew’s redactional strategy was no longer simply one of personal style or ideas; it was no longer simply theological reflection upon traditional material. Instead, Matthew was manipulating the story of Jesus to address a specific historical crisis, and he was doing so in behalf of a specific community of Christians. This connection to historical situation and to community interests would prevail through the next decades of scholarship on the Gospel of Matthew. Matthew would become the theologian speaking for his community, particularly in its struggle with Judaism.

This move beyond the questions of personal style and tastes into the historical setting of the larger narrative was accompanied by wider thinking about Matthew’s interaction with the traditions. If Matthew was seeking to counter the Pharisaic authority and to explain the Christian movement, then he might be less a handler of tradition and more a theologian in his own right. New attention was given to Matthew’s constructive theology: to Matthew’s Christology, to Matthew’s view of salvation history, to Matthew’s attitude to the Law, to Matthew’s view of discipleship and church,²⁹ and other theological issues.

Matthew the apostle and evangelist had now become, in redaction criticism, a competent author with a theological agenda. Redaction critics attended to the language and style of Matthew and to his manipulation of traditions through techniques such as framing, omissions, introductions, summaries, and allusions. They also investigated ways in which editorial activity might be a tool of theological construction by the evangelists. They gave less attention, however, to the ways such traditions and editorial changes operated within the larger narrative world, and they rarely considered issues such as plot and characterization. That task would be undertaken by proponents of narrative criticism.

²⁷ For discussion of the whether such a curse plays a role in this period, see Edwin Broadhead, *Jewish Ways of Following Jesus*, (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), pp. 290–96.

²⁸ Davies, *The Setting of the Sermon on the Mount*, p. 315. This is cited and discussed in Donald Senior, *What are they Saying about Matthew?* (New York: Paulist Press, revised and expanded edition, 1996), pp. 8–10.

²⁹ All titles of chapters in Donald Senior’s *What are they Saying about Matthew?*

5.0 Matthew the Literary Genius

Narrative critics looked upon the gospels as literature and upon Matthew as an author. They turned not only to issues such as plot, characterization, story world, narrative world, implied author, implied narrator, but also to the questions of intentionality. As a consequence, most narrative critics began to see Matthew as a personification of the interests and strategies of the text. This *persona* has grown larger through recent studies.

Even those who enter disclaimers about the difference between a real author and the implied author or between the narrator of the text and the narrator within the text often revert to language of authorial design and intent. Alan Culpepper,³⁰ for example, uses language that evokes the image of Matthew as an intentional author in control of his text. Culpepper says that the use of implicit commentary

suggests that the evangelists tied the developing self-understanding of the emerging Christian communities to the death of Jesus. Mark interprets the church as a new 'temple not made with hands'. Matthew relates the death of Jesus to the signs of the end-time and the hope of resurrection. Luke provides ethical instruction for the church, interpreting Jesus' martyrdom as a noble death, and John develops a rich portrait by which the church could define itself through the themes, images, and allusions of the Johannine passion narrative.³¹

In many cases, the focus on language, style, editorial changes, and theological construction emboldens commentators to personify the text and to psychologize and expand the portrait of Matthew.

What exactly did Matthew have on his table when he composed the gospel? One wonders. Strewn upon his tabletop would no doubt have been a copy of some form of Mark, possibly another document or a collection of written traditions (Q), and papyri and other items upon which were inscribed bits of Jesus tradition, sayings, miracle stories, parables, etc. Additionally, he would have had scrolls of OT texts (e. g., MT, Aramaic, LXX or some other Greek translation of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Psalms, etc.) or, at the very least, testimony collections.³²

Even when a scholar takes seriously the power of the sources employed in the Gospel of Matthew, it is easy to slip into the language of authorial intent and personality profile.

³⁰ Culpepper wrote the first intentially literary analysis of the Gospel of John. See R. Alan Culpepper, *Anatomy of a Gospel: A Study in Literary Design* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983).

³¹ R. Alan Culpepper, "Designs for the Church in the Gospel Accounts of Jesus' Death," *New Testament Studies* 51 (2005), p. 376.

³² Richard C. Beaton, "How Matthew writes," in *The Written Gospel*, ed. Markus Bockmuehl and Donald Hagner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 116. Beaton is fully aware of the power of traditions and the complexity of composition.

Methodologically controllable questions can be raised solely with regard to the structure *consciously intended* by the evangelist, not about a structure independent of that, existing on the level of the text alone If no continuous structure can be discovered, it would not necessarily mean that Matthew is a poor author; an intention of the evangelist might be hidden which would have to be interpreted.³³

Some more emphatically say that the first emphasis of interpretation should be “the individuality and creative achievement of theologians and evangelists.”³⁴

As these illustrations show, in most recent studies Matthew is a fully aware author who intentionally shapes the narrative – in both its form and its theology – to address a community in crisis. Often accompanying this personalized and idealized portrait of Matthew is a flat and stereotypical view of the world around Matthew: Israel, Judaism, the community, the church, early Christianity, the parting of the ways between Judaism and Christianity.

Matthew wrote his gospel as a ‘foundation document’ for a cluster of Christian communities, probably in Syria in the mid 80s. The evangelist and the original recipients of his gospel saw themselves as a ‘new people’, minority Christian communities over against both Judaism and the Gentile world at large. ... Matthew’s gospel legitimates the recent painful separation of Matthean communities from Judaism by providing divine sanction for the parting of the ways: as a result of the hostility of the Jewish leaders to Jesus and his followers, *God himself* has disclosed to the ‘new people’ that Jesus is the Son of God.³⁵

Similar descriptions can be found from various scholars.³⁶

This approach often results in a grand narrative constructed in the name of Matthew. While pre-critical interpreters believed, for the most part, that Matthew passed on to the church the teachings of Jesus that distinguished Jesus’ message from his Jewish opposition, more recent narratives suggest that Matthew, skillful artist and theologian, constructed the message about Jesus in order to justify the church in its break from Judaism. These grand narratives are often constructed around a series of binary oppositions: Israel and the church; the synagogue and the community; the synagogue and the church; Jews and

³³ Luz, *Matthew* 1–7, p. 35.

³⁴ Hubert Frankemölle, “Evangelist und Gemeinde: Eine methodenkritische Besinnung mit Beispielen aus dem Matthäusevangelium,” *Bib.* 60 (1979), pp. 153–90, cited and discussed in Luz, *Matthew* 1–7, pp. 34–35.

³⁵ Graham Stanton, *A Gospel for a New People: Studies in Matthew* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1992), p. 378.

³⁶ Ulrich Luz slips into this language on occasions. He speaks of “... the deep identity crisis into which the separation from Israel will have plunged the church” (Luz, *Matthew* 21–28, p. 173). Luz also says that “Matthew remains a Jew, *understands himself* not as the representative of a new religion but as an Israelite, and never would have accepted the charge of anti-Judaism” (p. 173). In *Matthew* 1–7, p. 162, Luz combines a number of flat images: “The Jewish-Christian Matthew, for whose community the separation from Israel was intensely traumatic, emphasizes the claim of the community to the Bible.” See also *Matthew* 21–28, p. 641, where Luz says, “In this story of conflict Matthew works through his own pain over the separation from ‘Mother’ Israel.”

Gentiles; Israel and the world. Both the popular and the critical forms of this grand narrative depend upon the imagined profile of Matthew, and both tend toward flat, sweeping, and stereotypical constructions of the world into which Matthew's message was spoken.

6.0 Overview: the History of Matthew

There is a common element to these varied approaches to the Gospel of Matthew. At each stage – and almost without exception – the key to the gospel is the person of Matthew: his apostolic standing, his eyewitness status, his inspiration, his management of sources, his theological purposes, his literary skill. At each stage, then and now, the key to the Gospel of Matthew has been found in understanding the *persona* of Matthew.

7.0 Contradictory Views of Matthew in Current Scholarship

If understanding Matthew has been seen as the key to understanding the Gospel of Matthew, it might surprise casual readers how widely and to what extent critical scholarship disagrees on how to answer the central questions about this gospel.

7.1 Conflicting Answers to Current Questions about the Gospel of Matthew

Donald Senior has, on various occasions, chronicled developments within studies on the Gospel of Matthew. His 1996 edition, entitled *What are they saying about Matthew?*, considers the answers to various key questions.³⁷

7.1.1 Was Matthew Jewish or Gentile?

Beyond the claim of Papias (in Eusebius) that Matthew wrote in Hebrew, the only evidence about the identity of Matthew is found in the text of the gospel. From this evidence scholars argue two different understandings of Matthew.

For most, Matthew was a Jewish Christian. While a few would take the call of the tax collector in Mt 9.9 as an autobiographical statement, most scholars locate Matthew as a Jewish Christian from a later generation. A few offer more specific traits. For Reinhart Hummel, Matthew is a converted Pharisee who was a scribe.³⁸

³⁷ Senior, *What are they Saying about Matthew?*

³⁸ Reinhart Hummel, *Die Auseinandersetzung zwischen Kirche und Judentum im Matthäusevangelium* (München: Kaiser Verlag, 1963).

Douglas Hare believes the harsh tones used of Judaism point to the pain of separation felt by Matthew because of the separation from his own people.³⁹

Ulrich Luz says that “the Gospel of Matthew comes from a Jewish-Christian community and from a Jewish-Christian author.”⁴⁰ He then lists reasons for this position:⁴¹

1. The structure and composition of the gospel show the influence of Jewish literature.
2. The key sources for this gospel (Mark and the Sayings Tradition) come from Jewish Christian communities.
3. The language of the gospel is similar to the Septuagint and shows Jewish linguistic characteristics.
4. The theology of this gospel, especially its appeal to the Old Testament, suggests a Jewish-Christian author.
5. This gospel was subsequently embraced within Jewish-Christianity.

In contrast to this majority opinion, a few scholars still argue, on the basis of the text, that Matthew is a Gentile author.⁴² Most of these would explain the Jewish focus as traces of an earlier stage, then claim the final redaction comes from a Gentile author. For many, the key issue is the harsh rhetoric and the level of antagonism directed toward Pharisaic Judaism in the Gospel of Matthew. For some scholars, such harsh rhetoric could only come from a Gentile community and author.

7.1.2 Was Matthew's Community Jewish or Gentile?

A similar disparity can be seen in the question about Matthew's community. While most envision a mixed community of Jewish and Gentile followers of Jesus, David Sim consistently interprets the gospel, its author, and its community as a group of Jesus' followers who are thoroughly Jewish.⁴³

7.1.3 What is Matthew's View on the Law?

Matthew's view of the Law is understood in different ways. An older view, rooted in a long history of interpretation, is that Matthew is giving a new Law. The

³⁹ Douglas Hare, *The Theme of Jewish Persecution of Christians in the Gospel According to St. Matthew* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967).

⁴⁰ Luz, *Matthew 1–7*, p. 80.

⁴¹ Luz, *Matthew 1–7*, pp. 80–81.

⁴² Among those holding this position are Paul Nepper-Christensen, *Das Matthäusevangelium. Ein judenchristliches Evangelium?* (Aarhus: Universitetsforlaget, 1958); John Meier, *The Vision of Matthew: Christ, Church, and Morality in the First Gospel* (New York: Paulist, 1979); Georg Strecker, *Der Weg der Gerechtigkeit. Untersuchung zur Theologie des Matthäus* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1962); Hubert Frankemölle, *Jahwebund und Kirche Christi* (Münster: Aschendorff, 1974).

⁴³ David Sim, *The Gospel of Matthew and Christian Judaism: The History and Social Setting of the Matthean Community* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998).

classic expression of this view was given by Benjamin Bacon, who argued that the five discourses are Matthew's replacement of the Pentateuch.⁴⁴

Most recent positions are more nuanced. Following Gerhard Barth, numerous scholars have argued that Matthew is fighting on two fronts: a legalistic Pharisaism and antinomian trends in his own community.⁴⁵ Hans Dieter Betz argues that this gospel contains within it two very different positions on the Law: the Sermon on the Mount calls for absolute observance, while the rest of the gospel is more compromising.⁴⁶ A host of scholars argue that Matthew intends full obedience to the Law, but only as it is interpreted and applied through Jesus.⁴⁷

7.1.4 What is the Key Focus of Matthew's Christology?

A similar diversity and contradiction is found in scholarly opinions on the Christology of Matthew. Many still see the various titles (Son of God, Son of Man, Son of David, Christ) as the key.⁴⁸ Some think Matthew is presenting Jesus as the new Moses.⁴⁹ Others see the key in the images of Wisdom.⁵⁰ For some, the healing stories hold the key to Matthew's Christological strategy.⁵¹

7.1.5 Have Matthew and his Community Separated from the Synagogue?

Perhaps the most contested issue in recent scholarship is the question of social location: have Matthew and his community separated from the synagogue? Much of scholarship reads the painful words of woe and condemnation pronounced

⁴⁴ Benjamin Bacon, "The Five Books of Matthew against the Jews," *The Expositor* 15 (1918), pp. 55–56.

⁴⁵ Gerhard Barth, *Tradition and Interpretation in Matthew* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1963); Robert Gundry, *Matthew: A Commentary on His Literary and Theological Art* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982); Gundry's 2nd edition appeared in 1994 as *Matthew: A Commentary on His Handbook for a Mixed Church Under Persecution*.

⁴⁶ Betz, *The Sermon on the Mount*. See, for example, pp. 166–97.

⁴⁷ Among these are Hammerton-Kelly, "Attitudes to the Law in Matthew's Gospel: A Discussion of Matthew 5:18," *Biblical Research* 17 (1972), pp. 19–32; Alexander Sand, *Das Gesetz und die Propheten: Untersuchungen zur Theologie des Evangeliums nach Matthäus* (Regensburg: Friedrich Pustet, 1974); Klyne Snodgrass, "Matthew's Understanding of the Law," *Interpretation* 46 (1992), pp. 368–78; Ulrich Luz, *Matthew 1–7*.

⁴⁸ Among many, see Jack Kingsbury, *Structure, Christology, Kingdom* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975).

⁴⁹ W.D. Davies and Dale Allison, *Matthew*, International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1997).

⁵⁰ Jack Suggs, *Wisdom, Christology, and Law in Matthew's Gospel* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1970).

⁵¹ Heinz Joachim Held, "Matthew as Interpreter of the Miracle Stories," in Bornkamm, Barth, and Held, *Tradition and Interpretation in Matthew*, pp. 165–299; Jack Kingsbury, "Observations on the Miracle Chapters of Matthew 8–9," *CBQ* 40 (1978), pp. 559–73; Birger Gerhardsson, *The Mighty Acts of Jesus According to Matthew* (Lund: CWK Gleerup, 1979).

upon the Pharisees and concludes that the separation now lies in the past.⁵² Most of these view the separation as recent and believe it still impacts the community situation. The most articulate voice of this position is found in the commentary of Ulrich Luz:

The Matthean community, whose mission in Israel has come to an end, no longer belongs to the Jewish synagogue system. The fissure between community and synagogue is final. Any attempts to situate the Matthean community within the Jewish synagogue system must be considered a failure.⁵³

Luz believes this situation is the context for the harsh condemnations of Pharisees and other Jews.

In this story of conflict Matthew works through his own pain over the separation from “Mother” Israel. There are harsh and wholesale condemnations of Pharisees and scribes (chap. 23) that can be justified neither historically nor, from the perspective of Jesus’ message of love of one’s enemies, theologically, and there are skillfully malicious historical fictions (27.24–25, 62–66; 28.11–15). They can only be understood from the particular historical situation of that day and from the situation of postdecision conflict. Here we encounter the darkest and most problematic side of the Matthean story of Jesus.⁵⁴

Other scholars contend the break has not yet happened.⁵⁵ These interpreters usually highlight the ongoing nature of the conflict, and many suggest a church in transition. Most who take this position believe, however, that the parting is imminent.

These two positions are not simply anecdotal: they go to the heart of how one reads and understands the Gospel of Matthew. In essence, the question becomes whether the harsh criticism against Pharisees and other Jews is said in their absence or in a face-to-face confrontation. At stake is the question of whether one can already read anti-Jewish elements within the pages of this gospel.

⁵² Included here would be Ulrich Luz, *Matthew 1–7*; Graham Stanton, *A Gospel for a New People: Studies in Matthew* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1992); Douglas Hare, *The Theme of Jewish Persecution of Christians*; Georg Strecker, *Der Weg der Gerechtigkeit. Untersuchung zur Theologie des Matthäus*; David Garland, *Reading Matthew: A Literary and Theological Commentary* (Macon: Smyth & Helwys, 2001); Sjeff Van Tilborg, *The Jewish Leaders in Matthew* (Leiden: Brill, 1972). See the discussion by Senior, *What are they Saying about Matthew?*, pp. 10–20.

⁵³ Luz, *Matthew 1–7*, p. 88.

⁵⁴ Luz, *Matthew 21–28*, p. 641.

⁵⁵ Among these are Davies and Allison, *Matthew*; David Sim, *The Gospel of Matthew and Christian Judaism: The History and Social Setting of the Matthean Community* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998); Jack Kingsbury, *Structure, Christology, Kingdom* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975); Andrew Overman, *Matthew’s Gospel and Formative Judaism: The Social World of the Matthean Community* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Press, 1990); Anthony Saldarini, *Matthew’s Christian-Jewish Community* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994). See the discussion by Senior, *What are they Saying about Matthew?*, pp. 10–20.

7.2 Conflicting Views on Discipleship and Ecclesiology

A recent group of scholars considered the question *What light does Matthew's use of Mark in relation to Discipleship and Ecclesiology throw on Matthew's theological location?* The question itself requires source and tradition criticism, but it especially evokes the concerns of redactional criticism and narrative studies. A selection of recent answers to this question illustrates the diverse ways in which, though reading a common text, scholars answer the question.⁵⁶

7.2.1 W.D. Davies and Dale Allison, Jr.

Modifying W.D. Davies' earlier work, Davies and Allison see a Matthean response to an emerging rabbinic movement.⁵⁷

Matthew, engaged with a Pharisaism which sought to re-establish the unity of the Jewish people in terms of the written and oral Torah, himself sought a unity – the unity of Christians. He found such unity implicit in the story and teachings of Jesus.⁵⁸

The theological location is found in this quest for unity.

The Matthean Christians were mostly Jews. Among them the divisiveness so characteristic of the Jewish society to which they belonged was no doubt perpetuated. So Matthew, like the Pharisees, was faced with the need to keep a community united. But unlike the Pharisees Matthew also had to come to terms with the increasing number of Gentiles entering the Jesus movement.⁵⁹

The social location can be inferred from this. Matthew's community

... seems to have demanded, on the one hand, its own inclusion within Judaism ... and, on the other, the expansion of Judaism beyond strictly Jewish confines. ... we incline to believe that despite its positive association with Gentile Christians, Matthew's community was still a deviant Jewish association.⁶⁰

The outcome can also be envisioned:

... the tragedy is that the sort of Christianity, so richly Jewish, that we find in Matthew, and which apparently lived on in the Nazoraeans, did not flourish much past Matthew's time. In the century after Matthew Christianity became a primarily Gentile religion, and Jewish Christians became marginalized. ... In one sense, then, our Gospel, as we interpret it, is a monument to a failed hope: its ecumenical goal, the unity of Jewish and Gentile Christians, was not achieved.⁶¹

⁵⁶ I wish to express my deep respect for the position and scholarship of each of my colleagues. It was my participation in this conversation that pushed me beyond my own focus on Matthew the author and my own presumption of a unified line of redaction.

⁵⁷ Davies and Allison, *Matthew*.

⁵⁸ Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, vol. 3, p. 704.

⁵⁹ Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, vol. 3, p. 702.

⁶⁰ Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, vol. 3, p. 695.

⁶¹ Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, vol. 3, p. 727.

7.2.2 Graham Stanton

In his 1992 treatment,⁶² Graham Stanton believed that at the time Matthew wrote, church and synagogue have parted company.⁶³ For Stanton, the theological location is shaped by this history.

Matthew wrote his gospel as a 'foundation document' for a cluster of Christian communities, probably in Syria in the mid 80s. The evangelist and the original recipients of his gospel saw themselves as a 'new people', minority Christian communities over against both Judaism and the Gentile world at large. ... Matthew's gospel legitimates the recent painful separation of Matthean communities from Judaism by providing divine sanction for the parting of the ways: as a result of the hostility of the Jewish leaders to Jesus and his followers, *God himself* has disclosed to the 'new people' that Jesus is the Son of God.⁶⁴

Despite its social location as a separated community, the orientation process is still underway.

One of Matthew's 'legitimizing answers' is particularly prominent. He includes as a part of his story a sustained defence of open and full acceptance of Gentiles. This is carried out with such literary skill that it is highly likely that this was a matter of continuing importance for the 'new people'. Even if the principle was largely accepted when Matthew wrote, it was still necessary to repeat the explanation of how this step had been taken, a step which ultimately proved to be crucial for the parting of the ways with Judaism.⁶⁵

7.2.3 Ulrich Luz

For Ulrich Luz the Gospel of Matthew has its central focus in Jesus.⁶⁶ From the beginning, the earthly Jesus is Immanuel – the one in whom God meets humans. Throughout the story, Jesus is the messiah of Israel, and with his resurrection the messiah of Israel is revealed to be the Lord of the entire world. The Gospel of Matthew presents an "inclusive story" that encourages its readers to "interweave their own experiences with the story being told by the evangelist."⁶⁷

Ultimately, for Luz, this is a story of separation:

The evangelist tells his story of Jesus as the story of an increasing and dramatic conflict with Israel's leaders.

... As is the case with every story of conflict, the Matthean story of Jesus is also to be understood by its ending. ... The conflict was unavoidable, because for Matthew and his church the authority of the Son of Man Jesus was so commanding and his story in Israel so sweeping that only the figure and message of Jesus could be the foundation of Israel.

⁶² Stanton, *A Gospel for a New People*.

⁶³ Stanton, *A Gospel for a New People*, pp. 7–8.

⁶⁴ Stanton, *A Gospel for a New People*, p. 378.

⁶⁵ Stanton, *A Gospel for a New People*, p. 379.

⁶⁶ I am drawing here from the concluding "In Retrospect" of the three-volume commentary of Ulrich Luz: *Matthew 21–28*, (Minneapolis, Fortress Press, 2005), pp. 637–44.

⁶⁷ Luz, *Matthew 21–28*, p. 640.