THE BOOK:

CONSTRUCTIONS OF AUTHORITY IN THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

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Contents

Abstract

The author of the Gospel of Matthew constructs his authority as a legitimate interpreter of "biblical" texts, which he understands to portend Jesus as an eschatological saviour, "the messiah". He does so through a coordinated literary strategy that dispossesses "traditional" interpreters of these texts in favour of Jesus's, and ultimately his own, superior understanding of their meanings. In this dissertation I argue that the text evidences a comprehensive compositional plan that consists of a systematic program of redaction of other sources about Jesus; a pervasive emphasis on the religious practice of divination, which occurs throughout the gospel in multiple forms; and the explicit coordination of Judean prophecy with narrative details from Jesus's life. With these tactics the author argues not only that Jesus of Nazareth was the prophesied messiah, but also that disclosing information about *the* messiah is the purpose of earlier Israelite and Judahite texts. The author had in his possession other biographical accounts of and saying attributed to Jesus, namely, the Gospel of Mark and Q. However, by repurposing and redacting his sources, this author displays that *he* is superior to any other would-be authority on Jesus traditions. By critically examining his redaction of prophetic material inherited from his sources, as well as the introduction of novel divinatory elements into Markan narrative, I attempt to reconstruct this author's distinct epistemology and aims. The dissertation begins with a broad introduction to Greek and Roman divination and surveys the evidence for "messianism" in the first and second centuries of the Common Era, before reviewing current scholarship on the Gospel of Matthew. It next examines how the author, with Jesus as his proxy, constructs his own authority as both a skilful exegete and textual critic of "Judean writings." Three scenes from the gospel illustrate aptly the author's implicit contention that true knowledge of Jesus's status and

teachings can only be apprehended by inexpert or unconventional interpreters. This principle is demonstrated through characters within the narrative but its application is intended more broadly, encouraging readers to discern "true" expertise in their own settings along the same lines. I explore further how Matthew's use of other forms of divination reveals his understanding of nonobvious beings as the source of all knowledge. Finally, I explore how the author winnows the field of who is capable of "successful" interpretation by including in his narrative several examples of divinatory failures, ones that track with ethnic and professional status. Altogether, these dimensions of the gospel suggest an author who, far from being the scribe of a cloistered community of Christ believers, composed a text to further his own interests and ambitions within the competitive intellectual world of the Roman Empire.

Résumé

L'auteur de l'Évangile selon Matthieu construit son autorité comme interprète légitime de textes « bibliques » qui, d'après lui, annoncent l'arrivée de Jésus comme sauveur eschatologique, soit le « messie ». Pour ce faire, il mobilise une stratégie littéraire coordonnée qui dépossède les interprètes dits « traditionnels » de ces textes en faveur de la compréhension supérieure de Jésus de leur signification et finalement, de la sienne. Dans le cadre de cette thèse, nous soutenons que le texte de l'Évangile selon Matthieu manifeste d'abord un projet de composition global consistant à caviarder systématiquement d'autres sources concernant Jésus; un accent marqué sur la pratique religieuse de la divination qui apparaît tout au long de l'Évangile sous de multiples formes; et finalement, la coordination explicite de la prophétie judéenne avec des points saillants de l'histoire de Jésus. Par l'entremise de ces tactiques, l'auteur argumente non seulement que Jésus de Nazareth était en effet le messie prophétisé, mais que la fin même des anciens textes israélites et judéens était d'annoncer *le* messie. D'ailleurs, l'auteur avait en sa possession d'autres témoignages biographiques sur Jésus ainsi que les dires qui lui ont été attribués, notamment l'Évangile selon Marc et la Source Q. Cependant, c'est en transformant et en caviardant ces sources que l'auteur met de l'avant *sa* supériorité à toute autre entité faisant autorité sur l'histoire de Jésus.

Nous tentons de reconstituer l'épistémologie et les fins distinctes de l'auteur en examinant de façon critique sa censure du contenu prophétique hérité de ses sources et son insertion de nouveaux éléments divinatoires dans le récit de Marc. Cette thèse s'ouvre donc avec une introduction globale à la divination grecque et romaine en ce qui trait du « messianisme » au cours des deux premiers siècles de l'ère commune, avant de faire un survol de la recherche actuelle sur l'Évangile selon Matthieu. Ensuite, nous examinons la manière dont l'auteur, se servant de Jésus comme mandataire, constitue son autorité en tant que grand exégète et critique textuel d'« écrits

judéens ». Trois scènes de l'Évangile dressent un portait vraisemblable de l'avis implicite de l'auteur qu'une vraie connaissance du statut et des enseignements de Jésus ne puisse passer que par des interprètes inexperts ou non conventionnels. Ce principe se laisse entrevoir par les personnages du récit, mais se veut d'une application plus large afin d'encourager le lectorat à discerner par lui-même la « véritable » expertise selon son propre contexte. Par la suite, nous explorons plus en profondeur la manière dont la mobilisation de Matthieu d'autres formes de divination révèle sa compréhension des êtres dits non évidents comme source de toute connaissance. Enfin, nous étudions la façon dont l'auteur réduit le champ des personnes capables d'une interprétation « réussie » par l'intégration dans son récit de plusieurs exemples d'échecs divinatoires qui vont de pair avec les statuts ethnique et professionnel. Somme toute, ces dimensions de l'Évangile évoquent un auteur qui, loin de servir d'un simple scribe pour une communauté cloîtrée de croyants en Christ, a composé un texte dans la promotion de ses propres intérêts et ambitions au sein du monde intellectuel compétitif de l'Empire romain.

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I dedicate this dissertation to my mother, Rev. Janet Nield, for her unending, unwavering support of my dreams.

Authors Declaration

I declare that this thesis is the result of original scholarship, and that I am the sole author.

Esther Guillén
September 2024

1 Chapter 1: Setting the Stage

The author of the Gospel of Matthew constructs his own authority as an interpreter of diverse texts about Jesus through a coordinated literary strategy that seeks to usurp the established authority of figures whom he presents (and presumably others viewed) as "traditional" Jewish or Judean religious experts. Through his redaction of other gospel or sayings sources, his coordination of multiple forms of divination, and his Christological explication of "biblical" prophecy, this author—hereafter referred to as Matthew—presents his arguments that Jesus of Nazareth was the messiah prophesied in these writings. Establishing Jesus's status as the messiah constructs the author as not just an but *the* expert in such matters, while the acts of redaction, reinterpretation, and expansion of his sources amount to an implicit argument of need for the very text he composes. Matthew already had in his possession a perfectly serviceable biography of Jesus, the Gospel of Mark, but by his reworking of this text Matthew positions himself as the superior biographer. One of his most persistent interventions into this source concerns, or amounts to a form of, divination. This dissertation focusses on Matthew's interest in divination: his introduction of divinatory elements into pericopes where in *Mark* they are lacking, as well as his alignment of narrative details in Jesus's life with a curated selection of ancient prophecy. I argue that the author is concerned foremost to claim interpretive authority over the latter texts in the service of his particular Christ hermeneutic, but that he also corroborates his interpretations through the assorted dreams, signs, and wonders that recur throughout the text. The result is a narrative world in which multiple forms of divination, each with its own epistemological domain, confirm Matthew's presentation of Christ and his significance on a global scale.

In addition to the Gospel of Mark, Matthew's other textual sources also play an important role in this discussion. The author used Q, the Sayings Source, alongside Mark, to compose his biography of Jesus, and redacted this source with the same observable goals as he did Mark.[1] That the same strategy holds across both sources is the basis for my claim that Matthew's interests and aims can be discerned through careful study of his redactions: if the elements I observe in *Matthew* were found only in material only from one source or the other, it would be possible that what I present as his changes were merely inherited from an unknown recension of that text. This liability is especially pertinent to Q, the only evidence for which is already filtered through Matthean and Lukan redactions to an independent collection of Jesus sayings. Hence, if found only in Q, one might plausibly surmise that an emphasis on divination was inherent in Q before Matthew incorporated this material into his own composition. However, because the same strategies and redactional goals are observed across both *Mark* and Q, I argue that these are distinctly and revealingly Matthew's own.

Matthew's third identifiable textual "source" is the compilation of sacred "Judean writings" whose authority as divinely issued and oracular he affirms.[2] Matthew uses these texts differently than how he uses *Mark* or Q. Whereas in his Jesus sources Matthew redacts freely and creatively, where the Judean writings are concerned, his expertise is wrought along the lines of textual criticism and translation accuracy. This concern is best illustrated by his insistence upon verbatim prophetic fulfilment, as I will discuss below. In addition, Matthew mines these texts primarily for eschatological knowledge whose decipherment amounted itself to a highly skilled form of divination. Whether the author was further interested in Judean writings for their

[1] See section 1.1.3 "Structure and Sources" for a discussion of Matthew's use of *Mark* and Q, and my position on the two-document hypothesis.
[2] See Section 1.5 "A Note on Language" for a discussion on identifying this source as "Judean writings."

historiographical value or as a matter of law cannot be known, but his interest in them as sources of relevant prophecy is clear. Matthew presents these texts as containing information about God's imminent eschatological plans, including the messianic role of Jesus Christ therein. Thus, his selection and coordination of prophecy with the circumstances and events of Jesus's life amount to "proof" that a messiah was foretold in the ancient writings, and that Jesus is this figure.

Many scholars of *Matthew* propose still another fourth source, which they identify as the "special M" source, or just "previous oral tradition," to account for the remainder of material that bears no relationship to the other three but is seemingly unique to this gospel. While I will address Matthew's sources more fully below, I provisionally suggest that any content that cannot be attributed to an extant source—or at least a reasonably confident reconstruction of one, in the case of Q—should be considered Matthew's own contribution, free of ties to "oral tradition." Philological studies have sought to identify specifically "Matthean" language conventions in order to delineate "oral tradition" from authorial novelty. Without diminishing certain contributions of such work, the impulse to attribute the text as a whole to earlier sources, whether written or oral, stems equally from a desire to recover reliable tradition and from an anxiety about a gospel author's capacity for agency and invention. I argue that irrespective of whether Matthew composed, rewrote, or reworked the material found in his biography of Jesus, the text as a whole bears evidence of his creativity and individual goals. While we cannot reliably access any "previous oral tradition," when read in the ways I suggest, the text is a trove of information about what he sets out to accomplish, and we should appreciate it as such.

As stated above, this dissertation is primarily concerned with the divinatory elements of Matthew's gospel, and how he showcases his own authority through multiple diverse engagements with this widespread religious practice. Communication with gods or other non-

obvious beings forms the basis for Matthew's own divinatory activities and those of his characters alike. Through these actions, Matthew claims special association with the Judean god (God) and, on account of that association, privileged insight into the texts he inspired. At the root of this dissertation is the question of why Matthew would rewrite another gospel in these particular terms. The solution I propose is that, by reframing Mark's narrative in fulfilment of prophecy, and including the sayings of Jesus found in Q, Matthew tells his readers that he found in *Mark* and Q texts that accorded with his interests, and that Mark's narrative chronology, at least, had value. His transformation of his sources, however, works to make a different, and much bolder, claim of expertise. I argue that implicit in his use and redaction of the texts are two suppositions: that Matthew through the authors of his sources knew *something* about the life of Jesus, and that he knew *more,* and he was, moreover, the most able and correct individual to share this knowledge with his potential audience.

1.1 Introduction to the Gospel of Matthew

Studies of the Gospel of Matthew are as multitudinous as wasps in summer. Because of space constraints, I have chosen, rather than conducting a preliminary review of key and current scholarship, to engage this literature throughout my dissertation where it is most relevant. However, some topics must be considered first, such as the date of the gospel, the sources used by the author of the gospel, and the composition methods the author employed. In what follows, I review the most influential positions on these matters while situating my own.

1.1.1 Date

Matthew was composed some time before the middle of the second century of the common era, when we find direct quotations, identified as such, from the gospel in Irenaeus (*Adv. Haer.* 3.11.8); a more precise date is difficult to determine. Some scholars have proposed

dates as early as the decades prior to the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple in 70 CE, which year serves for most scholars as a *terminus a quo* for the canonical gospels. On the other end of the spectrum, albeit a minority position, scholars such as Markus Vinzent have proposed that gospel composition occurred at a much later date, in the middle decades of the second century.[3] Another minority places the Gospels even earlier than the First Revolt or Judean War that led to the Temple's destruction. Craig Evans argues that all three Synoptic Gospels were written prior to its outset, a dating scheme based on an analysis of *Mark* that places composition in the mid-40s CE,[4] and then allows "sufficient time" for that text to circulate before it can be used as a source for *Matthew.* A foundational premise of his early scheme is that the Synoptics "[appear] to presuppose the continuing function of the Temple."[5] Ulrich Luz disagrees, giving the *terminus a quo* as the destruction of Jerusalem in 74CE, arguing that the gospel shows evidence of the temple's destruction, and for the *terminus ad quem* he looks to textual evidence of the use of *Matthew*.[6] Luz sees strong evidence that the *Didache,* a text that scholars typically date to the first decade of the first century CE, "originated in a church that was influenced by Matthew," although the date of this text, too, is insecure.[7] Luz argues that Ignatius, who wrote his letters in the early second century, was "familiar" with *Matthew*, on the basis of "passages that presuppose Matthean redaction" and apparent "points of contact" between *Matthew* and Polycarp's letter to

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[3] Markus Vinzent, *Marcion and the Dating of the Synoptic Gospels*, StPatr 2 (Leuven: Peeters, 2014).
[4] James G Crossley, *The Date of Mark's Gospel: Insight from the Law in Earliest Christianity*, JSNTSup 266 (London: T&T Clark, 2004).
[5] Craig A Evans, *Matthew*, CBC (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 4.
[6] Davies and Allison agree. They argue that 22:7 (The king was enraged. He sent his troops, destroyed the murderers, and burned their city.) is a direct reference to the events of 70CE, and conclude that while the verse does not "demand a date after A.D. 70, it does strongly imply one." W. D Davies and Dale C. Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on The Gospel According to Saint Matthew* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1988), 1:132.
[7] Ulrich Luz, *Matthew 1-7*, trans. James E. Crouch, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2005), 58. Bart Ehrman proposes the first decade of the second century CE as the date of compilation of the Didache, but that "various sources" used in its composition may date much earlier. Ehrman's dates rely on the lack of evidence of "internal church structures" in the text, and argues that such structures would have been in place any later in the second century. Bart D Ehrman, "Introduction to Didache," in *The Apostolic Fathers, Volume I* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003), 411.

the Philippians, the *Epistle of Barnabas*, and *1 Clement*, all of which are also typically dated to the early to middle of the second century CE.[8] Hence he argues that *Matthew* was "known in Rome before 100" and concludes that the text was composed very soon after 80 CE, allowing for as noted above, "sufficient" time for *Mark* to circulate after its composition immediately following the fall of Jerusalen, and Matthew to compose his version of the narrative.[9] John P. Meier provides many of the same arguments as Luz, and agrees that the *terminus a quo* can be no earlier than 70 CE. He is, however, less firm in his terminal date, suggesting only that Ignatius's use of *Matthew* requires that the gospel was composed "before the early years of the second century."[10] Markus Vinzent's argument for a much later date rests on the possible relationship between Marcion's *Evangelion* and the Synoptics, which he views to have been written in response to Marcion's composition. In this model, the authors of the canonical gospels were compelled to compose their own accounts as a counteractive measure to Marcion's narrative presentation.[11]

I find Luz and Meier's arguments more persuasive than Evans for a number of reasons, but most particularly because Evans's dating scheme requires the gospels to be written before the destruction of the temple. However, I am unconvinced that the passages identified in Ignatius are direct references to *Matthew*, rather than simply reflections of shared themes in early Christian thought. I locate the *terminus ad quem* no earlier than the middle of the second century, on account of Vinzent's intriguing arguments against dates earlier than this period. This is because of lack of evidence, rather than any firm statement on the late composition of the text. At the

[8] For the date of Ignatius's letters, see Bart D Ehrman, "Introduction to Ignatius," in *The Apostolic Fathers, Volume I* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003), 203; Luz, *Matthew 1-7*, 58.
[9] Luz, *Matthew*, 1:59.
[10] John P Meier, "Matthew, Gospel Of," *ABD* 4:624.
[11] Vinzent, *Marcion and the Dating of the Synoptic Gospels*.

same time, the question I am here exploring does not really require a particular date of composition; the authorial and literary dynamics I interrogate would make sense at any point in Roman intellectual history from the mid-first century onward. Taking into account that the gospel authors show awareness of the temple's destruction, I propose a date of composition anywhere between 74 and 150CE. I am unconvinced that anything other than *termini a quo* and *ad quem* are possible for the canonical gospels, and so remain agnostic on this subject outside of the parameters I have described here.

1.1.2 Composition

The author's impetus for composition is a dominant theme of scholarship in Matthean studies. Running throughout these discussions is the idea that the text is a product, and therefore reflects the values, of a "Christian community." That the gospel was a community output is a common assumption in the study of early Christianity.[12] Stendhal writes that the "conception of individual authorship … is felt to be an oversimplified approach to the gospels."[13] Stendhal's proposition is not to fully deny the possibility of individual authorship, but rather to present *Matthew* as the product of a catechical "school" that used Matthew the author as its spokesperson. Kilpatrick imagines the gospels as primarily liturgical documents, and argues that

[12] Davies and Allison assume the existence of a "community" and appear to do so without an awareness of a need for justification. Their assumption is clear from the outset of the introduction, where in a defense of the historical-critical method they adopt for their commentary, they write "the text of Matthew makes the indisputable assumption that behind it *and the community within which and to which its author wrote*, stands the life, death, and resurrection of an actual person, Jesus of Nazareth." Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 1:4. (emphasis added) Davies and Allison here *assume* that the gospel was written in and for a community. Stanely Stowers attributes this thinking to the influence of German Romanticism on the interpretation of the gospels, which ascribed "original pure primitive roots" to the composition of biblical literature in general. "The more authentic and *Geist*-filled literature came not from the rational manufacture of authors, but grew organically from peoples, cultures, and communities." As such, the NT texts *must* be a product of communities, to avoid association with the "decadence of literature from Greco-Roman times." Stanley Stowers, "The Concept of 'Community' and the History of Early Christianity," *MTSR.* 23.3–4 (2011): 239. This argument is taken up and continued by Robyn Walsh in her discussion of intellectual and textual communities. Robyn Faith Walsh, *The Origins of Early Christian Literature: Contextualizing the New Testament within Greco-Roman Literary Culture* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2020).

[13] Krister Stendahl, *The School of St. Matthew and Its Use of the Old Testament*, 2nd ed. (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1968), 11.

when *Matthew* was composed *Mark* had been in use as a liturgical text for some years, as had Q and M.[14] As Stendhal writes in his summary of Kilpatrick, the narrative portions of *Matthew* that are unique to this gospel were "first put into writing by the evangelist himself."[15] Understanding this wording is key to understanding the community production model espoused by Kilpatrick, Stendhal, and, to a somewhat lesser extent, Luz. In this model the "evangelist" does not compose, he "puts into writing." The distinction between these two concepts is the distinction between an author, and a spokesperson. In the community production model Matthew does not compose his narrative of Jesus using his free creative power, he records existing—and therefore possibly historical—stories told by "Christians" in a "church" setting. Leaving aside the obvious anachronisms, we can see that this model the literary material found in the Gospels as we know them is presumed to have a life prior to and independent of the authors who eventually put them to the page. Such thinking is rooted in theological concerns and interest in the historical Jesus; it proceeds from the assumption that the stories are in *some* way rooted in historical truth. More pertinent to this present study, the community model removes most, if not all, authorial responsibility for the Gospels from their authors.[16] Kilpatrick tempers the position only slightly for *Matthew:* "While we may not say that the gospel was created by a community, yet it was created in a community and called forth to meet the needs of a community."[17] While Kilpatrick

[14] G. D Kilpatrick, *The Origins of The Gospel According to St. Matthew* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1946), 59–100. "M" is used most often to denote all material unique to Matthew, though here Kilpatrick refers only to the discourse material, and not the narrative portions.
[15] Stendahl, *The School of St. Matthew*, 20.
[16] Davies and Allison provide an example of the community production model in their retrospective on *Matthew* at the end of their commentary. In a section on Matthew's theology, they write that Matthew sought to supress his own theology in favour of a "traditional faith." They present Matthew as a storyteller, not and author, and describe the Gospel as a retelling of "his community's story to which he added commentary." Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 3:705.
[17] Kilpatrick, *The Origins of The Gospel According to St. Matthew*, 2.

grants the author *some* responsibility for composition—after all, *someone* in the Matthean community did this work—he still places the onus of its *creation* on the community.

Stanley Stowers writes that "this is the idea of community as a deep social and mental coherence, a commonality in mind and practice."[18] Stowers is not directly responding to Kilpatrick, Stendhal, and Luz, but to the general trend in studies of early Christianity to think of the Gospels as reproducing the theology of a so-called community, and as repositories for "residues of oral speech such as parables, stories, and testimonies" from that community.[19] Stowers identifies two ways this thinking manifests in studies of the canonical gospels. The first approach is to conceive of the author as the voice of their community. Here we have, instead of a mouthpiece, a *writing* piece. This is most in keeping with Stendhal's presentation of what he calls the "school of St. Matthew" where the author "puts into writing" preexisting, assumedly oral, material about Jesus. The second approach gives more creative freedom to the author, in that they are a *composer* of stories about Jesus, but in this case the stories, "in almost every detail," are composed to address specific needs and issues of the community they write for.[20] This is most in keeping with the presented views of Kilpatrick, in his model of liturgical

[18] Stowers, "Community," 238. Stowers pins the "theological or ideological origins of the totalizing role of community in the Christian imagination about early Christianity" directly on Paul and his letters, and argues that Paul brought forth the imagining of community by telling his followers that they *already were a community.* To create coherence, Paul prioritized their ontological status of being the unified body of Christ, which then supersedes any ethnic, gender, or social identity or status that may create disunity. (242) Arnal takes Stowers' theory a step further and argues that the second-century gospel authors (such as the author of *Luke-Acts*, and Vinzent argues, *Matthew*) laid claim to earlier characters and events, such as Paul, to create a continuous community. William Arnal, "The Collection and Synthesis of "Tradition" and the Second-Century Invention of Christianity," *MTSR* 23 (2011): 193-215. This theory will be developed in my later discussion of the possible relationship between the writings of Justin Martyr and *Matthew*, and how Justin constructed a continuous tradition not just from Paul to the second century, but reaching further back into Israelite writings and societies.
[19] Stowers, "Community," 240.
[20] Stowers, "Community," 240–41.

documents, and Luz, in his conception of *Matthew* as a text written for the particular needs of a specific Jewish-Christian community.[21]

Scholars often emphasize the "Jewish" nature of this gospel, a mode of thinking that is linked to the idea that the author Matthew was himself Jewish. This thinking ultimately has its roots in the fragments of Papias preserved in Eusebius's *Church History*. According to Eusebius, Papias tells us that a man he calls Matthew wrote, in Hebrew, a "gospel" or a collection of oracles that Matthew interpreted. Irenaeus tells us also that "Matthew published among the Hebrews a gospel written in their own language."[22] In Eusebius the Matthew named was a disciple of Jesus, who "preached to the Hebrews" and then later wrote a record of Jesus's life, with the addition of certain Hebrew prophecies.[23] The difficulty with using Papias's testimony to date or identify our *Matthew* is that he describes a text written by a contemporary of Jesus, in Hebrew. As Davies and Allison note, it is unlikely that a Semitic eyewitness would have used a later, Greek, non-eyewitness account (*Mark*) as his main source for his composition.[24] While it is not impossible that these traditions preserve some truth, we are limited in our study to only what can be discerned from the extant text, which was originally written in Greek, not Hebrew.[25]

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[21] I have addressed here only the concept that texts were products of communities, that they came out of them, and not the possibility that texts can *create* communities around them. Maren Niehoff asks this question in her work on the *Timaeus*, exploring whether the text functioned in group identity definition. Maren R. Niehoff, "Did the Timaeus Create a Textual Community?," *GRBS.* 47 (2007): 161–91. Niehoff found that the *Timaeus* became a "focus of identity" for some Greek philosophers, who saw the text as a "significant marker of their pagan Greek identity vis-à-vis Christianity." (162) Analogous to the eleventh century dissenters Stock studied in his work, Niehoff found that particular texts, in this case Plato's *Timaeus*, were used to create in-group boundaries in relation to a (real or imagined) out-group or opposition force. William Arnal explores an analogous phenomena surrounding the Coptic Gospel of Thomas. William Arnal, "How the Gospel of Thomas Works," in *Scribal Practices and Social Structures Among Jesus Adherents: Essays in Honour of John S. Kloppenborg*, ed. William Arnal et al. (Leuven: Peeters, 2016), 261–80.

[22] Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* 3.3.1, trans. Robert M Grant, *Irenaeus of Lyon* (London: Routledge, 1997).

[23] Other of the church fathers supported this view, but they are "usually assumed to have relied upon his (Papias) testimony, so there evidence is thought to be of no independent worth." Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 1:8–9.

[24] Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 1:9.

[25] Luz, *Matthew 1-7*, 22; Walter T Wilson, *The Gospel of Matthew 1-13*, *ECC* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2022), 1.

While the testimony from Papias is no longer taken as evidence of *Matthew*'s date of composition, the antiquity of the testimony and the value placed on it by Irenaeus, Eusebius, and subsequent historians of Christianity has allowed the testimony to continue to pervade thinking about *Matthew*. Papias's testimony, and the weight given to the Judean writings in *Matthew*, has coloured the way the author of the gospel is presented in later studies.[26] In their survey of scholarship on *Matthew* in the hundred years leading to 1982, Davies and Allison show that the prevalent theory has been that *Matthew* was composed by a "Jewish Christian" and that the author was a "Gentile Christian" is proposed in only a small number of studies, all of which were published after 1947, and most after 1972.[27] Meier identifies this group as a "vocal minority of exegetes" and writes that they have effectively argued that the "final redactor of the gospel was a gentile."[28] A strong argument in favour of this position is the error Matthew makes in the entry into Jerusalem, where he includes the second animal found in the source text of the prophecy, but that Mark as omitted. Matthew appears to miss the Hebraic parallelism present in Zech 9:9, and instead understood the text to be referring to two distinct animals. It is hard to support a view that a well-educated Jew, capable of producing the gospel, would have been ignorant of Hebraic

[26] Kenneth Clark also notes that "features such as the genealogy, the blocks of teaching material … the eschatological passages, the Jewish particularism, semitic words and idioms" all contribute to the supposition the author was a "converted Jew." Kenneth W Clark, "The Gentile Bias in Matthew," *JBL.* 66.2 (1947): 165. Clark reminds the reader that most of these features can be found in other Gospel accounts, for example, the genealogy in *Luke*, and the eschatological hope present in Mark. Clark concludes, as do I, that the argument for Jewish authorship rests much more on tradition than on critical exegesis of *Matthew*.

[27] Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 1:10–11.

[28] Meier, "Matthew, Gospel Of," 625. Ernest L. Abel argues that we should be thinking of not one, but two, individuals working on *Matthew* independently, who he identifies as Matthew(1) and Matthew(2). Abel sees strong evidence that Matthew(1)'s gospel was composed by a Jewish Christian, and the later redactor, Matthew(2), who produced the form we now know as *Matthew*, was a gentile Christian. While the presence of many hands at work in the totality of the history of *Matthew* is viable, Abel's proposition relies on a non-intersectional conception of the authors religious identity, and a firm "parting of the ways" between Judaism and Christianity. Neither of these are, in my view, supportable by the evidence. Ernest L Abel, "Who Wrote Matthew?," *NTS.* 17 (1971): 138–52.

poetic norms. Therefore, Meier concludes that the author of *Matthew*, while still a well-educated, intelligent person, cannot be a Jew.[29]

The Jewish nature of the text strongly informs scholars' thinking of why Matthew would compose this text. Davies and Allison note the importance of the Judaic reforms necessitated by the destruction of the temple at the end of the Judean War.[30] As Senior summarizes, Davies asserts the "importance of the Pharisaic reform as an immediate and direct context for Matthew's gospel."[31] Albright and Mann suggest a similar timeframe but propose the coming death of those persons who knew Jesus personally as the impetus for composition. They hold that the "infant Christian community" desired a "permanent record" of those events that would soon pass out from living memory.[32] Without discounting the excellent scholarship I have reviewed here, I conclude that we cannot make any confident statements about the author's ethnicity. However, as in the question of date composition, remaining agnostic in the question of Matthew's Jewish-ness does not hamper this current project, as the dynamics I examine were at play within the wider Roman world. I am, though, firm in my rejection of the community model of composition, for the reasons enumerated above.

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[29] Meier, "Matthew, Gospel Of," 626; John P Meier, *Law and History in Matthew's Gospel: A Redactional Study of Mt. 5:17-48*, AB 71 (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1976), 14–15. In his 1976 study Meier uses "redactor" and "author" interchangeably. The Matthean redactions to the entry into Jerusalem and the Passion narratives will be treated extensively in my chapter on divination and dreams.

[30] The author of *Matthew* "appears to have knowledge of rabbinic Judaism as it sought to emerge like a phoenix from the ashes of 70, that is, knowledge of the critical period of Jewish reconstruction and reconsolidation which, in the rabbinic texts, is pre-eminently associated with the so-called council of Jamnia." Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 1:133–34. A series of gatherings around 100CE, of which there are no contemporary sources, only much later accounts, at Yavneh (Jamnia) is reported to have standardized the Masoretic text and the contents of the writings. According to twentieth century scholars, this was necessitated by the destruction of the Temple, which led to a more book- and study-focused, rather than Temple- and sacrifice-focused, religious experience for first century Jews. Jack P Lewis, "Jamnia (Jabneh), Council Of," *ABD* 3:634–37.

[31] Donald Senior, "Directions in Matthean Studies," in *The Gospel of Matthew in Current Study*, ed. David E. Aune (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 8.

[32] W.F. Albright and C.S. Mann, *Matthew*, AB (New York: Doubleday, 1971), XXII.

1.1.3 Structure and Sources

Luz identifies three possible models of literary structure in *Matthew:* the five books model, the centre model, and the Markan structural model. However, he cautions that any such discovery of a structure is not neutral, but rather "already contains assumptions for a possible understanding" of the gospel.[33] For example, the five books model, which separates the text into five discourse sections bracketed by an introduction (chapters 1-2) and a conclusion (chapters 26-28) allows for a closer ideological relationship between *Matthew* and the Torah, emphasising the possible associations of Jesus with Moses. Conversely, the Markan structural model emphasizes the source-reliant relationship of *Matthew* on *Mark*, inclining one to think of *Matthew* as simply an extension of the Markan narrative, rather than an independent, creatively composed text. Schnackenburg favours a fourfold structure of the gospel, a model Luz does not include in his list of possibilities, that identifies an introduction that concludes after the Temptation, a section of public proclamation, concluding at 16:20 with Peter's "confession" at Caesarea Philippi, a section comprised of the journey to Jerusalem and the events there, and a conclusion containing the Passion and resurrection.[34]

Evans and Davies and Allison lean towards the Markan structural model, which leads to the assumptions cautioned above. Evans sees Matthew's structure as an "expansion and adaptation" of *Mark*.[35] *Mark* was Matthew's main source for the narrative portions of his account of Jesus's life. It is likely that Matthew thought Mark's version was somehow lacking and a desire to fill in the blanks, as he discerned them, was at least part of the former author's impetus. Matthew may have, as Stanton speculates, intended to fully supplant Mark's account with his

[33] Luz, *Matthew*, 1:2–3.
[34] Rudolf Schnackenburg, *The Gospel of Matthew*, trans. Robert R Barr (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 2.
[35] Evans, *Matthew*, 9. Davies and Allison argue for a polyvalent structural conception that includes chiastic, Markan, and Pentateuchal structures. Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 1:72, 59.

own.[36] Davies and Allison, however, suggest that Matthew's intention was to augment Mark's story with added commentary.[37] Matthew's "intent was not to innovate so much as to retell" with supplementary additions.[38] Matthew had a version of the Jesus biography available to him, and it is reasonable to assume he thought of Mark's biography as at least somewhat serviceable, as it forms the chronological framework for Matthew's version. Matthew did, however, choose to write his own version of the Jesus narrative, and I find more convincing the arguments that his intention was to supplant *Mark* rather than comment upon his source text.[39] While I do not anachronistically require Matthew to cite his sources, I would note that he actually does something quite like that when he uses quotations from the Judean writings, texts to which he attributes authoritative and prophetic value. For instance, he tells his readers and auditors when he is quoting from the writings, and provides evidence of their authority by identifying them as prophecies, even occasionally gives the name of the source book, as in Matt 3:3. If he had thought of *Mark* in the same way, I think it likely he would have provided some indication of the authoritative status he ascribed this text, even a slight gesture towards his earlier source. There is no evidence of such recognition in *Matthew*. Matthew changes Mark's wording and inserts new events into the narrative without any indication of source use. This alone, in light of his repeated

[36] Matthew's "incorporation of most of Mark's gospel is surely an indication that he intended that his gospel should replace Mark's, and that it should become *the* gospel for Christians of his day." Graham N Stanton, "The Fourfold Gospel," *NTS* 43 (1997): 341.
[37] Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 3:705.
[38] Senior, "Directions in Matthean Studies," 13.
[39] Matthew Larsen argues that at the time Matthew wrote his gospel, users of *Mark*, including Matthew, thought of that text as a collection of notes that was "put down in writing not so much to become literature as to be memoranda." Matthew D.C. Larsen, *Gospels before the Book* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), 11. This type of text, known as *hypomnemata* in Greek, was not a "book" or "literature" but rather a memory aid, a sort of list designed to remind the user of earlier events or historical persons, "to protect against memory loss." (ibid.) Larsen extends this line of thought, asserting that Matthew thought *Mark* as a thing "designed to be changed" (*Gospels*, 100) and as such Matthew sought not to *rewrite*, but to *continue* that text. The two are not "separate books made by different human authors" but rather one book, and the memoranda used to write it. (*Gospels*, 105) Larsen's assertion that Matthew intended to clarify and rework *Mark* is in keeping with my own understanding of his authorial process, but I remain unconvinced that this supposition requires *Mark* to be an "unfinished draft" (*Gospels*, 115), a list of memories, or a sort of outline of a text, rather than simply a more esoteric, opaque, version of the same hero story.

reference to the Judean writings, speaks to his intention to supplant *Mark*. Matthew attributed *Mark* with some authoritative value, reflected in Matthew's use of Mark's chronology and narrative framework, but his lack of direct reference to the earlier text minimizes the possibility that he intended the two versions to be read synoptically, or that *Matthew* was a commentary on *Mark*. The general consensus of scholarship is that, in addition to *Mark*, Matthew used Q, the hypothesized "sayings source" as his source for much of the text known as the double tradition between *Matthew* and *Luke*.[40] In opposition are Goulder, Goodacre, and Albright and Mann. Goulder held that *Matthew* was dependent on *Mark*, but that the remainder of the gospel was a product of Matthew's own creativity, composed to serve the religious needs of his community.[41] Goodacre favours the Farrer hypothesis, which supports the priority of *Mark*, but rejects the independence of *Matthew* and *Luke* in favour of Luke's dependence on Matthew's text. Albright and Mann, in their commentary on *Matthew*, work with a theory of oral tradition, and reject all theories of literary dependence. In their words "it is only a failure to take tradition itself seriously that has driven many to assume the existence of almost a multitude of copies of written gospels on which the evangelists could exercise scissors and paste."[42] While all the theories that reject Q as the basis for *Matthew* and *Luke's* "double tradition" overlap posit authorial creativity in ways

[40] For the critical text of Q, and a comprehensive discussion of the source and redaction criticism involved in the Q project, see John S Kloppenborg, *Q Parallels: Synopsis Critical Notes and Concordance* (Sonoma, California: Polebridge Press, 1988); John S. Kloppenborg, *The Formation of Q: Trajectories in Ancient Wisdom Collections* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987); John S Kloppenborg, *Q, The Earliest Gospel: An Introduction to the Original Stories and Sayings of Jesus* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2008). The argument that Matthew used Q is supported by Luz, Wilson, Senior, Davies and Allison, and Evans. Luz, *Matthew*, 1:18; Wilson, *Matthew*, 1:3; Senior, "Directions in Matthean Studies"; Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 1:116; Evans, *Matthew*, 10.
[41] Michael D. Goulder, *Midrash and Lection in Matthew* (London: SPCK, 1974).
[42] Albright and Mann, *Matthew*, XLVIII.

that are apropos of my arguments about *Matthew*, I ultimately find the two-source hypothesis more persuasive than other explanations for the extra-Markan material that those gospels share.[43]

1.2 Divination

What one knows, and how one knows it, is at the root of the type of intellectual authority the author of *Matthew* sought to construct for himself. Matthew worked in an environment of competing authority, visible in its most basic form in his redaction of *Mark* and Q, and one of his tools for distinguishing himself from other would-be authorities was demonstrating expertise in the recognition and interpretation of information from a divine source. *Matthew* assures his reader, through his act of writing, that he was the preeminent holder and interpreter of knowledge about Jesus's life, mission, and status as the messiah. Immediately following the genealogy that opens his gospel, Matthew uses divinely sourced dreams and textual prophecies to guide and authorize the narrative to follow. Studies of *Matthew* have extensively explored how the author joins biblical prophecy with the events of Jesus's life as "fulfilment citations," a taxonomy specific to New Testament and early Christian literature. I seek to redescribe them instead as instances of literary divination, which allows us to see the author's tactics as of a piece with broader interpretive strategies applied not just to biblical literature, but also to other ancient texts understood to be inspired or oracular. Further, I explore other supernaturally communicative events within a framework of divination.[44] I define divination in Matthew's gospel as a method

[43] For an excellent argument in favour of the two-document hypothesis directly pertaining to Matthean scholarship see John P Meier, "John the Baptist in Matthew's Gospel," *JBL* 99 (1980): 386, note 13; Meier, *Law and History in Matthew's Gospel*, 2–6.

[44] I am not the first to describe supernaturally communicative events in Matthew's gospel as divinations. Kyung S. Baek does the same, but within the framework of ANE divinatory practices, using Qumran *pesharim* as his rubric of comparison. Baek describes Matthew within the context of late Second Temple scribal practices, and uses this and ANE divinatory practices to describe a Matthean "early church community." Kyung S. Baek, "Prophecy and Divination in the Gospel of Matthew: The Use of Dream-Visions and Fulfillment Quotations," in *Reading the Bible*

of unidirectional communication between a character or the author / narrator and a supernatural being, most often identified as the god of the Judeans. I identify three categories of divinatory activities in *Matthew*: literary divination, the spontaneous interpretation signs and wonders, and prophetic statements by characters within the narrative. Each kind of divination is performed by specific characters or the author / narrator, according to the areas of authority ascribed to them by the author.

Divinatory practices were essential to human–divine communication in the ancient Mediterranean world, including among Judeans. Establishing what divination *is*, in its most distilled form, is complicated both by the difficulties of defining a concept so pervasive in cultural understandings, but also by questions of whether emic or etic definitions are most helpful, as is noted by Kim Beerden.[45] At the most basic level, and across cultures, divination was a religious practice that involved identification of signs sent by gods, and the interpretation of such signs. The divinatory practices described in Matthew's biography are contextually situated in their intersectional environment. The author wrote in Greek in a Roman imperial space, using Judean textual history and with references to Judean religious customs, a biography of the life of an itinerant Judean teacher who is presented as the founder of a new religious movement primarily located outside of Judea. The actions of characters and events described in the biography reflect this intersectionality, while maintaining somewhat permutable ethnic and professional delineations, specifically in what types of divination are presented as correct for particular characters or groups of such. For example, we will see that the author preferences spontaneous divination, which Matthew associates with inexpert gentile interpreters, over

in Ancient Traditions and Modern Editions: Studies in Memory of Peter W. Flint, ed. Andrew B. Perrin, Kyung S. Baek, and Daniel K. Falk (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2017), 653–78.

[45] K Beerden, *Worlds Full of Signs: Ancient Greek Divination in Context*, *RGRW* 176 (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 19.

"signs" performed by request, a phenomenon associated with the traditional Judean religious authorities.[46]

While most divinations in Matthew's gospel are performed by either the author / narrator or Jesus, some and no less important ones are performed by other characters, even if their methods may differ from those of the former. Matthew's Jesus prophesies, heals, and exorcizes; only rarely does he perform literary divination. For example, during his arrest Jesus provides a literary divinatory basis for his career, telling his companions not to prevent his seizure, as it was a requirement of scripture (Matt 26:54). Like the author of the gospel, Jesus here divines through knowledge and analysis of the Judean writings. In contrast, many of Matthew's other characters engage in a variety of divinatory practices, such as dream interpretation, astrology, or divination through (super)natural events. The types of divination employed by Matthew's characters, and their successes and failures, are delineated along professional and, often, ethnic lines.[47] Interestingly, the majority of successful non-literary divinations in the gospel are performed by gentiles, while all failures at divination are attributed to Judeans. Professional boundaries also often determine divinatory ability. We see successful divinations performed by untutored lay persons, such as the disciples or the centurion who witnesses Jesus's death, who are contrasted with the textual professionals, such as the scribes and Pharisees.

[46] That God hides knowledge from "the wise" and reveals it to simple persons is present in Q (Luke 10:21 // Matt 11:25). It is only in *Matthew*, however, that this concept reaches its fullest expression, where privileging the "unwise" works in turn to deauthorize "the wise" as I demonstrate below.

[47] Throughout this dissertation I discuss Matthew's ethnic delineation of divinatory abilities. By ethnicity I refer to cultural groupness, rather than genetic, linguistic, geographic, or otherwise. I delineate ethnicity in Matthew's gospel into only two groups: those who are Judean, and those who are not. I follow Louise Joy Lawrence's caution to not equate the literary world with the world of compositional production. Louise J. Lawrence, *An Ethnography of the Gospel of Matthew: A Critical Assessment of the Use of the Honour and Shame Model in New Testament Studies* (Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003). I am not proposing that this model of ethnicity is reflective of first-century Judea or Matthew's compositional context, but that it is created within the literary world of Matthew's gospel.

As stated above, Matthew's gospel displays influence from a variety of cultural contexts, including those of Greece and Rome. His use of divination as a method of communication with the god of the Judeans and, in turn, his use of the communication to bolster his interpretive authority, fits within a growing phenomenon of self-authorized or "freelance" religious expertise that flourished under the Roman Empire, a subset of which consisted of freelance diviners.[48] Many diviners in the Greco-Roman world were associated with local shrines, such as the well-known oracles of Dodona or Delphi, but there were also those unaffiliated with specific cults or cultic sites. David Aune discerns four types of freelance diviners: the technical diviner, the inspired diviner, the magical diviner, and the collector and interpreter of oracles.[49] Aune's scheme is helpful to think with, and however we may call them, there is evidence of each type of freelance divination in Matthew's gospel. I provide a short definition of each type, and then introduce the characters which I argue reflect the characteristics Aune identifies.

Technical diviners were persons who had, or professed to have, the knowledge and skills required to correctly interpret "the ambiguous signs and symbols that were regarded as coded indications of the will of the gods."[50] Signs and symbols could be found in dreams, in the flight of birds, in natural phenomena such as weather patterns, and in the entrails of sacrificed animals. Technical diviners were either employed by the state, attached to specific cults, or were freelance practitioners, offering their skills in exchange for renumeration. I argue in Chapter 4 that Pilate and the magi display characteristics of technical divination as defined by Aune.

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[48] Heidi Wendt, *At the Temple Gates: The Religion of Freelance Experts in the Roman Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016); Sarah Iles Johnston, *Ancient Greek Divination* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2008).
[49] David E. Aune, *Prophecy in Early Christianity and the Ancient Mediterranean World* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), 35.
[50] Aune, *Prophecy*, 53.

Inspired diviners were figures who made prophetic utterances while under the influence of supernatural possession, and are, I argue, in Matthew's gospel associated with spontaneous divinations. These figures, deemed "irrational" or "ecstatic," are often contrasted with the technical diviner, who is identified as "rational" or "sober." Aune writes that inspired diviners were "instruments though which the god speaks" and that following their prophetic utterances, the diviner was often unaware of what they had said.[51] Inspiration or possession was also used as a means of authorization of prophecies and oracles; exhibiting behaviours associated with supernatural possession could legitimate prophetic utterances. In some instances, intermediaries were required to interpret inspired utterances. Plato's *Timaeus* argues that intermediaries are "necessary for judging and interpreting the inspired utterances" of diviners in a "state of frenzy."[52] It is the role of the rational mind to judge the validity and interpret the meaning of things spoken through the irrational or possessed mind. I argue in Chapters 3 and 4 that both Jesus and John the baptizer display elements of inspired and spontaneous divination, as does the Centurion who witnesses Jesus's death.

Collectors and interpreters of oracles, in Aune's scheme, come in two types: the *chrēsmologos*, who collected and recited oracles attributed to an inspired diviner, such as Bakis, the Sibyl, or Orpheus, and the *exēgētai* "who claimed expertise in making ambiguous oracles comprehensible."[53] *Chrēsmologoi* claimed authority by association with an earlier diviner, in that the oracles they spoke were understood to come from a diviner with access to supernatural wisdom. The authority of *exēgētai* was based less on the original oracles they interpreted, and more on demonstrable interpretive skills, which were rooted in special knowledge and technical

[51] Aune, *Prophecy*, 38–39.
[52] Aune, *Prophecy*, 39. *Timaeus* 71e-72b.
[53] Aune, *Prophecy*, 44.

training. In his description of Alexander of Abonuteichos, the second-century author Lucian of Samosata tells us that Alexander's oracles were so incomprehensible—for Lucian, because Alexander issued whatever happened to pop into his mind—that a sub-economy of exegetes (ἐξηγηταὶ) grew up around his shrine.[54] While there are some parallels between the *chrēsmologoi* and Matthew, in that the author was presumably in possession of some collection of Judean prophecies, the model of the paid *exēgētai* is more helpful for thinking about his function in this text. While it is unlikely that Matthew thought of himself in the mode the exegetes with whom Alexander was, according to Lucian, in cahoots, he does present himself as an interpreter of ambiguous prophetic statements whose "true" meanings require "expertise" to be discerned. Involved in his authority is the understanding that he possessed a certain technical interpretive skill that allowed him to see the true meaning of a prophecy, when that meaning had not been gleaned by other, less skilled, interpreters. Aune's collectors and interpreters of oracles are presented as immediate intermediaries, working alongside diviners, or as reciters or oracles taken from collections. I argue that Matthew the author / narrator blends these two types of divinatory practices, the *chrēsmologoi* and the *exēgētai*, in that he possessed a collection of prophecies that were authoritative because of the ancient prophets who uttered them, but Matthew's true authority comes from his technical interpretive skill, that is rooted in the special wisdom he possesses by association with Jesus.

Other categorizations of freelance divination can provide fruitful models for analyzing Matthew's system of authority. Sarah Iles Johnston identifies freelance divination professionals as *manteis*, an umbrella term she uses to capture multiple modes of divination, including the

[54] "καὶ ἦσάν τινες ἐξηγηταὶ ἐπὶ τοῦτο καθήμενοι καὶ μισθοὺς οὐκ ὀλίγους ἐκλέγοντες παρὰ τῶν τοὺς τοιούτους χρησμοὺς λαμβανόντων ἐπὶ τῇ ἐξηγήσει καὶ διαλύσει αὐτῶν." (and there were certain expounders who sat by with that in view and garnered large fees from the recipients of such oracles for explaining and unriddling them.) Lucian, *Alex.* 49 (Harman, LCL).

chrēsmologoi discussed above.[55] Iles Johnston provides a short discussion of how one becomes a *mantis*, and notes that professional divination was often a family affair, which was enhanced by claims of mythic ancestry. These claims are evidenced in the guilds to which many *manteis* belonged, such as the Iamids, as described by Pausanias, and the Telliadae, who claimed ancestry in the line of Tellias, who is known only from a mention in Herodotus.[56] Divinatory guilds were not unique to Greece. Kim Beerden writes that guilds of divinatory professionals are attested in the Neo-Assyrian record as well, where mention of a guild of *bāru*, experts in extispicy (divination using the entrails of sacrificed animals), notes that membership in the guild required "wisdom and learning."[57]

Matthew's text does not explicitly identify the author as a member of a guild, but it does present a collection of oracles that the author interprets in relation to the events of Jesus's life. While some sects of Judaism presented prophecy and oracular speech as a historically closed practice, in the Roman view some revelation was continuous, and some was confined to the past. For example, in the Roman tradition the Sibylline books comprised a "closed" collection of prophecies, but one could visit an augur to determine the potential outcome of an upcoming event. Collections of oracles, such as that maintained by the Roman college of the Priesthood of Fifteen (*quidecimviri sacris faciudis*) were made because the "enigmatic nature of older oracles placed their complete fulfilment somewhat in doubt."[58] The doubt these oracles engendered led to the need for textual records, and in turn, interpreters of those records. As Aune tells us, textual collections of oracles also reflected the "increased respect for revelation in written form"

[55] "The term mantis was frequently used to subsume the other names in antiquity, and that is what I will use most often in this chapter as well, when there is no need to be more specific." Iles Johnston, *Ancient Greek Divination*, 109.
[56] Iles Johnston, *Ancient Greek Divination*, 110.
[57] Beerden, *Worlds Full of Signs*, 68.
[58] Aune, *Prophecy*, 23.

characteristic of the first and second centuries in Rome.[59] Considering Matthew's repeated use of the Judean writings as textual prophecy, I think it likely the author was influenced by this trend, and therefore I find it helpful to think of the author as a collector, compiler, and interpreter of oracles.[60]

1.3 Messianism

And Jacob was the father of Joseph, the husband of Mary, of whom Jesus was born, who is called the Messiah. Matt1:16

Matthew's authority relies on his superior expertise as an interpreter of communications from the Judean god, whether conveyed in textual prophecies, dreams, or natural signs. Throughout this dissertation I argue that Matthew presents his discernment that Jesus was the messiah prophesied in the Judean writings as the source of his interpretive expertise. However, while Matthew may depict Jesus's status and the nature of his role as a foregone conclusion, the contemporary and contextual meaning of "messiah" requires more exploration. As Matthew Novenson explains, as scholars we must reflect on what we mean when we talk about messianism.[61] Novenson argues that the majority of studies of messianism, which purport to be about messiah texts, are not about the texts, but about an abstracted concept "most often called

[59] Written prophecy was also of importance for two oracles of Apollo in the Greek world, at Branchidae and Coropaeos. In addition to the prophet or promantis, descriptions of officials at both sanctuaries also mention a grammateus or secretary, whose function was to write down the official version of the spoken oracle. The grammateus was not an interpreter in the mode of Matthew or the Roman Priesthood of Fifteen, but only an amanuensis. Aune, *Prophecy*, 23–28.

[60] Matthew's exclusive use of the Judean writings as textual prophetic statements, as well as his use of annunciation dreams as will be discussed below, has led Baek to think of the author as within Second Temple scribal culture. "Understanding Matthew as a scribe within this context helps to situate his use of dream-visions and fulfilment quotations as a method of revealing God's divine will." Baek, "Prophecy and Divination in the Gospel of Matthew: The Use of Dream-Visions and Fulfillment Quotations," 654.

[61] Matthew V Novenson, *The Grammar of Messianism: An Ancient Jewish Political Idiom and Its Users* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 4.

the messianic idea."[62] In this history-of-ideas approach, the concept "messianism" appears to be pre-existent, a meme of which the primary text author is aware and which he pulls into his writing.[63] The meme "messianism" is removed from its textually-defined context, and rather than exegeting what each particular author is attempting to express with their use of "messiah" scholars *eisegete*, that is, read *into*, an abstract and pre-defined concept into a particular text. In this thinking each author projects onto the text an idea separate from it, but that now appears present.

R. J. Zwi Werblowsky begins to address the lack of theoretical reflection in studies of messianism by distinguishing between messianism itself, which he understands as a "complex of ideas, doctrines, hopes and expectations," and messianic movements, which are "messianism in action."[64] Novenson's intervention is to explore messianism as a phenomenon of textual discourse, where the texts in question "represent so many creative reappropriations of an archaic scriptural idiom" used to discuss the authors', and their audiences, current concerns.[65] I would argue that, irrespective of whether the meme "messianism" or "messiah" pre-existed Matthew's elaboration of the concept, he constructs it as such: something firm and bounded, with a realness that existed outside of his textual productions. For Matthew, the "messiah" fulfilled a specific eschatological role and was presaged by particular prophecies, which he then is able to connect so as to make an argument that Jesus assumes that role.

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[62] Novenson, *Grammar of Messianism*, 5.
[63] The concept of "memes," first introduced by Richard Dawkins, proposes that ideas "propagate themselves in the meme pool by leaping from brain to brain via a process which, in the broad sense, can be called imitation." Richard Dawkins, *The Selfish Gene*, 4th ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 249. In other words, memes are ideas that take on an independent life of cultural propagation and transference.
[64] R. J. Zwi Werblowsky, "Jewish Messianism in Comparative Perspective," in *Messiah and Christos: Studies in the Jewish Origins of Christianity*, ed. Ithmar Gruenwald, Shaul Shaked, and Gedaliahu G Stroumsa, TSAJ 32 (Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1992), 7.
[65] Novenson, *Grammar of Messianism*, 18.

I distinguish between how various characters within Matthew's narrative legitimate and delegitimate specific messiah figures, and the ends to which he constructs a particular concept of "messiah." The first attributes theological and political assumptions about the "messiah" to others so as to show how they are incorrect or somehow lacking, while the second way privileges the author's own methods—proof-texting and exegesis of the Judean writings—for fixing the meaning and criteria for this concept as well as his application thereof to Jesus. Hence how Matthew deploys the idiom "messiah," namely, to legitimate Jesus and his eschatological significance, is also an occasion to showcase his own command of these texts.

1.3.1 Role and Function of Messiah in *Matthew*

Matthew opens his biography of Jesus with a genealogy of "Jesus the Messiah, the son of David, the son of Abraham." (1:1) This author takes for granted that a person has, or will, appear at some time in history who will be called "messiah" or "Christos." From the opening of his text, we can understand that he wanted his readers to assume the *existence* of the concept of the messiah, and to accept his proof that Jesus of Nazareth was this person. The characteristics and functions of the role of messiah are constrained in his gospel, so that the criteria for identifying the messiah and the fulfilment of this role, are, by definition, precisely as portrayed by Matthew. Three expectations about the messiah are affirmed in Matthew's narrative, as though they were widespread: that he is of Davidic ancestry, that he is a son of God, and that he is a Judean king. Matthew presents these characteristics as basic terms of discussion, but that they were, in fact, widely shared beyond this text is less clear. The alternative is that Matthew is constructing *the* messiah in his own terms while naturalizing, first, the idea that other people (Jews) expected such a figure at all, and second, that all who expected him shared certain points of agreement that then gave way to differences stemming from differential expertise. Matthew is advancing the

terms of the conversation, that naturalize the realness of the thing under construction; he tells his readers characteristics the messiah has, and what his functions are, and by doing so creates the realness of those characteristics and functions. For example, Matthew's genealogy serves to legitimate Jesus as the messiah by constructing a Davidic ancestry for Joseph, but Novenson and others show that Davidic ancestry was not a precondition for status as the messiah.[66] Matthew confers legitimacy onto Jesus by creating for him a Davidic lineage, but at the same time, the author creates the *requirement* for Davidic lineage for the messiah. Matthew constructs the criteria through his argument that Jesus fulfills the criteria.

A counter to the genealogical legitimacy conferred in Matt 1:2-17 is the so-called *Davidssohnfrage* found at Matt 22:41-46. This short pericope, which is dependent on Mark 12:35-37, calls into question Jesus's status as the son of David.[67] Here the requirement that the Messiah be the son of David is attributed to the Pharisees, who when asked whose son the Messiah is, respond "David's" (τοῦ Δαυίδ) (22:41). Jesus presents them then with the riddle of Psalm 110:1: "the Lord said to my Lord, sit at my right hand until I put your enemies under your feet." If this Psalm was composed by David and refers to the messiah, then how can the messiah be the son of David, if David calls him Lord? Novenson understands the *Davidssohnfrage* as evidence of two distinct traditions: a Jesus who was not descended from David, and a Jesus who was "supra-Davidide."[68] The synoptic authors attest the tradition that Jesus was the son of David, but they also make "even more loaded christological claims" such as the "categories "lord" and "son of God"."[69] Wilson writes that this pericope should be understood in conjunction with the

[66] Novenson, *Grammar of Messianism*, 84–85, see esp. n.83.
[67] Matthew makes three such important redactions to Mark's text: the interlocutors, the source of the son of David tradition, and the omission of the criticism of the scribes in Mark 12:37b-40 (//Luke 20:45-47).
[68] Novenson, *Grammar of Messianism*, 86.
[69] Novenson, *Grammar of Messianism*, 86.

Great Commission (Matt 28:18-20), where "authority that transcends that of conventional Davidic messianism" is claimed for Jesus by Matthew.[70] Like Novenson, Wilson understands the *Davidssohnfrage* as part of the tradition of extending Jesus's authority as the messiah beyond earthly concerns of political power and Judean kingship, into the realm of God and the kingdom of the heavens. Jesus *is* the son of David, but he is *not only* the son of David; he is also the Son of God and Lord.

Like Davidic ancestry, the characteristics of Son of God and King of the Judeans that Matthew presents as implicitly messianic were likely mutable, but most definitely would have conferred authority on a Judean figure before Paul or the Gospels.[71] Matthew presents Jesus as the messiah in such a way that reasserts the validity of the three characteristics, that for Matthew, work in concert together. The author's goal is to reinforce Jesus's position, and thereby his own, through his superior abilities as a textual interpreter, and so his identification of the messiah as a Davidic descendent can be placed in the same category as his identification of the prophecies he will later quote. Matthew's ability to parse the Judean writings to correctly identify Jesus as the messiah comes together with his genealogy of Jesus as a sort of self-fulfilling prophecy of its own: we know that the messiah is a descendent of David because Jesus is, and we know Jesus the messiah because he is descendent of David. Ultimately such an argument cannot stand under

[70] Wilson, *Matthew,* 2:236.

[71] The characteristics, or "titles," under consideration here are likely idiomatic uses derived from Judean traditions. As John Collins writes "there were clear biblical precedents for speaking of the messiah as God or son of God" and Matthew, with his evident concern that Jesus should conform, in his thinking at least, with a Judean messianic figure, was surely writing with this in mind. 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: Eerdmans, 2008), 100. Collins and Collins conclude that the idea that a king "was in some sense divine" was present during the Davidic dynasty, which was "shaken" by the Assyrian and then Babylonian conquests of Israel and Judah, at which time future hope for a deliverer took the place of current awareness of the king's divine status. Ibid, 204. They caution, however, that these titles in no way *implicitly* guarantee thought of divine status, and that while this idea is present in Christian and Judean texts from the first century, this presence is inconsistent and dependent on textual context.

scrutiny, of course, but for Matthew's purpose of authorization and legitimation the genealogy serves as another item ticked off on his list of messianic criteria.

While the specific characteristics and lineage of the messiah may not be clearly identified in the Judean writings, Matthew presents the possibility that the messiah was prophesied in the authoritative texts as pre-established. As Matthew seeks to authorise Jesus as this figure, he in turn authorizes himself as the most accurate interpreter of textual prophecy. Matthew's abilities are presented as a contrast to those of "traditional" interpreters of the same writings, in this gospel, scribes, Pharisees, elders of the temple, and the Chief Priests, all of whom fail to recognise that the events of Jesus's birth, life, and death fulfill the messianic prophecies in the writings they venerate. Their interpretive failure, and his interpretive success, are the foundations on which Matthew builds his interpretive authority. Matthew's competitors, the "traditional" interpreters, do come close to understanding, but then ultimately fail to make the final connections between Jesus's actions in the gospel, the prophecies outlined by Matthew, and the prophecies of John the baptizer, all of which show, according to the author, that Jesus is the messiah. That they come close is noteworthy; as will be discussed further below, Matthew creates *worthwhile* opponents, both for Jesus, and himself, so that when they ultimately are bested, the victory is all the more significant.

1.4 Freelance Religious Experts

I have so far discussed *how* Matthew constructs his authority but have not yet addressed *why* he would need to do so. If Matthew were a member of an established religious institution or interpretive tradition, then his authority would be a function of affiliation, such as having a priestly lineage in Judean temple religion, or, possibly, completion of a dissertation and conferral of the title Doctor of Philosophy in the academy. Matthew, however, sought to establish his

authority in relation to Christ at a time when what it meant to be such an authority was not yet fixed. I suggest, therefore, that we should understand Matthew within the mode of freelance religious experts as proposed by Heidi Wendt. Wendt uses this analytical term to "capture any self-authorized purveyor of religious teachings and other practices who drew on such abilities in pursuit of various social benefits."[72] These self-proclaimed experts lacked the legitimacy that derived from institutional affiliation, and instead earned their "recognition and legitimacy through demonstrations of skill and learning."[73] Wendt is not the first to refer to these kinds of religious actors as "freelancers." Iles Johnston, as mentioned above, noted that many Greek magicians were freelance practitioners, willing to entrepreneurially "expand their repertoire as their clientele demanded."[74] James B. Rives argues that desire for religious options and alternatives in the Roman Empire created a fertile environment for freelance practitioners offering esoteric wisdom and claiming a special connection with the divine.[75] However, Wendt defines freelance expertise as an analytical category for persons who participated in a variety of professional activities, even in some cases medicine or philosophy, one of which was religious specialty. Many of the experts she considers brokered religious benefits in exchange for such intangible benefits as prestige or social mobility, as well as material support. In the case of Paul, she argues that letter writing in combination with in-person activities occasioned displays of skill, knowledge, and interpretative authority that together "demonstrate[d] a need for the specific services Paul offered."[76] Paul, for example, created the requirement for purification, and then provided the purification services that were now needed.

[72] Wendt, *At the Temple Gates*, 10.
[73] Wendt, *At the Temple Gates*, 10.
[74] Iles Johnston, *Ancient Greek Divination*, 177.
[75] Rives, James B., *Religion in the Roman Empire* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007), 158–80.
[76] Wendt, *At the Temple Gates*, 187.

Wendt's discussion of competition amongst early "Christian" experts provides a useful framework for exploring not only how Matthew positions Jesus as a rival to scribes, priests, and Pharisees, but also how he implicitly elevates his own abilities above that of other Judean experts and would-be Christ authorities, if these types were even distinct. Early Christian writer-intellectuals such as Justin, Marcion, and Irenaeus, whom Wendt likewise treats as freelance religious experts, composed polemics that equipped readers to discredit their rivals' access to divine wisdom and interpretive abilities.[77] We see this phenomenon most clearly in Justin's description of Simon the Samaritan, whom he calls Simon Magus or "Magician." So too does Justin identify Simon's acts as "magical deeds" (ποιήσας μαγικάς) performed with the power of demons (διὰ τῆς τῶν ἐνεργούντων δαιμόνων τέχνης δυνάμεις, *1 Apol.* 26). Presumably Simon himself presented his skills as divine in nature, as Justin does his own.

The first few centuries of the common era, the period in which Matthew wrote, was one wherein "textuality [served] as a conspicuous index of authority."[78] Occupying this intellectual space, Matthew adjusted and expanded the myth of Jesus in ways that conspicuously displayed those areas of his own authority he sought to bolster. As the *character* Jesus engages in discursive competition, what is displayed is the textual prowess of the *author* Matthew.

We see a similar phenomenon in *Acts of the Apostles,* where Luke's description of Simon parallels that found in Justin's *Apology*. In Acts 8:9-13, Simon is presented as an effective foil for Philip; Simon performs acts of "magic" (μαγείαις) that amaze the crowds in the city of Samaria, but when Philip—a true follower of Christ—arrives and starts to preach, Simon sees the truth in Philip's words, is persuaded and baptized. He is them himself amazed at the signs (σημεῖα) and

[77] Wendt, *At the Temple Gates*, 204.
[78] Heidi Wendt, "Mythmaking and Exegesis," in *T&T Clark Handbook to the Historical Paul*, ed. Ryan S Schellenberg and Heidi Wendt (London: T&T Clark, 2022), 199.

things of great power (δυνάμεις μεγάλας) that he saw taking place around Philip. Seen in isolation, this episode provides two helpful contrasts for thinking about how miracles and magic are narratively constructed to legitimate and delegitimate, respectively, competing versions of the same practices. The first is, of course, the language used. Simon performs magic, which is presented as categorically distinct from the signs and things of great power. Another contrast of note is that when discussing Simon, the acts are *acts*, performed with his agency; whereas with the contrasting event, the acts *happen*, and Philip is a passive receptor. It is not indicated that Philip contributes any agency to the events. Instead, it is implied that the events are divinely inspired with Philip as their human facilitator, but not directly through any actions he takes. Philip is a passive vessel for divine action; where Simon has to perform actively, Philip simply exists in a space with signs and wonders, implicitly because of his devotion to Christ. In these two instances, Justin and Luke reflect, or create, discursive competition between practitioners the authors seek to authorise, and those they want to deauthorize. Matthew's methods of authorization and deauthorization are somewhat subtler than Justin's or Luke's, but are present in the scenes of discursive competition between Jesus and the traditional Judean interpreters, and are discernable in the subtext of Matthew's prophetic interpretations and prooftexts.

Wendt's framework of freelance religious expertise, especially its subset of writer-intellectuals, is helpful for investigating what Matthew may have aimed to accomplish by writing his gospel. At some level, Matthew was a freelance practitioner by default since "Christianity" as such did not yet exist at the time he wrote. But this is just one aspect of the model that applies to Matthew, who also displays the same interest in textual competition, the heterogeneity of skills, and the pursuit of intangible rewards that many other experts exhibited. Throughout this project I

use the model of freelance religious experts, and the subcategory of writer-intellectual, to illuminate Matthew's textual practices, and attempt a redescription of this author.

1.5 A Note on Language

Choosing the right terms for texts as historically fraught as the Judean writings or the gospels is a challenge for a number of reasons. First, the individual texts, while they are fairly static now, were in flux in the first and second centuries, the timeframe within which I locate Matthew the author. Scribal changes, authoritative negotiations, and ideological goals are all contributing factors. Additionally, the way in which the texts were grouped was not static. This is a time before the creation of "canon" as we know it. There are a few options for terms, each of which carries its own assumptions and ideological weight. The first choice is the noun: are these "writings" "texts" "scriptures" or "books" or a bible? And then the adjective used to describe that noun: are they Israelite, Hebrew, Judean, or Jewish? Or are we to use the supersessionist term Old Testament? While I reject "Old Testament" I choose to use "New Testament" to describe the biographies, letters, and Revelation as a bounded group of texts. My objections to Old Testament are that this term assumes both the existence of a group of texts known as the New Testament, which did not exist as a bounded grouping in the second century, and that it is supersessionist, assuming the correctness of now-Christian ways of thinking and knowing. I therefore reject the term Old Testament in favour of a more contextually appropriate language. I could here be guided by my subjects of study. Matthew uses "the writings" (ἀι γραφαί) to describe these texts. This is usually translated into English as "scriptures" implying a sacred, divinely-associated quality to the texts, that while I acknowledge was present in Matthew's understanding of the Judean writings, I choose not to reproduce it in my own. Therefore, I choose the more neutral "writings" as my noun. This has the benefit of both ideological neutrality and contextual

appropriateness. For the adjective, I reject "Jewish" as both anachronistic and in that it implies "not-Christian." The linguistic term "Hebrew" suggests that my authors of interest were reading the texts in Hebrew, where instead they used Greek versions. I choose not to use Septuagint, or LXX, as this also implies as bounded quality to the grouping of the texts. Following Wendt, I use here "Judean Writings," not to describe a particular group of texts, or to suggest that the texts were composed in Judea, but as a marker of the conceptual root of particular texts valued by self-defined experts in Judean religion and exegesis.[79]

There is a trend contemporary liberal theology to use either gender neutral pronouns for the god of the Bible or to refrain from using pronouns at all, and simply describe this god as always "God." This project, however, is not one of theology but of exegetical, literary, and historical analysis. To this end I choose to reproduce the language used within the texts I am analyzing. *Matthew* displays exclusively male conceptions of God and uses exclusively male imagery. In this project I am agnostic about the existence of any god, and about the validity of any particular traditions or systems of thought and therefore choose to reproduce the language Matthew uses to describe God. For simplicity, I use the capitalized God when referring to the god of the Bible.

Throughout this dissertation I use the terms "gospel" and "biography of Jesus" interchangeably. While "gospel" does have fundamentally theological roots, scholarly convention, ease of understanding, and a desire for pleasing language justify its inclusion in a non-theological study of a book of the New Testament. I acknowledge that using "gospel" to refer to the biographies of Jesus creates a genre of literature that can only be used for Christian texts about Jesus, and can therefore be read as a theological justification rather than a description

[79] Heidi Wendt, "From the Herodians to Hadrian: The Shifting Status of Judean Religion in Post-Flavian Rome," *Forum (Genova)* 6.2 (2017): 146, note 3.

of genre. Ideally, descriptions of the texts under study here would allow for broader genre classification as part of the project of contextualization of the Matthew's text within it's literary and historical context. Using the term "biography of Jesus" serves this purpose and should be taken as a confirmation of the genre classification of *bios*. My use of "gospel" is not an affirmation of the theological genre, but a reflection of my desire for varied language.

1.6 Composition-Redaction criticism.[80]

My goal for this project is to say something interesting about the author of *Matthew* through analysis of the text he produced. To do so, I position myself as the "authorial audience" as described by Peter Rabinowitz.[81] An author composes their work with particular rhetorical goals, and in service of those goals the author must make assumptions about the readers' "beliefs, knowledge, and familiarity with conventions."[82] The compositional choices made by the author serve the rhetorical purpose of the text, and this success of this rhetorical goal is dependent on the accuracy or persuasiveness of the author's assumptions. The authorial audience is comprised of those readers or auditors for whom the text was rhetorically designed. The authorial audience of the text is generated by both text and context; if I read the gospel within my own post-industrial, feminist, academic context, I will make my own, incorrect, assumptions about the values of its historical author. What is required is to read the gospel within its context, to attempt to identify those assumptions about beliefs, knowledge, and conventions made by the author. In my study of the text, I seek to reconstruct the assumptions and understandings that *Matthew's*

[80] I was first introduced to composition criticism by the works, both on the *Gospel of Matthew*, of Jason Hood and Joel Willitts and am indebted to them for the wealth of scholarship they introduced me to on redaction, composition, and literary criticism. Jason B Hood, *The Messiah, His Brothers, and the Nations*, LNTS 441 (London: T&T Clark, 2011); Joel Willitts, *Matthew's Messianic Shepherd-King: In Search of 'The Lost Sheep of the House of Israel'* (de Gruyter, 2007).
[81] Peter J. Rabinowitz, "Truth in Fiction: A Reexamination of Audiences," *Crit. Inq.* 4.1 (1977): 121–41.
[82] Rabinowitz, "Truth in Fiction," 127.

primary audience might have brought to such a text, and how the author exploited those in the service of his own rhetorical goals.[83]

I here examine the gospel as a unified text, rather than as a series of dislocated, individual, pericopes. Analysis is done, of course, through examination of discrete parts of the gospel, but always with the goal of explicating the completed whole. The gospel, "viewed rigorously and persistently in its entirety, becomes the primary context for interpreting any part of it."[84] To this end, I follow Donald Verseput in considering the text as an integral composition that "stands between the author and reader, and it is that text against which all meaning must ultimately be measured."[85] Verseput discourages searching for the "origin" of the text under study, and while I do think a reconstruction of the author of the gospel is essential to a full understanding of the literary and rhetorical goals present in the text, I am much less concerned with determining a temporal or geographic location for the author than I am his authorial intentions. In reading the gospel holistically, I intend to serve my goal of positioning myself as the *intended* audience. While some auditors or readers engaged with the text in a more piecemeal fashion—which is how, for example, Justin describes Christians gathering to listen to certain "memoirs of the apostles" read aloud—*Matthew* was still composed as a coherent account.[86] As David Howell writes, "It is reasonable to presume that many people read one gospel through as a whole literary

[83] This is an extension of the earlier goals of *sitz im lieben*, shifting the focus from the author to the author's imagined audience.
[84] Stephen D Moore, *Literary Criticism and the Gospels: The Theoretical Challenge* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 4.
[85] Donald J Verseput, *The Rejection of the Humble Messianic King: A Study of the Composition of Matthew 11–12* (Frankfurt: Lang, 1986), 8.
[86] Justin tells the addressee of his *apologia* that his group gathered on Sunday's to hear the "memoirs of the apostles (ἀπομνημονεύματα τῶν ἀποστόλων)" among other activities. Justin, 1 *Apol*. 67.3.

story."[87] Hence the entire narrative should be examined as a cohesive and systematic literary program.

I seek to read the gospel in this way and to avoid the pitfalls of searching for the origins of *Matthew*; the where and when of composition are much less important to this project than the *kind of setting* when the text arose. and this approach must consider Matthew's sources and his redactional program as an essential part of his composition. As stated above, my work on the gospel presumes that Matthew used *Mark* and Q as sources when writing his text. Acknowledging a given author's debts positions the redaction critic "to identify the particular emphases of the evangelists by examining the ways in which they have altered their traditions and sources."[88] I am not interested in recovering an earlier form of the gospel or an oral tradition behind uniquely Matthean material. Rather, I am interested how Matthew transformed those sources whose use has been convincingly established in the service of his own priorities. I look forward with redaction, rather than backward. The same principle extends to material Matthew adopted but did *not* redact. As Tuckett reminds us, when an author reproduces his sources as he finds them, this indication of agreement is no less revealing than an act of transformation.[89] We can learn about Matthew the author through analysis of his reproductions, and his redactions.[90]

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[87] David B Howell, *Matthew's Inclusive Story: A Study in the Narrative Rhetoric of the First Gospel*, *JSNTSup* 42 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1990), 32.
[88] Christopher Tuckett, *Reading the New Testament: Methods of Interpretation* (London: SPCK, 1987), 119.
[89] Tuckett, *Reading the New Testament*, 121.
[90] It is, of course, possible that we do not have access to any of the texts Matthew redacted when composing his gospel, which would mean that arguments from redaction are unsupportable exercises in academic speculation. It is also important to recognise that texts in the ancient world were mutable, lacking consistency across copies, and characterised by their variants.

1.7 Narratology

My analysis of *Matthew* reveals a coordinated literary strategy that is comprised of his systematic source redaction and elements novel to this gospel. Michal Beth Dinkler defines literature as "written poetry or prose that communicates through the use of specific linguistic techniques, and that is taken by society to be meaningful beyond its immediate context of origin," a definition fully in keeping with my understanding of *Matthew*.[91] Following this, literary theory interrogates how humans make meaning through such literature. To adequately describe Matthew's literary strategy requires tools of literary analysis and narrative description that narratological studies supply. I find especially useful theoretical insights drawn from Genevieve Lively's work on modern theories of narratology that search out associations with literary theorists from the classical world. Such scholarly marriages result in a vocabulary and methodology for literary analysis of ancient texts, which I here apply to the gospels. I employ structuralist understandings of narratological concepts that are reliant on theorists of narrative from the ancient and modern world. For example, I employ Plato's Socrates' distinction between subject or content (*logos*) and style or form (*lexis*). The key discussion of book three of Plato's *Republic*, as described by Lively "opens with Socrates drawing a distinction between *logos* (the subject of the discourse, or *what* is said) and *lexis* (the style of the discourse, or *how* it is said) so as to better understand 'both the matter (*logos*) and the manner (*lexis*) of speech' (Republic 3.392c)."[92] In other words, narrative involves "the *what* of the story told and the *how* of its

[91] Michal Beth Dinkler, *Literary Theory and the New Testament*, AYBRL, ed. Collins, John (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2019), 5.

[92] Genevieve Lively, *Narratology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019). The classical concepts of lexis and logos are reflected in Gerard Genette's introduction of the concept of focalization, or how the readers focus is directed, through the story and discourse of a narrative. Gerard Genette, *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method*, trans. Jane E Lewin (New York: Cornell University Press, 1980), 189–94.

presentation."[93] This provides a framework for thinking about the narrative construction the author of Matthew employs: he uses the logos (the *what*) of his narrative to present Jesus as the Israelite messiah, and the lexis (the *how*) of his narrative to display his ability as a textual interpreter. The two work together to construct Matthew's position as the final authority on Jesus's life and status, and his authority as an interpreter of textual prophecy as found in the Judean writings.

My work on *Matthew* is intended to fit within the wider discussion of the gospels as narrative literature. Narrative criticism, a subset of literary criticism, has gained some traction in New Testament Studies since the 1970s. It was first referred to as *narrative criticism* by David Rhoads who identifies the Gospel of Mark as fiction, rather than history. "By using the term "fiction," I do not mean to deny that Mark used sources rooted in history or that his story does not reflect historical events of Jesus's day. Rather, by "fiction" I mean to suggest that in the end the narrative world of the story is a literary creation of the author and has *autonomous integrity*."[94] In fiction, an author "tells a story that generates a world of persons, places, and events, and that has its own internal consistency and validity independent of its resemblance or non-resemblance to the real world of Jesus's or Mark's day."[95] Following Lively, I identify this as the "story-world." The story-world is a place of literary fiction apart from whatever historical kernels it may contain, that is temporally bounded by the events it describes, and peopled only by the characters it creates. The intrinsic autonomy of a literary work is a theory of the New Criticism, which proposed a rejection of all extrinsic elements of a text in favour of only the intrinsic. The New Critics' conceptualized works of literary art as autonomous and internally

[93] Patrick O'Neill, *Fictions of Discourse: Reading Narrative Theory*, Theory / Culture (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 13. Emphasis original.
[94] David Rhoads, "Narrative Criticism and the Gospel of Mark," *JAAR* 50 (1982): 413. Emphasis original.
[95] Moore, *Literary Criticism and the Gospels*, 8.

unified, whose meaning must be validated by the text itself.[96] While I find the terminology of literary theory and narrative criticism helpful in my analysis of *Matthew*, and the concept of an internally-bounded, autonomous, story-world extremely useful (the temporal boundaries of the story-world are particularly helpful when discussing prophecy and other forms of divination, which appear so often in *Matthew*), I see this story-world as a product of the author, and therefore while it is bounded by the narrative, I seek in addition to *use* the created story-world to illuminate the author.

Inherent to the project of illustrating the author through analysis of his narrative is the supposition that the reader of Matthew's gospel hears his voice through the narrative. In chapter two of this dissertation, I will examine Justin Martyr's *Dialogue with Trypho*—a fictional, or fictionalized, dialogue between Justin and an educated Judean—wherein Justin lays out his arguments for Jesus's status as the messiah. I introduce this text here because the Justin the author is represented in the dialogue by Justin the character, an idealized figure who has memorized all the relevant quotations from the Judean writings, who perfectly formulates responses to every challenge, and who in every other way models ideal philosophical debate. The character Justin is not *equivalent* to the author Justin but is rather the *perfected version* of the human person. The *Dialogue*'s reader can discern its author's rhetorical goals in this idealized presentation of the character. On the one hand, Matthew's gospel presents an increased challenge, since, unlike Justin in the *Dialogue*, the author is not explicitly a character in the narrative.[97] On the other, there are multiple instances in the text when the narrator addresses the

[96] Moore, *Literary Criticism and the Gospels*, 9.

[97] There is, of course, Matthew the tax collector, called by Jesus at Matt 9:9 and listed as a disciple at Matt 10:3, who gives his name to the gospel, largely thanks to Papias (discussed above) and Irenaeus (*Adv. Haer.* 3.1.1). While I preserve this supposition in my use of "Matthew" to identify the author, even if the two are the same, that tells us very little about the author, as Matthew the tax collector never speaks, nor does the author of the gospel tell us anything pertinent about him, other than that he followed Jesus when called.

reader directly: namely, in the fulfilment citations that I discuss in Chapter 2. I propose that in these instances when we hear the narrator's voice, we are hearing the idealized voice of the author, and can glean, from this, his rhetorical and persuasive goals.

The characters that people Matthew's story-world form an essential part of his persuasive narrative. Many of these figures that have a (likely) historical basis, such as Jesus, Herod, and Pilate, while others, such as the magi, are less concretely identifiable. While some figures in the gospel are surely historical persons, and others are possibly the same, I assert that the figures Matthew describes are not necessarily equivalent to the historical persons they represent. Additionally, characters in Matthew's gospel with a historical association cannot be reliably historically identified by means of the gospel. The Jesus, Herod, Pilate, or even Peter described by Matthew may have roots in historical figures, but Matthew's descriptions of those figures cannot be said to be historical on their face. With that in mind, I encounter and interrogate those figures as characters, created by the author to serve his rhetorical goals. Matthew's Jesus may be based on the historical Jesus of Nazareth but is not necessarily a reflection of the historical person. I assert that the character Jesus serves less to document the historical person on which he is based than advance the author's rhetorical aims.

Many of the characters in Matthew's gospel are adjusted versions of those found in *Mark*. Reuse and rearrangement of prior material was by no means uncommon in Matthew's authorial period. The emphasis on an author's manner of arranging "pre-existing story stuff"[98] in Horace's *Ars poetica* and Cicero's discussion of structures (*dispositio*) of words (*verba*) and things (*res*) in his *De inventione* are helpful for understanding Matthew's authorial disposition and textual goals. Matthew wrote his biography of Jesus during an intellectual period that many scholars

[98] Lively, *Narratology*, 66.

refer to as the Second Sophistic. The term, coined by Flavius Philostratus in the late 230s, is used by modern scholars to refer to the intellectual and compositional culture of roughly the first two centuries of the common era.[99] Literarily, this period was characterised by a practice of reworking and rewriting pre-existing stories with ones own creative and rhetorical goals, of earlier textual material, as an act of emulation and imitation of earlier sophists and philosophers.[100] Performance of intellectualism and a particular concept of Greek education, classical *paideia*, was essential to constructing identity and membership in the "in-group" of oratorical competition that distinguished the Second Sophistic.[101] The categories "sophist" and philosopher, are not, however, absolute, but rather function differentially, requiring constant performance and negotiation to maintain.[102] Matthew does not overtly claim either title: he does not call himself a philosopher, nor does he tell his readers that he is engaging in sophistic oratorial practices. Nevertheless, he does display many of the same concerns for identity formation and maintenance that characterised the second sophistic period.[103] Through his narrative we see an interest in constructing and maintaining a chain of authority, through association with Jesus and the Judean writings. In addition, the discursive competitions we see play out between Jesus and his interlocutors reflect the polemical positionings of other second century intellectual figures.[104] I introduce this discussion of the second sophistic period not with

[99] Tim Whitmarsh, *The Second Sophistic*, New Surveys in the Classics 35 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 4–10. Whitmarsh cautions readers not to think of "second sophistic" as an authentically ancient category, and to recognise its construction and shaping by the goals and needs of modern scholars.
[100] R. Fowler, "The Second Sophistic," in *The Cambridge History of Philosophy in Late Antiquity*, ed. L Gerson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 100–114.
[101] Barbara E. Borg, "Glamorous Intellectuals: Portraits of Pepaideumenoi in the Second and Third Centuries AD," in *Paideia: The World of the Second Sophistic* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2004), 157–78; E.L. Bowie, "Greeks and Their Past in the Second Sophistic," *Past Present* 46.1 (1970): 3–41.
[102] Tim Whitmarsh, *Greek Literature and the Roman Empire: The Politics of Imitation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 158–59.
[103] Kendra Eshleman, *The Social World of Intellectuals in the Roman Empire: Sophists, Philosophers, and Christians* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 21–24.
[104] Eshleman, *The Social World of Intellectuals in the Roman Empire*, 92.

the goal of identifying Matthew as a sophist, philosopher, or even of saying he fits firmly within the category, the existence of which is still contested as a historical phenomenon. Rather, I suggest useful socio-cultural parallels that aid in situating Matthew the author more firmly within his cultural milieu. His efforts to construct and bolster his authority, the very premise of this project, is best understood within this broader socio-cultural context.

1.8 Summary of Chapters

The author of *Matthew* cultivates dynamics of speciality and authorization—to the advantage of not only Jesus but also, implicitly, himself—throughout his composition. I argue that these prerogatives imply competition with other textual specialists who shared Matthew's hermeneutical goal of identifying *the* messiah through interrogation of the Judean writings. I argue that Matthew devises and satisfies various criteria—as gleaned from textual prophecy, dream revelations, and other types of divination—throughout his gospel, both at its narrative and metanarrative levels. Chapter 2 introduces this author as a literary diviner and exegete, with the goal of illustrating how he made use of these textual skills as tools to bolster his authority. I explore how Matthew, using Jesus as his proxy, displays abilities that overlap with but exceed those associated with "traditional" Judean religious interpreters as he defines them, with the result that all specialties converge in the messiah (and his primary ambassador). To this end I interrogate prophetic and legal pericopes from the gospel, with a particular focus on Matthew's fulfilment formulas and prophetic quotations. My analysis of the legal pericopes explores how Matthew uses the character of Jesus to authorize himself as a textual critic and exegete superior to others renowned for expertise in these writings, but also how he stages competitive discourse with *worthy* rivals to elevate the former's abilities. I then explore how Jesus is further authorized

by associations with Moses and Elijah, with particular attention to how Matthew likens Jesus to Moses. I then explore how another early Christian author, Justin Martyr, employed a similar strategy to what I suggest for Matthew, and argue that both authors sought to cast themselves in the role of expert interpreters of the Judean writings.

Chapter 3 considers how Matthew's particular characterization of Jesus as teacher, prophet, and literary diviner differs from that which he inherited from Mark. I argue that one of the main differences has to do with a revision to what constitutes "true" understanding, and who has the capacity for divine insight. In *Matthew,* knowledge that Jesus was *the* messiah, as well as an accurate understanding of his teachings, can only be achieved by non-professional, inexpert characters. By way of illustration, I examine the purpose of the parables, wherein Matthew defines the disciples as a select group of "learned ones" who, through their teacher, have acquired access to and ability to understand God's wisdom. The final section of this chapter discusses the nature of Jesus's prophetic role, and how Matthew's Judean "experts" mistake him as a mere prophet rather than *the* messiah, who also has prophetic insight.

Chapter 4 turns from textual prophecy and literary divination to divine communication through dreams and (super)natural phenomena. In a discussion of dream types and interpretive intermediaries, I explore further how Matthew constructs expertise and ability along ethnic and professional lines. The divinatory abilities of the magi loom large in this construction, so I pay close attention to the ethno-religious valences of their narrative role. Jesus's future divinatory expertise, as foreshadowed symbolically by the gifts of the magi, occasions an opportunity for readers of the gospel to flex their own interpretive muscles by recognizing the significance of the items he receives. I also explore how astral divination, messianic hope, and "magic" converge in other early Christian texts—namely, the *Testament of Levi* and the letters of Ignatius—with a

view to how such elements may illuminate the social context in which all these authors were operating, even if they configure them in different ways. The chapter concludes with an examination of inexpert gentiles who succeed in recognizing Jesus's divine status despite lacking the conceptual vocabulary of messianism. Through these gentile characters, expert and lay alike, Matthew devises a complex taxonomy of divinatory ability and ethnicity.

The final chapter investigates divinatory failures in *Matthew*. Throughout the gospel, traditional Judean interpreters, a category comprised of the scribes, chief priests, and Pharisees, repeatedly fail to apprehend the signs that Jesus is the messiah. Rather, in this gospel, successful diviners must be either inexpert Judeans, as are Jesus and his disciples, or else gentiles, whether expert or inexpert. Matthew's pericopes of Jonah show the author's explicit rejection of any request for signs, and conversely, his preference for spontaneous divinatory experiences of the sort attributed to the Roman centurion and Pilate's wife. The effect of his taxonomy is to destabilize recognized forms of Judean religious expertise while also investing those, and any, specialty into Matthew's proprietary depiction of Jesus as the messiah. I then turn to Flavius Josephus, as a comparative tool for thinking about Matthew's strategy of ethnic differentiation. Josephus regularly indicts certain Judeans for incorrect interpretation of prophecy or failing to recognize clear divine signs throughout the Judean War. Since we know far more about Josephus as both historical person and author, his employment of a strategy similar to Matthew's reveals the potential complexities and nuances of ethno-religious differentiation. For Josephus, this is a largely intra-ethnic and institutional affair: while some gentiles *do* come to recognize God's power indirectly through his signs, the point is to rehabilitate Judeans at the expense of certain rogue actors, while also affirming the priestly expertise that Josephus himself claims. In these respects, his goals appear to be the mirror image of what I identify for Matthew, which may be

revealing of the latter author's social positioning. Notwithstanding, there are striking commonalities in how Matthew, Josephus, and also Justin fashion themselves as paramount "Judean" experts by insisting upon their correct interpretation of texts, prophecies, and omens.

2 Chapter 2: Authors, Texts, Prophecies

Communication with gods and other non-obvious beings by means of literary texts was a pervasive tool of ancient Mediterranean religious specialists, both freelance and those associated with established institutions. Texts such as the Judean writings, the Sibylline Oracles, and even the Homeric texts were resources for divining the moods, will, and intentions of deities so as to guide the actions of human persons.[1] The author of *Matthew* used the Judean writings as oracular resources whose interpretation is best understood within this broader phenomenon of literary divination. In Matthew's gospel, the majority of literary divinations are performed by the narrator, a proxy for the author himself, in the service of establishing Jesus's status as the messiah prophesied in these texts. Implicit in his strategy may be the less obvious goal of naturalizing the idea that all Judeans of the time were expecting *the* messiah at all, and disagreed only about the signs that would announce or the criteria that would confirm his arrival. As I suggested in the introduction, literary divination includes divinatory practices that make use of texts as vectors of supernatural communication, that is, it is a form of divination that understands that certain texts can facilitate interchange between humans and gods or other non-obvious beings.[2] Mathew's divinatory use of the Judean writings is narrower than the practices discussed above, and refers to instances wherein a the author or a character within the narrative interprets an occurrence within the story-world as an event or requirement signposted in an ancient inspired text. While many texts lent themselves to divinatory interpretation, in *Matthew,* the resources are always the Judean writings. Literary divination in *Matthew* is comprised of direct textual prophetic interpretation, such as the fulfilment formula citations, and exegesis of the law, such as

[1] For the bibliomantic uses of Homer's texts see Jennifer Eyl, *Signs, Wonders, and Gifts: Divination in the Letters of Paul* (Oxford University Press, 2019), 102.
[2] See section 1.2 "Divination."

the discussion on divorce. I include the latter in the category of divination because I see present in *Matthew* the belief that the Judean writings were replete with signs, and through careful reading and analysis the exegete can find these signs and divine God's plan for humanity. I am not suggesting that competitive exegesis of the law, such as we see in the discussion on divorce (Matt 19:3-2) is directly equivalent, in terms of divination, to prophecy. Literary divination is present in two strata in *Matthew*: as something a character or the narrator *does*, as in the fulfilment citations, or Jesus's invocation of prophecy during his arrest (Matt 26:54), and in the "exoskeleton" of the text, those ways of thinking that colour the *lexis*, that is, the *how*, of the narrative. The epistemological understandings that the exegete brings to the literature are here essential to my definition of literary divination; Matthew is a particular kind of exegete, whose textual engagements are predicated on the expectation of supernatural communication. There are of course many other hermeneutical methods being used by Matthew's contemporaries, and I am not seeking to limit how other interpreters read the same texts. However, Matthew's interest in these writings lay foremost in their divinatory potential, in their ability to facilitate communication from the divine realm. That both interpretation of prophecy and exegesis of the law fall within Matthew's divinatory experience necessitates understanding these two groups of literature, the books of the law, and the books of the prophets, as somehow unified. Davies and Allison argue that to Matthew the law and the prophets "together constitute a united prophetic witness."[3] Paul Foster tempers this position by noting that the unification of these categories in not certain, but that the close grouping of "the law and the prophets" in *Matthew* "suggests that within the first gospel [here, first in canonical order] the combined use of these terms functioned

[3] Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 1:484.

as a way of referring to authoritative writings."[4] My own thinking leans toward Foster's position in that I understand Matthew's presentation of the prophetic material he quotes as eternal text, in that they were composed well before Matthew's time but continue to have relevance and meaning, with clear meanings (for Matthew) whose revelation requires only a capable expositor. Matthew's apparent understanding of the law and its authority is somewhat different from how he characterizes "prophecy" as such insofar as he presents the law as subject to interpretation and different conclusions. Both the law and the prophets are authoritative, but only the latter contain divine wisdom from God that is about Jesus Christ, that being concealed, requires recognition and proper interpretation. To the contrary, the law, able to be modified or complemented by Jesus's teachings, has temporal relevance and mundane application that prophecy lacks. Matthew seems to acknowledge that different sources have different applications (eschatological, social, cultic, practical). Not all of the material in the Judean writings is meaningful for prophetic divination about Jesus, but all of the material is communication from God. Notwithstanding, I will demonstrate that his identification of prophecy and exegesis of the law both constitute acts of divination, in that they require access to revelatory wisdom.

2.1 Matthew the diviner

In his biography of Jesus, Matthew uses quotations from the Judean writings as divinatory tools that further his rhetorical goal of persuading readers that his version of this story is paramount. Senior identifies sixty-one quotations of these texts in the gospel, of which forty are attributed explicitly and twenty-one quote without such attribution.[5] Soares Prabhu identifies

[4] Paul Foster, "Prophets and Prophetism in Matthew," in *Prophets and Prophecy in Jewish and Early Christian Literature*, ed. Joseph Verheyden, Korinna Zamfir, and Tobias Nicklas (Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), 118.
[5] Donald Senior, "The Lure of the Formula Quotations: Re-Assessing Matthew's Use of the Old Testament with the Passion Narrative as a Test Case," in *The Scriptures in the Gospels*, ed. Christopher Tuckett, BETL 121 (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1997), 89. For a list of fulfilment citation identifications, see Appendices, section 8.2.

forty-two explicit quotations, of which "about a fourth are introduced by striking fulfillment formulas."[6] While all the quotations in the gospel serve Matthew's aims, those identified as the fulfillment formula quotations provide the clearest illustration of how he positions himself as a diviner. As such, they illustrate how his literary interpretations construct authority for his exegetical positions, as well as his systematic redactional program.

2.1.1 Fulfillment Formula Citations

Matthew's fulfillment formula citations are found throughout his text, with a concentration in the infancy narrative.[7] It is important to note that for some scholars the fulfillment *quotations* are not directly equivalent to the fulfillment *citations,* leaving us with two categories, quotations and citations. The equivalency between these categories is reliant on the method of identification used. Of the sixty-one (as per Senior) quotations from the Judean writings in *Matthew*, I identify ten as explicit fulfilment citations that include direct quotations from the Judean writings introduced by formulaic language of fulfilment.[8] In this identification I agree with Luz,[9] while Davies and Allison include three additional citations (2:5, 26:54, 56).[10] My argument for limiting which quotations constitute fulfillment citations is reliant on the definition established by Soares Prabhu, who argues that to be characterized as fulfilment formulas, quotations must have three features: first, a Matthean fulfilment formula, which reads

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[6] George M Soares Prabhu, *The Formula Quotations in the Infancy Narrative of Matthew* (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1971), 18–19.

[7] The fulfilment quotations, and the other quotations from the Judean writings in the *Gospel*, have been used to justify the position that *Matthew* is the "Jewish gospel" and that the author was himself a Jew and a rabbi. Scholarship supporting this position appears to be ancestrally reliant on Ernest von Dobschütz's 1928 article "Matthew as rabbi and catechist (Matthaus als Rabbi und Katechet)" in which von Dobschütz argued that Matthew was a rabbi who probably trained in the school of Yochanan ben Zakkai at Yavne.

[8] The following comprise my list of explicit fulfilment citations: Matt 1:22, 2:15, 17, 23, 4:14, 8:17, 12:17, 13:35, 21:4, and 27:9.

[9] Luz, *Matthew*, 1:125.

[10] Dale C. Allison and W. D Davies, *Matthew: A Shorter Commentary* (London: T&T Clark, 2004), 15. For a discussion on the scholarly trends of identification of the fulfilment citations see Soares Prabhu, *The Formula Quotations in the Infancy Narrative of Matthew*, 24–25.

"all this took place to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet saying," [11] second, an extra-narrative commentary function, and third, a "Hebraising text form," that is, a style of composing that makes use of a literary norm from Hebrew texts, such as the poetic parallels found in Matthew's version of the entry into Jerusalem upon two donkeys.[12] For the purposes of this study the second characteristic is the most important, insofar as these moments of extra-narrative commentary provide our clearest glimpse of Matthew the author.

The fulfilment citations allow us to think of *Matthew* as an expositing text. Some scholars see *Matthew*'s use of the Judean writings as analogous to the *pesharim* found in the Dead Sea Scrolls or the *midrashim* of the Talmud.[13] The ten explicit fulfilment citations feature the author as the textual interpreter, and the reader as his interlocutor. Each is, as identified by Soares Prabhu, a narrative aside, where the author speaks directly to the reader, outside of the storyworld time and setting. Throughout the gospel the author functions as an omniscient narrator, but it is only in the fulfilment citations that he addresses his audience in an explicit manner. As illustration, we can consider the scene of the sick healed at evening, which in *Mark* displays Jesus's abilities as an exorcist and participates in Mark's characteristic secrecy motif, here, concerning Jesus's messianic identity. Matthew, however, links the same event to prophecy from the Judean writings.

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[11] τοῦτο δὲ ὅλον γέγονεν ἵνα πληρωθῇ τὸ ῥηθὲν ὑπὸ κυρίου διὰ τοῦ προφήτου λέγοντος. In this dissertation all translations from Greek are my own unless otherwise noted.

[12] Soares Prabhu, *The Formula Quotations in the Infancy Narrative of Matthew*, 19, 40.

[13] As Kyung S. Baek writes, "*peshar* can be understood as divine revelation that contemporizes an authoritative text for its intended audience." Baek draws our attention to a section of 1QpHab wherein the expositor on Habakkuk quotes Hab. 2:5-6, and then provides an interpretation of the verses that argues for the identification of the "arrogant man" of Habakkuk with the "Wicked Priest", an antagonist who appears throughout the commentary. Baek, "Prophecy and Divination in the Gospel of Matthew: The Use of Dream-Visions and Fulfillment Quotations," 667. See also George J Brooke, "Prophets and Prophecy in the Qumran Scrolls and the New Testament," in *Text, Thought, and Practice in Qumran and Early Christianity*, ed. Ruth Clements and Daniel R Schwartz, STDJ 84 (Boston: Brill, 2009), 31–48. For *Matthew* as a Midrashic text see Goulder, *Midrash and Lection in Matthew*.

Matthew 8:14-17	
[14] Καὶ ἐλθὼν ὁ Ἰησοῦς εἰς τὴν οἰκίαν Πέτρου εἶδεν τὴν πενθερὰν αὐτοῦ βεβλημένην καὶ πυρέσσουσαν· [15] καὶ ἥψατο τῆς χειρὸς αὐτῆς, καὶ ἀφῆκεν αὐτὴν ὁ πυρετός, καὶ ἠγέρθη καὶ διηκόνει αὐτῷ. [16] Ὀψίας δὲ γενομένης προσήνεγκαν αὐτῷ δαιμονιζομένους πολλούς· καὶ ἐξέβαλεν τὰ πνεύματα λόγῳ, καὶ πάντας τοὺς κακῶς ἔχοντας ἐθεράπευσεν· [17] ὅπως πληρωθῇ τὸ ῥηθὲν διὰ Ἠσαΐου τοῦ προφήτου λέγοντος· Αὐτὸς τὰς ἀσθενείας ἡμῶν ἔλαβεν καὶ τὰς νόσους ἐβάστασεν.	[14] When Jesus entered Peter's house, he saw his mother-in-law lying in bed with a fever; [15] he touched her hand, and the fever left her, and she got up and began to serve him. [16] That evening they brought to him many who were possessed by demons, and he cast out the spirits with a word and cured all who were sick. [17] This was to fulfill what had been spoken through the prophet Isaiah, "He took our infirmities and bore our diseases."

This fulfilment concludes a brief pericope wherein Jesus heals Peter's mother-in-law, casts out spirits (πνεύματα), and heals others who were sick.[14] The quotation and fulfilment formula are not necessary to the narrative progression; if 8:17 were excised, it would continue smoothly from these healings to the next scene, beginning in 8:18. Rather, the prophecy and its fulfilment function as authorial asides and extra-narrative commentary for only the reader's benefit.

The fulfillment formulas and quotations are, however, necessary building blocks of the *lexis*, or form, of Matthew's Jesus story.[15] These two dimensions of the text—its biographical narrative and extra-narrative prophetic interpolations—proceed in lockstep through the final fulfilment citation, where Judas's thirty pieces of silver are used to purchase the potter's field (Matt 27:9). *Logos*, again, the content of the discourse, is found in the level of the storyworld and encompasses the temporally emplotted events and scenes: the narrative of Jesus's life, which begins with his conception and ends with his resurrection. *Lexis* is built into the overriding themes of the text, and the manner in which these themes are displayed. The function of the

[14] The healing event is from *Mark* 1:29-31 (cf Luke 4:40-41). Matthew redacts the pericope in multiple ways, particularly in that he tells the reader the method by which Jesus exorcises demons, that is, "by means of a word" (ἐξέβαλεν τὰ πνεύματα λόγῳ). For a detailed discussion of possession and exorcism in early Christianity and its antecedents, see Eric Sorenson, *Possession and Exorcism in the New Testament and Early Christianity*, WUNT. 2. Reihe, 157 (Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2002).

[15] An explanation of *lexis* and *logos* can be found in section 1.7 "Narratology."

logos is to tell the story of the protagonist's life, while the *lexis* showcases the bona fides of the author. The *lexis* is comprised of the foundation elements of the *logos*, such as the infancy narrative, the dreams, the ten fulfilment formulas and quotations, and the other textual prophecies Matthew includes, to be discussed below. Through each of these elements, Matthew performs for the reader his qualifications to determine not only Jesus's messianic status but also the very meaning and indices thereof: foremost, his demonstrable superior ability to identify all of the relevant prophecies from the vast corpus of the Judean writings, and then show, though his narrative, precisely how they manifested in the life and times of Jesus. The fulfilment citations and quotations illustrate his extensive knowledge of these texts, his ability to identify which verses contained therein are "prophecies" relating to Jesus, and his ability to create patterns in Jesus's life that conform with the prophecies to which he has assigned significance, patterns which do the work of proving his correct selection of verses from the Judean writings. When Matthew redacts material he received from *Mark* and connects it with a fulfilment citation and prophetic quotation, he is implicitly asserting his superiority to the author whose source he appropriates. His compositional act suggests that Matthew thought Mark knew only the events of Jesus's life—and only some of them at that—but not how these and other details or events fulfil the prophecies that this author presents as "proof" of messianic status. For this author interpretative abilities and divinely-sourced knowledge are appropriate only for particular people, and that this supposition that animates the gospel's storyworld but ultimately reveals as much about authorial agenda. Just as the character Jesus is shown, time and again, to be a superior interpreter to characters presented as "traditional" Judean religious experts, so too is the narrator, an extension of Matthew the author, a superior interpreter to Mark

2.1.2 Other Textual Prophecy

The fulfilment formula citations are the most prominent, but not the only, quotations of prophecy found in this gospel. Of the remaining literary divinations, some—such as Matt 2:5-6 (//Mic 5:2, 2 Sam 5:2); 3:3 (//Isa 40:3); and 26:54, 56—have been identified by other scholars as fulfilment formulas. I have excluded these four from my list of fulfilment formula citations and quotations for the following reasons: Matt 2:5 and 3:3 lack the specific formulaic language required, and the quotation is spoken by a character in the narrative, not as a narratorial or authorial aside. Matt 26:54 and 56 do contain the language of fulfilment but lack quotations; they are, likewise, spoken by a character within the text as opposed to its narrator. These four quotations do illustrate knowledge of the Judean writings and authorise particular interpretations of the quoted texts. However, such advantages accrue to characters rather than the author, or to the author alone: Matt 2:5 showcases the abilities of the chief priests and scribes; Matt 3:3, of John the baptizer; and Matt 26:54 and 26:56, of Jesus himself. Whereas the ten fulfilment formula citations privilege the narrator, these four do so only implicitly, since their recognition and application are mediated by those to whom they are attributed. I will return to the two fulfillments from Ch.26 in a subsequent discussion of Jesus's prophetic and divinatory activities, and to Matt 2:5 below.

Quotations and words of fulfilment in Matthew's gospel were carefully formulated by the author to validate himself and his chosen characters. In the baptism, the prophetic quotation divinely sanctions the actions of John the baptizer, authorizing this character as a communicator with God. Matthew's presentation of the baptism in chapter three relies on Mark 1:9-11, which, rarely, already contains the prophetic fulfilment quotation found at Matt 3:3. Whereas Matthew more typically interpolates prophecy into and then reframes Mark's narrative accordingly, his

redactions to a pericope that already contains a marked quotation from the Judean writings are revealing.

Mark 1:2-3	Matthew 3:3	Isaiah 40:3 LXX
Ἰδοὺ ἀποστέλλω τὸν ἄγγελόν μου πρὸ προσώπου σου, ὃς κατασκευάσει τὴν ὁδόν σου· φωνὴ βοῶντος ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ· Ἑτοιμάσατε τὴν ὁδὸν κυρίου, εὐθείας ποιεῖτε τὰς τρίβους αὐτοῦ.	Φωνὴ βοῶντος ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ· Ἑτοιμάσατε τὴν ὁδὸν κυρίου, εὐθείας ποιεῖτε τὰς τρίβους αὐτοῦ.	φωνὴ βοῶντος ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ Ἑτοιμάσατε τὴν ὁδὸν κυρίου, εὐθείας ποιεῖτε τὰς τρίβους τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμῶν·
Behold I send my messenger before your face, who will prepare your way. The voice of one crying out in the wilderness: prepare the way of the lord, make straight his paths.	The voice of one crying out in the wilderness: prepare the way of the lord, make straight his paths.	The voice of one crying out in the wilderness: prepare the way of the lord, make straight the paths of our god.

Matthew's most obvious change is to remove from his version of this "prophecy" the first part of what Mark has quoted (as indicated in italics). But Mark's quotation is in fact a composite of Malachi 3:1 and Exodus 23:20, not Isaiah, to whom the verses are nevertheless attributed in both gospels. Matthew chooses not to reproduce Mark's quotation, instead editing it to "correct" the quotation so that agrees with the attribution; where Mark incorrectly states that he is quoting Isaiah, Matthew actually *does* quote Isaiah. Matthew does maintain Mark's referent of the quotation, John the baptizer. Even more to the point, Matthew's version conforms to the LXX version of Isaiah, as noted by Stendhal, though does drop the final "τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμῶν" in favour of "αὐτοῦ".[16] The composite reappears in Matt 11:10, which most likely derives from Q. From this, it appears that Matthew redacted *Mark* to quote Isaiah precisely. Matthew retains the prophetic

[16] Stendahl, *The School of St. Matthew*, 47–50.

mandate conferred upon John in both quotations, first the Malachi-Exodus composite and then the verse from Isaiah, although these now occur in two different locations in the text. Matthew the author uses textual prophecy, outside of the strict fulfillment formula quotations, to authorize characters other than the narrator, who is a proxy for himself, or Jesus. Of even more import, however, is Matthew's adjustment of *Mark*, so that the quotation, and its referent, receive *specific* authorization from the Judean writings. If Matthew were to reproduce Mark exactly, the prophecy would not, in Matthew's system of thought, be valid, as it is not "correct" in its attribution to Isaiah. Matthew "fixes" Mark's text *so that* the prophecy is "true" and John the baptizer can be the prophesied messenger.

2.2 Traditional Interpreters 2:3-6

When thinking about the authorization of characters in Matthew's gospel, the chief priests, scribes, Pharisees, and Sadducees present a conundrum. On the one hand, Matthew seeks to usurp their authority as knowledge holders and interpreters, particularly in matters concerning the Judean writings. To that end, he implicitly increases his own authority by routinely diminishing theirs. On the other hand, the gospel presents various groupings of these characters as figures to whom others listen and from whom they might learn. Throughout text, these "traditional" experts, both wise and obtuse, are knowledgeable to a point but unable to interpret the *real* meanings of the sources they command. Moreover, their own actions misalign with what they teach.[17] In what follows I suggest that Matthew draws himself into an implicit and ultimately favorable comparison with others recognized for the sort of expertise he claims. Whereas we might expect him to undermine them entirely, he has more to gain from affirming their abilities to a point of limitation, which then occasions a demonstration of superiority.

[17] "The scribes and Pharisees sit on Moses' seat; therefore, do whatever they teach you and follow it; but do not do as they do, for they do not practice what they teach." Matt 23:2-3

The first instance of this phenomenon is found in Matthew's infancy narrative, with the arrival in Jerusalem of magi from the east wishing to prostrate themselves before the king of the Judeans, whose recent birth they discerned from the appearance of a star. Their declaration of this intention to the current king, Herod, dismays him (ἐταράχθη).[18] He then gathers around him trusted interpreters of Judean prophecy, the chief priests and scribes of the people, to inquire of them where the messiah is to be born. They reply—correctly according to the logic of this gospel—in Bethlehem of Judea, and justify this position with recourse to prophecy: "And you Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the ruler of Judah, for from you shall come a ruler who is to shepherd my people Israel" (Matt 2:5–6).

The quotation here combines language from Micah 5:2 and 2 Samuel 5:2.[19] Stendhal argues that Matt 2:6 is better understood as a citation, rather than a quotation, because of the lack of word agreement between *Matthew*, the LXX^{B}, and the Masoretic text.[20] Because of the freehand use of Micah this suggests, Stendhal argues that Matthew is not quoting but rather

[18] Matthew adds "and all Jerusalem with him" which Luz notes serves a literary goal, as it is ahistoric. Herod was not well-liked in Jerusalem, and the birth of a messianic child would have, historically, been more likely to elicit joy rather than dismay. Matthew's concern is not with historicity, but with literary structure and narrative flow: the dismay of the Jerusalemites at Jesus's birth parallels the participation of the people of Jerusalem in Jesus's death. With this dismay, and the isolated use of "king of the Jews," a phrase that Matthew does not use again until the passion narrative, Matthew foreshadows responsibility for Jesus's death that he places on the Jerusalemites at 27:25 ("His blood come on us and our children"). Luz, *Matthew 1-7*, 113. The arrival of the magi is explored more fully in section 4.1.2 "Magi 2:12.".

[19] Blended quotations were not uncommon in early Judaism, and Matthew may here be following an established pattern of supplementing prophecy or revelation from one book of the Judean writings with another, which we have evidence from in the Qumran materials, particularly *4QpaleoExod^{m}.* In her study of this text Judith Sanderson writes that when copying prophecy or revelation it appears that the "*words* of revelation were treated with more care than the *form* and *structure*." Judith E. Sanderson, *An Exodus Scroll from Qumran: 4QPaleoExodm and the Samaritan Tradition* (Atlanta: Scholars, 1986), 271. Emphasis original. A scribe could take material from other books, of other locations in the same book to supplement or adjust revelatory texts, to produce a required narrative or message, without losing any of the revelatory or prophetic value of the original quotation. It is possible that Matthew's intention in his blend of Micah and 2 Samuel follows this procedure for creating use-specific copies of other texts.

[20] Stendahl, *The School of St. Matthew*, 99. John Hawkins argued, from statistical evidence he gathered, that those quotations introduced by Matthew showed a decreased correspondence with the LXX over those Matthew adopted from Q or Mark. John C Hawkins, *Horae Synopticae: Contributions to the Study of the Synoptic Problem*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1909), 154–56.

citing Micah 5:2 with a supporting "similar expression" from 2 Samuel.[21] Soares Prabhu disagrees, conceiving of Matt 2:6 a "composite quotation" while noting that this version of Micah 5:2 "resembles no known text."[22] Soares Prabhu explains this as Matthew's own translation of the original Hebrew into Greek, and argues that the addition of "in the land of Judah" (γῆ Ἰούδα) is not a geographical note intended to distinguish this Bethlehem from a city of the same name in Galilee, as some have proposed, but rather to draw further attention to the criterion of Davidic ancestry primed in Matthew's genealogy.[23]

In this scene Matthew attributes some capacity for prophetic interpretation to the chief priests and scribes by showing that they are capable of identifying which verses from the Judean writings are about the messiah. However, this capacity for interpretation is given only begrudgingly. The quotation in 2:6 is not preceded by Matthew's fulfilment formula ("all this took place to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet saying"), which is why I have not included in my strict summary of the fulfilment citations above. Luz writes that Matthew "avoids" putting the fulfilment formula in the mouth of the scribes.[24] If this was Matthew's goal, it may be to sidestep the impression that traditional experts agreed that Jesus was in fact the awaited messiah. Their lack of recognition to this effect does not negate entirely their interpretive aptitude: they are able to correctly identify the prophecy, and therefore ascertain a key criterion for the messiah's arrival. Hence even in the absence of a fulfilment formula citation Matt 2:6 still qualifies as an instance of prophetic fulfilment. Moreover, the traditional

[21] Stendahl, *The School of St. Matthew*, 99.
[22] Soares Prabhu, *The Formula Quotations in the Infancy Narrative of Matthew*, 261–62. Matthew uses three composite quotations in his *Gospel*, at 21:5, 21:13, and 2:6. Early commentators on the *Gospel* sought to explain Matthew's use of composite quotations as well. Jerome, for instance, wrote in his commentary on Micah that Matthew placed an "incorrect" quotation in the mouth of the scribes and Chief Priests to show how careless they were with the writings. Stendahl, *The School of St. Matthew*, 101.
[23] Soares Prabhu, *The Formula Quotations in the Infancy Narrative of Matthew*, 263, 292.
[24] Luz, *Matthew*, 1:113.

interpreters correctly identify a *messianic* prophecy, even if they fail to recognize that it has been fulfilled by Jesus's birth.

These traditional experts have thus failed in their second function. They may know the writings and even recognize in them prophecies of contemporary relevance, yet they fall short of appreciating that what was prophesied is now transpiring.[25] If we examine this scene holistically, it introduces a theme to which Matthew will return repeatedly throughout his text: all *true* knowledge comes from God, and to interpret this knowledge correctly is a divinely conferred ability allocated only to certain interpreters. More specifically, Matthew creates two distinct categories of interpreters: "experts" who know the writings as a function of tutored, human ability; and "inexpert" or unconventional interpreters, who both know them *and* can discern their hidden meanings through divine sanction. The latter category includes, foremost, Jesus himself, but also the author, for whom Jesus serves as a narrative proxy. In this way, Matthew the author (and narrator) elevates his own abilities and understanding above those of any other recognized interpreters of the same texts and, in so doing claims their religious authority for himself.

2.2.1 Matthew as Traditional Interpreter

The failure of traditional interpreters to recognise that Jesus fulfills the messianic prophecies found in the Judean writings is the foundation on which Matthew builds his own legitimacy. By demonstrating a superior ability to receive and apply divine wisdom, Matthew matches but then exceeds the sort of "expertise" he invests in these characters. This strategy of self-authorization fits into the mold of freelance religious experts, who are "self-authorized purveyor(s) of religious teachings and other practices who drew upon such abilities in pursuit of various social

[25] Matthew uses the same structure of knowledge without understanding and interpretation in his discussion of the Mosaic laws against divorce which I discuss in below in section 2.2.2.2 "Divorce."

benefits."[26] Matthew's implied rivalry with the traditional religious authorities present in his narrative, and his begrudging allotment of interpretive ability to these characters, highlights his need to create his own authority.

Wendt's theorization of competitive dynamics among writer-intellectuals, introduced above in the discussion of freelance religious experts, is especially apt for analyzing how Matthew constructs different forms of religious expertise. One feature that many experts shared was a tendency toward "eclecticism," boasting multiple specialities that could be combined in novel configurations. Wendt points to the "Greekling" in Juvenal's third satire as an illustration of the expert who can become whatever is desired: "*grammaticus, rhetor, geometres, pictor, aliptes, augur, schoenobates, medicus, magus*—your *Graeculus* has every talent."[27] Matthew does not claim mastery of every area listed by Juvenal, but he does display the all-in-one expertise that Juvenal derides.[28] Throughout his gospel, Matthew showcases his abilities as a scribe, an orator, and an expert in assorted types of divination. He composes texts, pens orations, exhibits knowledge of Stoic philosophy, identifies and interprets signs in natural phenomena, divines the meaning of dreams, and suggests astrological knowledge.[29] Of course, Juvenal is a satirist for whom intellectual versatility is a sign of misrepresentation, amateurism, and wrong incentives. I am not suggesting that Matthew was risible or insincere but find it noteworthy that his self-presentation bears out the satirical portrait of a would-be expert from an altogether different perspective. Matthew assembles his diverse tools to position himself as a sort of generalist,

[26] Wendt, *At the Temple Gates*, 10. Wendt imposes this etic category only a particular type of religious specialist as a way of categorizing and *thinking with*.
[27] Juvenal, *Sat*. 3.76-77; Wendt, *At the Temple Gates*, 114.
[28] "For Juvenal and similar authors, versatility is not something to be championed but a sign that one is capable of affecting different guises without possessing any real expertise." Wendt, *At the Temple Gates*, 114–15.
[29] For Matthew and Stoicism, see Stowers, Stanley K, "Jesus the Teacher and Stoic Ethics in the Gospel of Matthew," in *Stoicism in Early Christianity*, ed. Tuomas Rasimus, Troels Engberg-Pedersen, and Ismo Dunderberg (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010), 59–76.

wielding each when rhetorically appropriate while impressing readers with their sheer variety. Within the narrative of the gospel, Jesus exhibits the same qualities, although in his case on account of his status as the son of God and awaited messiah. And yet, the symmetry between narrative protagonist and author establishes a lineage connecting the messiah's authority with the person who most fully and accurately recognizes his status as such.

2.2.1.1 Magic vs Religion

One of Wendt's contributions is to draw attention to the category confusion surrounding figures whom she treats as "religious" experts but whom others have characterised as "practitioners of "magic.""[30] The difference in approach or taxonomy stems, she argues, from a confusion of "religion" as a redescribed object of analysis—any social practices that directly involved the gods and other divine beings—with various discourses that developed *about* such practices, nearly always in the service of normative interests. With Wendt, I am convinced that the production of the category "magic" as a normative foil (e.g. to *religio,* Christianity) was an effective strategy for implying essential difference between religious practices that were otherwise indistinguishable. To label certain practices "magic" or a practitioner a "magician" privileged a favorable term of comparison by discrediting its opposite, even if or precisely because the two were, analytically, *not* essentially different. While such labeling was often done at the expense of self-authorized experts as a whole, individual experts wielded the same strategy against one another. The notion of self-authorized expertise must be a nuanced one; I think it likely that the effort of self-authorization present in *Matthew*, and in Justin Martyr's *Dialogue*, whose relevant to the present discussion I will establish below, reflects real-world experiences of the author. The issue is not merely literary, but also indicative of the competitive dynamics that

[30] Wendt, *At the Temple Gates*, 115.

defined relations among varieties of freelance experts. In some instances of polemic against "magicians" by practitioners of "religion" or allied concepts, the very authors working to delegitimate others were vulnerable to the same charge. It is in this sense that early Christian authors used writings to deauthorize other religious experts like them as "magicians" while legitimating their own versions of the same or similar practices as "miracles," maybe in response to those would discredit Christians themselves as "magicians."[31]

While categories might create an impression of essential difference where none existed, in these texts "magic" and "miracle" are interdependent taxa rooted in discursive competition.[32] Thus, these acts of labeling are not merely discursive but also inherently polemical: through the act of defining and evaluating, one type of practitioner becomes rational and valid, the other, irrational and false. In ancient sources, then, "validity" is a literary construct, whereby an *author* serves as the ultimate arbiter of what counts as magic or miracle. In narrative literature, the observance of a practice, event, or practitioner is often insufficient for *characters* to make these determinations; to them, magic and miracles present as the same. The results are likewise indistinguishable: when Jesus heals a mute demoniac in Matt 9:32–34, the Pharisees claim that he acted through the power not of God but of demons. It is in keeping with the context of freelance expertise for Matthew to place Jesus's supporters and detractors in opposing camps, whose positions make explicit the power and effect of labeling.

[31] "In non-canonical acts literature the apostles' miracles provoke the charge from their pagan opponents, thus providing a dramatic backdrop for the divine authentication of the apostles and the eventual discomfiture or conversion of the opponents." Harold Remus, "'Magic or Miracle'? Some Second Century Instances," *SecCent* 2 (1982): 133.

[32] Shaily Patel addresses this phenomenon in her analysis of "magic" in *Luke-Acts*. "When the author of Luke-Acts accused others of practicing magic, he makes a normative claim contrasting the "signs" or miracles of his protagonists against these "magicians. In short, some Christians do miracles, which outsiders do magic." Shaily Patel, "Notes on Rehabilitating 'Magic' in the Study of Early Christian Literature," *RC* 15 (2021).

From this anecdote we can surmise that actions and effects understood to be accomplished by one agent looked much the same to the casual observer as those attributed to another, "illegitimate" alternative. Adjudicating the difference was the task of specialists of the sort whom Matthew presents himself to be. I argue that his distinction between miracles and magic is ultimately a matter of who or what the author chooses to legitimate, and therefore functions analogously to how he portrays—and performs—prophetic interpretation. The inability of the lay observer or casual reader to distinguish correct from incorrect textual interpretation requires, Matthew insists, a "true" specialist. By routinely disqualifying other interpreters while showcasing his own mastery, this author implicitly positions himself as that expert, although Jesus serves as his *narrative* proxy. Matthew further conveys to his readers that while the ordinary observer might be fooled about what constitutes true or valid expertise, *informed* or *skilled* readers will not. In so doing, he creates a requirement for expert knowledge in all matters of religious interpretation while laying claim to that indispensable role. At the same time, he patterns his audience's sense of what will constitute effective engagement with the gospel: the ideal, competent reader is the one who grants Matthew's expertise.

2.2.2 Matthew Authorized through Jesus

Matthew's source redactions and interpretations of textual prophecy are evidence for ancient readers and scholars alike of how he constructed his own religious expertise. For the former, these acts displayed a command of sought-after intellectual skills and literate knowledge, while for the latter they provide clues to his social positioning and ambitions. Matthew's textual strategy is by no mean unique among contemporaneous authors. Justin Martyr—a second-century author who shares Matthew's concerns about religious authority and the correct interpretation of the Judean writings—employs many of the same tactics as Matthew in his

Dialogue with Trypho. While *Matthew* and the *Dialogue* are of different genres, they are temporally and conceptually close; Justin, moreover, is aware and makes ample use of material found in *Matthew*, so that scholars presume he knew an early version of the gospel, even if he does not refer to it as such. Moreover, as a temporally and culturally proximate reader of Matthean material, that a known writer such as Justin—whose social setting and interests are clearer than those of an anonymous author—put that material to similar ends suggests he was sensitive to precisely the dynamics I am positing for the gospel author. Justin's apparent knowledge of *Matthew*, and his use of similar authorial strategies, suggests that he was sensitive to the dynamics of self-authorization and competition I posit are present in *Matthew*. Importantly, both Matthew and Justin wield exegesis of Judean prophecy as a tool for dispossessing the interpretive authority of characters presented as traditional interpreters—for Matthew, the chief priests, Pharisees, scribes, and even the "tempter," while for Justin, Trypho and his Judean companions—so as to take it up themselves. Consideration of their similar textual dynamics, above all their respective constructions of religious and interpretive authority, thus offers a useful comparandum for the reading of *Matthew* I have proposed.

In Justin's writings the person being authorized is clear: he writes himself into the text as an authoritative exegete, even if there may still be a meaningful distinction to draw between Justin the author and Justin the character.[33] In *Matthew,* however, the beneficiary of the expertise cultivated in the text is subtle and layered; within the narrative, Jesus is the obvious one, yet the author is omnipresent both implicitly, as the fabricator of that persona, and explicitly as the narrator who periodically coordinates biography with messianic prophecies. That is, Matthew displays his own abilities equally within the narrative, through his fashioning of Jesus's expertise

[33] See Introduction section 1.7 "Narratology" for a discussion of author / narrator distinctions.

vis-à-vis that of other experts, and in the meta-narrative he constructs (e.g., through fulfillment citations). Hence when I examine *Matthew*'s portrayal of Jesus as the "supreme exegete" in what follows, and the effects of its meta-narrative in a subsequent chapter, these foci are inseparable from the author's own aims. I explore the theme of Matthew's competitive self-authorization, first, by studying how his temptation scene and discussion of divorce establish Jesus as an expert in divination, and then, by comparing the literary dynamics I identify to Justin's debate with Trypho about the correct interpretation of prophecies from Isaiah (*Dial.* 43.8; 43.8; 66.2; 67.1). I also propose that the Matthean Transfiguration offers a novel explanation for the source of Jesus's abilities. Since the Temptation depends on Q, and both the Transfiguration and the teaching about divorce on Mark, making the case for a common redactional logic across these pericopes supports my contention that they were part of a coordinated literary strategy that bolstered the author's superiority in not only oracular exegesis, but also the transmission of Jesus traditions.

2.2.2.1 The Temptation

The story of Jesus's temptation by the devil and his time in the desert introduces the motif of competitive discourse in this gospel. Immediately following Jesus's baptism by John, the temptation episode creates an environment in which Matthew, through Jesus, can display his superior knowledge and understanding of the Judean writings. Matthew opens the scene by telling the reader that Jesus was led into the wilderness "by the spirit to be tempted by the devil (ὑπὸ τοῦ πνεύματος πειρασθῆναι ὑπὸ τοῦ διαβόλου)" (Matt 4:1 // Luke 4:1). In this pericope Jesus engages in competitive discourse through exegesis of the Judean writings with a character Matthew first identifies as "the devil" and later calls "the tempter" (ὁ πειράζων). The parallel character in *Mark* is identified as "the adversary" (τοῦ σατανᾶ) and appears in *Luke* as "the devil" (διαβόλος). In *Matthew*, the devil challenges Jesus three times to test God's own fidelity,

and three times Jesus responds with verses from the Judean writings that refute each specific challenge. The temptation is the first time in the gospel that Jesus engages with another character in discursive competition, and Matthew has Jesus use these Judean writings as tools of authority in his competition with the devil. Matthew casts Jesus's assorted rivals with care, and all evince one important characteristic: they are *worthy* opponents. Each discursive sparring partner—whether the tempter, the scribes, the chief priests, or the Pharisees—is granted sufficient knowledge and skill to go head-to-head with Jesus. For Matthew's protagonist, having a worthy opponent makes the victory that will ensue more valuable. Moreover, since the latter opponents were broadly recognized for expertise in Judean textual interpretation and other forms of ethnically coded religious expertise, besting them confirmed that Jesus possessed all the same and more.

All three Synoptics contain a temptation scene, although Matthew's version depends on the Sayings Source rather than that of Mark, or Mark's alone. Luz thinks the former likely "originated relatively late without direct dependence on the Markan temptation story."[34] The Markan version is much shorter, only two verses, compared to Matthew's eleven, which are paralleled in *Luke*. In addition, *Mark* makes no mention of Judean writings. Again, the additions are not wholly Matthean, since Matthew's version seems indebted to Q, but he makes significant redactions to his main source. As is his wont, Matthew used Mark's chronology and narrative framework for his pericope. Matthew brackets the Q narrative with the Markan verses, and following *Mark* locates the temptation between the baptism and the return to Galilee.

For Evans, the purpose of the temptation narrative is to cement Jesus's position as the messiah who will "save his people from their sins" (Matt 1:21). Jesus has just been identified as

[34] Luz, *Matthew*, 1:148.

the son of God, and the temptations do not "challenge the divine sonship of Jesus" but instead they "attempt to misdirect it" in order to "render it powerless and ineffective."[35] This testing fails, and Jesus's success renders his position even firmer. Luz agrees, as does Wilson, who additionally suggests that it is no coincidence that the first quotation from the Judean writings found in the double tradition temptation story is from an extensive sermon given by Moses to the Israelites just before they crossed over the Jordan River.[36] Like the Israelites, Jesus was tested in the wilderness, and it was through total submission to the word of God as written in the books of both the law and the prophets, that both were delivered into safety. The necessity of this submission is clearly articulated in the quotation at Matt 4:4. In Matthew's version of the temptation, Jesus responds to the devil's (διαβόλος) first challenge, an exhortation that he turn stones into loaves of bread, with the following words, "It is written, one will not live upon bread alone, but upon every word coming out from the mouth of God" (Matt 4:4; quoting Deut 8:3).

Matthew 4:4	Q 4:4	Deuteronomy 8:3
ὁ δὲ ἀποκριθεὶς εἶπεν· Γέγραπται· Οὐκ ἐπ᾽ ἄρτῳ μόνῳ ζήσεται ὁ ἄνθρωπος, ἀλλ᾽ ἐπὶ παντὶ ῥήματι ἐκπορευομένῳ διὰ στόματος θεοῦ.	καὶ ἀπεκρίθη πρὸς αὐτῷ ὁ Ἰησοῦς· Γέγραπται ὅτι Οὐκ ἐπ᾽ ἄρτῳ μόνῳ ζήσεται ὁ ἄνθρωπος	οὐκ ἐπ᾽ ἄρτῳ μόνῳ ζήσεται ὁ ἄνθρωπος, ἀλλ᾽ ἐπὶ παντὶ ῥήματι τῷ ἐκπορευομένῳ διὰ στόματος θεοῦ
And he answers saying, it is written, the person does not live by bread alone, but by every word coming forth from the mouth of God.	And Jesus answered to them: it is written that the person can not live by bread alone.	The person cannot live by bread alone, but by every word that is coming forth from the mouth of God.

The quotation in *Matthew* derives from the LXX of Deut 8:3, also present in the Q, but Q uses an abbreviated form that lacks the second clause, "but by every word coming forth from the mouth

[35] Evans, *Matthew*, 80.
[36] Luz, *Matthew*, 1:151; Wilson, *Matthew*, 1:102–3.

of God." Matthew's addition of this clause gives an exact explanation of what humanity (*ho anthropos*) is meant to obey: the words of God, as found in the Judean writings. In Q, the quotation relates to hunger, to Jesus's direct bodily experiences in the desert. Matthew's addition, however, moves the discussion out of the realm of the body into that of the mind. Jesus's admonition of the devil is not about being hungry, but about the nature of obedience, how people are meant to know what God desires for them. Luz suggests that the entire remainder of the gospel serves to explicate the meaning of the quotation at 4:4.[37] As part of his salvific role, here and elsewhere in *Matthew* Jesus's mission is to teach correct interpretations of the Judean writings—those things that issue "forth from the mouth of God"—so that those who are worthy and able to hear and understand might be welcomed into the kingdom of the heavens. Those who will not, or cannot, hear and understand, will have no place in the kingdom of the heavens.

The value that Matthew places on the Judean writings themselves is emphasized in the temptation narrative, as is the value of correct interpretation. Jesus is able to quote the Judean writings to the devil, who is himself depicted as an interpreter of the same texts, although his interpretations are proven incorrect. The temptation marks the first time in the gospel that the reader properly encounters Jesus as a teacher and interpreter—our first example in *Matthew* of exegesis of the Judean writings as a competitive practice—and as such Matthew takes full advantage of the opportunity to assert his superior insight and wisdom into those texts. In v. 6, the devil encourages Jesus to throw himself off the highest point of the temple so that God might send angels to hold him up (cf. Psalm 91:11–12). Jesus responds pithily, "Do not test the lord your God" (Matt 4:7). On a literal level his response is a rejection of the devil's suggestion that he put God's fidelity to the test. When we take Jesus's second response in concert with his earlier

[37] Luz, *Matthew*, 1:154.

quotation of Deut 8:3, however, the takeaway is that people ought not test God and must instead be obedient to his *word*, which obligation is only possible through the correct interpretation of the writings that contain it. Matthew tells the reader that while the devil can *quote* those texts, he cannot correctly ascertain their meanings. Jesus, who triumphs over the devil in what is ultimately a competition of words, is shown not only to know the writings but also and essentially to grasp their *meaning*. Wilson argues that the point of the temptation is not to demonstrate that Jesus is "learned in scripture, but that he is obedient to the will of God as revealed in scripture."[38] I would suggest that the goals we identify are parallel and require one-another to be coherent: in order for Jesus to be obedient according to the definition put forth, he must first understand and interpret God's will, as revealed in "scripture."

2.2.2.2 Divorce

In Matt 19:3–12, where Jesus debates the Pharisees about divorce, the former is revealed further to possess superior abilities in the interpretation of Mosaic law. As in the scene of the temptation, through a narrative anecdote about Jesus besting worthy opponents the author shows that he, too, can play and win at this game. Nested in a section where Jesus teaches by telling parables, the text describes Jesus's travel to the "region of Judea beyond the Jordan" (19:1), where he healed many who followed him. In this heavily re-worked episode sourced from *Mark* (//10:1-10), Matthew explains that the Pharisees have come for the purpose of testing (πειράζοντες, 19:3) Jesus's knowledge of the divorce commandment (Μωϋσῆς ἐνετείλατο δοῦναι βιβλίον ἀποστασίου καὶ ἀπολῦσαι, 19:7). I think it likely that the author intended his audience to understand this scene as representative of competitive discourse on any such subject, so that the specific explication of divorce models a general stance toward Mosaic law. In it, the Pharisees

[38] Wilson, *Matthew*, 1:110.

ask Jesus whether it is lawful for a man to divorce his wife, and when he tells them it is not, they insist that it is indeed lawful according to Mosaic law. Jesus responds that while Moses *did* allow for divorce, this provision existed only because of people's "hardheartedness" from creation (ἀπ' ἀρχῆς), however, God did not allow for divorce. Matthew's Jesus is able to see the entirety of the Judean writings (in whatever form Matthew imagines them to take) as a unified whole. This is seen in his ability to synthesize material from multiple books, here Genesis and Deuteronomy, reading them intertextually to show, here, that while Deut 24:1–4 on its face may make an allowance for divorce, God's ideal intention for humanity was altogether different. Whether this interpretation is correct is beside the point; Matthew *presents* it as correct, and Jesus as a more knowledgeable interpreter than contemporaneous figures synonymous with such expertise. While the Pharisees and Jesus appeal to the same texts, and are able to teach the texts as they are written, the former lack the latter's superior insight into their "deeper" meanings, and therefore teach only incorrect interpretations. Matthew is explicit about why the Pharisees' interpret incorrectly in 19:8, where he implies that they do not possess the necessary wisdom to interpret the writings correctly because they were so "hardhearted" (σκληροκαρδίαν); it was on account of this hardheartedness that Moses allowed for divorce at all. Hence why these renowned legal experts are unable to understand that divorce, while permitted in letter, contradicts the spirit of the law, as it were: their hearts or minds lack the divine wisdom to which Jesus—and Matthew through Jesus—had access.

2.2.2.2.1 Hard-Heartedness in Matthew

Matthew's theme of hard-heartedness is, I suggest, rooted in this author's broader interest in likening Jesus to Moses, specifically the competition between Moses and Aaron, on one side, and Pharaoh's advisors, sophists and "magicians," on the other. In Exodus, hard-heartedness is a condition that God afflicts intentionally to prevent people understanding, that they may then act

upon, his true will. Aaron, on Moses's command, engages in a contest of signs and wonders (σεμέια and τέρας) with Egyptian "magicians" (Αἰγυπτίων ταῖς φαρμακείαις) to convince Pharaoh of God's omnipotence so that he might release the Hebrews from enslavement. However, at each stage this intended result is prevented from being realized by none other than God, for whom the context is a pretext for displaying his power in Egypt. Time and again God intervenes to "harden Pharaoh's heart" (σκληρυνῶ τὴν καρδίαν Φαραω, Ex. 7:3. Cf. 7:13, 22; 8:15, 19, 32; 9:7, 12, 34; 10:20, 27; 11:10) and thereby reverse his intention to release the Hebrews, lengthening Egypt's trials to occasion greater display of might.

Matthew's use of the theme of hard-heartedness is reflective of his understanding of the abilities and roles of the Pharisees and other traditional Judean interpreters. In Exodus, the theme of heart-hardening recurs as a formulaic conclusion to each plague, just after Pharoah has decided to relent.[39] The Egyptians see nothing unusual or extraordinary in the acts of power that Moses performs through Aaron, since similar acts could also be performed by their magicians. It is only after the tenth plague, which brings death upon all the firstborn of Egypt, that Pharaoh is finally able to carry out his intention, releasing the Hebrews into the wilderness to worship God. It is worth noting that God will harden Pharaoh's heart yet again, so that the Hebrews are pursued up to the Red Sea, where God enables Moses to part its waters. The key throughout the story is that God alone who bends the will of human hearts as he chooses. Analogously, the Pharisees, although matching certain of Jesus's knowledge and interpretive abilities, are unable to *understand* them because of hardheartedness. They know well Moses's explicit command that wives be given a writ of divorce but cannot grasp, as can Jesus, that profounder divine

[39] Exodus 7:22, 8:15, 19, 32, 9:7, 12, 35, 10:20, 27. This is one of the indications that while Jesus is the new Moses, *so is Matthew*.

knowledge is scattered throughout his writings, including the creation account.[40] Rather than reading them intertextually, the Pharisees take the easy route, interpreting each law in isolation and on its face.

2.2.2.3 The Transfiguration

In the scenes discussed above, Jesus is imbued with the ability to correctly interpret divinely inspired writings. The author evidences this ability through events of competitive interpretation between Jesus and formidable opponents, the tempter and the Pharisees. In this next section, I argue that the so-called transfiguration scene makes apparent the twofold source of Jesus's unparalleled interpretive abilities, which is his association with Moses and his absorption of Mosaic attributes. Matthew's presentation of Jesus as the "new Moses" is first cultivated through typological parallels in the infancy narrative, particularly that of the flight and return from Egypt, but in the transfiguration contains imagery that primes readers understand that Jesus not only succeeds but also supersedes Moses as the supreme interpreter of God's word.

The transfiguration narrative, wherein Jesus retreats to a mountain top with a select group of acolytes and experiences a sort of apotheosis, as found in both *Matthew* and *Mark* has been described as a "resurrection" story, whereby the transfigured body of Jesus is understood as an appearance of the resurrected Jesus.[41] Scholars also associate the transfiguration scene with the

[40] Of course, Matthew the author may have just thought that divorce was inherently wrong, and created this narrative tool to justify his belief. Even if this is so, however, my interpretation still stands. Matthew's Jesus sees the Law and the Prophets as holistic texts, able to be woven together and interpreted together. In this thinking, Matthew, like Moses, is given a birds-eye-view of the entire narrative, a view that the traditional interpreters are not able to access or understand.

[41] See Delbert Burkett, "The Transfiguration of Jesus (Mark 9:2-8): Epiphany or Apotheosis?," *JBL* 138 (2019): 413–32. For discussion of possible analogies in *Mark* with Paul's position of the spiritual and fleshly duality of Jesus see Gitte Buch-Hansen, "The Politics of Beginnings – Cosmology, Christology and Covenant: Gospel Openings Reconsidered in the Light of Paul's Pneumatology," in *Mark and Paul Comparative Essays Part II. For and Against Pauline Influence on Mark*, BZNW 199 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2014), 213–42. and Heidi Wendt, "Secrecy as Pauline Influence on the Gospel of Mark," *JBL* 140 (2021): 579–600.

appearance of the resurrected Jesus on a mountain in analyses of Matt 28:16. Evans rejects the identification of the transfiguration with resurrection, since our earliest resurrection accounts lack descriptions of the "the kind of luminosity depicted in the transfiguration."[42] For the genre of this story in Mark, Yarbro Collins suggests biblical theophany is most appropriate, with aspects of the Hellenistic genre of metamorphosis.[43] Luz notes that the story in *Matthew* "doubtless contains reminiscences of the Sinai traditions" in Exodus 24 and 33–34, which maintains the genre of theophany from *Mark*. He adds as well that there are allusions to inthronization rituals of the Jerusalem kings. Through an appearance of God on a mountain, together with Moses and Elijah and select disciples as witnesses, Jesus is "enthroned as the Son of God."[44]

My thinking aligns with Yarbro Collins and Luz in the importance of the biblical theophany genre in both versions. In addition, I adhere to Luz's description of Matthew's transfiguration narrative as "polyvalent," in that he refers to the genres of theophany and inthronization.[45] I would, however, add another valence: Matthew's transfiguration also serves to illustrate how Jesus receives his knowledge and insight directly from God. In this moment, we see Jesus transformed both bodily and intellectually through interaction with Elijah, Moses, and God. I will discuss Matthew's redaction of the Markan transfiguration as an illustration of how he associates Jesus with Moses before concluding with precisely how this author constructs the sort of knowledge and insight he privileges throughout the gospel.[46]

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[42] Evans, *Matthew*, 320.
[43] Adela Yarbro Collins, *Mark*, ed. Harold W Attridge, Hermeneia--A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007), 417.
[44] Ulrich Luz, *Matthew*, 2:397.
[45] Luz, *Matthew*, 2:397.
[46] The association between Moses and Jesus is one of wisdom, but also of interpretive authority over the "Books of Moses" which itself has the effect of underscoring expertise in Matthew's own writing.

2.2.2.3.1 The New Moses

Matthew's most significant redaction of the transfiguration occurs in 17:2, where he adds a detail about Jesus's face that is lacking from *Mark*.[47]

Mark 9:2b-3	Matthew 17:2
καὶ μετεμορφώθη ἔμπροσθεν αὐτῶν, **3** καὶ τὰ ἱμάτια αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο στίλβοντα λευκὰ λίαν οἷα γναφεὺς ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς οὐ δύναται οὕτως λευκᾶναι.	καὶ μετεμορφώθη ἔμπροσθεν αὐτῶν, καὶ ἔλαμψεν τὸ πρόσωπον αὐτοῦ ὡς ὁ ἥλιος, τὰ δὲ ἱμάτια αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο λευκὰ ὡς τὸ φῶς.
And he was metamorphosized before them, and his clothes became radiant white, such as no fuller on earth was able to whiten them.	And he was metamorphosized before them, and his face shone as the sun, and his clothes became white like light.

In both gospels, Jesus's clothing became a brilliant white in the moment of his metamorphosis; only in *Matthew*, however, is it said that his "face shone as the sun." The addition has a revealing parallel in Philo's *Life of Moses*. In Philo's account of the descent from Sinai, the Hebrews were unable to look directly at Moses because of the "dazzling brightness that flashed from him like rays of the sun."[48] The *Testament of Levi*, a likely first-century BCE text, describes the arrival of a saviour figure in the person of a priest, who will, at his coming, "shine forth as the sun on earth." (*T. Levi* 18.4)[49] In *Sifre Bamidbar* 140 on Num 27:20 the Rabbis write that "the face of Moses was like the face of the sun; the face of Joshua was like the face of the moon." Num 27:12–23 recounts Joshua's appointment as Moses's successor. I am not proposing that Matthew

[47] Also missing is Mark's reference to the fuller, which was done in *Matthew*, *Luke*, and some manuscripts of *Mark*, according to Wellhausen, because of its "plebian" nature. Julius Wellhausen, *Das Evangelium Marci Übersetzt Und Erklärt* (Berlin: G. Reimer, 1903), 69., in Collins, *Mark*, 422.

[48] "καὶ μηδ᾽ ἐπὶ πλέον ἀντέχειν τοῖς ὀφθαλμοῖς δύνασθαι κατὰ τὴν προσβολὴν ἡλιοειδοῦς φέγγους ἀπαστράπτοντος." Philo, *De vita Mosis II*, 70

[49] Evans identifies the priest in *T. Levi* 18 as the "Messiah." While the author of the *Testament* is clearly presenting the priest as a saviour and transformer of the world, the term "messiah" is not present in the Aramaic version of the text. Evans, *Matthew*, 321. De Jonge argues that the Greek text of the *Testament* is Christian, that the Aramaic version cannot reliably be reconstructed, and that the messiah described in the text is Jesus. Marinus de Jonge, "Levi, the Sons of Levi and the Law, in Testament Levi X, XIV-XV and XV," in *De La Tôrah Au Messie. Mélanges Henry Cazelles*, ed. J Dore, P Grelot, and M Carrez (Paris: Desclee, 1981), 513–23.

relied on any of these texts. While scholars may have read Mosaic themes into *Matthew* where they are not present, it seems unlikely that Matthew intended his readers to think of anything other than the Sinai tradition that he received from *Mark* and then increased when reading the transfiguration account. Due to the parallel imagery between Moses upon his descent from Sinai in Ex. 34:29-35 and that of Jesus during his encounter on the mountain, as well as the very presence of Moses during this scene, and the description of God in the cloud, I argue that we must understand the transfiguration as attributing to Jesus, in an explicit manner, a transfer of, and an increase to, Mosaic textual authority. In addition, Jesus's legal authority is an increase of Moses's, as he is empowered to reinterpret and change the Law as given to Moses, as we see in the discussion on divorce (Matt 19:3-12) treated above.

Evans sees evidence of Mosaic tradition in descriptions of Jesus as a way to "enhance Jesus's law-giving authority."[50] By contrast, Luz argues that Moses and Elijah do not represent the Law and the Prophets in the Transfiguration account, but are "simply representatives of the heavenly world."[51] This seems to me at once overly complicated and too simplistic. Matthew's most common presentation of Moses in the gospel is as an expert in the law. Why would this not be the case in the transfiguration? And, if Moses and Elijah are "simply representatives of the heavenly world," then really any other figure could serve just as well. Why not Joshua and Elisha? Or Deborah and Samuel? That Matthew chose to keep Moses and Elijah here, as they are in *Mark*, must have some significance, and the most likely significance for Matthew is as representations of expertise in the law and prophecy. Matthew presents Moses as an authoritative law interpreter and constructs Jesus in this same way. However, Matthew's Jesus goes a step further than Moses; where Moses is presented as interpreting oral law *spoken* by to him by God

[50] Evans, *Matthew*, 321.
[51] Luz, *Matthew*, 2:398.

(Ex 34:4–35:29, esp. 34:21; 35:2) Jesus is empowered with authority to adjust or contextualize law through inter-textual or *re*-interpretation. This is clearly seen in the teachings on divorce. While Mark resists connecting Jesus with Moses, insisting instead that Jesus is a unique "character," the Son of God and Christ, here and elsewhere Matthew is at pains to fix a typological connection between Moses and Jesus, in order to claim for the latter, the wisdom and literary authority associated primarily with the former. As for associations with Elijah, Matthew thereby gains, for Jesus, prophetic authority outside of literary divinations. By claiming this authority for Jesus, Matthew claims it for himself in turn, convincing his audience that he possesses a more fulsome and legitimate understanding of Jesus tradition than any other. Just as Jesus has the wisdom and authority to reinterpret Mosaic Law, Matthew has license to rework his sources and exposit Judean oracles when composing his gospel.

2.3 Justin's Exegesis of Isaiah

Matthew's creation of characters with exegetical and interpretative prowess bolsters his own authority. This was in keeping with the cultural norms of his era. The crowded arena of competitive textuality created a climate in which mere possession of books and knowledge of their contents was sufficient for identification as a textual specialist, but the crowded field required ever increasing displays of ability. A religious expert who enlisted texts could provide this increase through display not only knowledge of texts, but also the ability to uncover hidden meanings embedded in texts often claimed to be divinely inspired.[52] In his texts Justin Martyr, an approximate contemporary of Matthew, exhibits similar methods for claiming textual authority. Indeed, his exegesis of Isaiah in the *Dialogue with Trypho* displays many of the same concerns with interpretation and competitive discourse that I have illustrated in *Matthew*. Justin, who

[52] Wendt, "Mythmaking and Exegesis," 202.

received an education in Greek paideia that included the major traditions of Greek philosophy, presents his initial conversion to Christianity as a choice of philosophical school. He also boasts specialized abilities in textual criticism and allegorical interpretation, in which he roots his claim to superior interpretive authority over Judean writings. Justin likely wrote his *Dialogue* in Rome in the late second century, where he made his living as a Christian teacher. Particular parallels are evident between the characters that each author, Matthew and Justin, creates as the sparring partners for their literary protagonists. For Justin, this is his main interlocutor, Trypho, whom he introduces as a "Hebrew of the circumcision" (εἰμὶ δὲ Ἑβραῖος ἐκ περιτομῆς, *Dial* 1.3). The stated purpose of their debate is for Justin to convince Trypho and his companions of the validity of Jesus's role as the Judean messiah as Justin understands that figure, and in order to strengthen Justin's position he creates in Trypho a worthy interlocutor; there is no benefit in discourse with someone who is not capable of understanding, and more to be gained by the conversion of an educated man than an uneducated one, and so Justin establishes Trypho's position as a Judean knowledge-holder, likewise familiar with the Judean writings and educated in Greek philosophy. Justin indicates that Trypho is a worthy interlocutor most clearly through Trypho's salutation to Justin: "Hail, O Philosopher!" (Φιλόσοφε, χαῖρε, *Dia*. 1.1). Through his greeting, and the subsequent explanation, Justin tells the reader that Trypho has received, and retained, philosophical teaching from a true Greek philosopher.[53] Trypho knows Justin is a philosopher because he recognises Justin's particular style of dress, and that recognition, here in this text, identifies Trypho as one trained in Greek philosophy (*Dia*. 1.2). The characters with whom Justin does *not* engage in competition serve also to bolster Trypho's worthiness as a discursive opponent. When he first hails Justin, Trypho is accompanied by a group of "others" (καὶ ἄλλων,

[53] The greeting also serves to authorize Justin as a true philosopher, as Trypho, who has been established as authoritative, recognizes him as such.

Dia 1.1), often translated as "friends." Trypho ask Justin to engage in philosophic discourse about God and Justin's philosophy, as he has been taught to ask anyone he encounters that is dressed as Justin is to do so.[54] Trypho's request for philosophical tuition is not for himself alone but also for his companions. Throughout Justin's description of his varied philosophical explorations (*Dia* 2.2-6) and his encounter with an "old man" (παλαιός τις πρεσβύτης) on a walk by the sea (3.3-6.2), who introduced Justin to Jesus philosophy, Trypho's companions presumably sit quietly and listen to Justin's narrative, but at 8.3 they betray their unfitness for philosophical lessons and discursive competition with Justin by laughing (ἀνεγέλασαν) at Justin's profession that becoming a Christian is the key to a happy life. Their loud laughter is repeated at 9.2, and it is after this outburst that Justin and Trypho move away from the group to discuss philosophy, Christ-following, and the Judean writings amongst only themselves. Trypho's companions have been revealed uncouth and incapable of serious discussion, while Trypho's suitability as a discussion partner for Justin only increases by his separation from his laughing fellow-countrymen.

Unlike Matthew, Justin locates himself in his writings, allowing for more confident identification of how they served his prerogative of self-authorization. In the proem to the *Dialogue*, wherein the companions are still Justin's audience, he describes his philosophical dabbling. Here he lists for the reader all the schools he tried before settling first on Platonism and then Christ-following. This section of the *Dialogue* serves two aligned purposes for the author, in that they showcase Justin's mastery of other intellectual traditions while positioning Christ-following as superior to all. Since Justin was educated in multiple philosophical schools, he presents himself as someone qualified to adjudicate "true" and partial or incorrect philosophy. It

[54] σὺ δὲ πῶς, ἔφη, περὶ τούτων φρονεῖς καὶ τίνα γνώμην περὶ θεοῦ ἔχεις καὶ τίς ἡ σή φιλοσοφία, εἰπὲ ἡμῖν. *Dia* 1.6

appears from the text, however, that Justin considered himself to be more educated in philosophy, or perhaps just more innately able to discern truth, than the teachers from whom he learned. From the beginning of this section Justin undermines each school in turn, beginning with Stoicism. Justin studied with a "certain Stoic" whom he found to be completely unsuited to what was, in his view, the true purpose of philosophy, to lead one to and unite one with God. Indeed, this teacher knew nothing about God, and did not even know that knowledge of God was valuable! For Justin this seems to be the worse crime. If the teacher had had no knowledge, then they two perhaps could have sought it out together, but by not even considering knowledge of God a worthy philosophical pursuit, the Stoic removed himself from the realm of philosophy altogether. It also worth noting that Justin does not then move on to another Stoic teacher, but instead discounts Stoicism tout court. The purpose of this illustration is not just to give Justin's educational biography, but, more importantly, to serve as a rhetorical rejection of all other philosophical schools, in favour of the philosophy of Christianity. It establishes both Justin's ability to determine what constitutes true philosophy and, thereby, that all the philosophies he names are invalid. Hence when "Christian philosophy" comes into focus as the "truest" option, the person who recognizes it as such is one who has also mastered and rejected all alternatives.

In his attribution of philosophic dress to his protagonist, Justin is more explicit in his self-authorization than is Matthew. Where readers of the gospel must make inferences about its author on the basis of how he constructs the text, in the *Dialogue*, the author's qualifications are the prolegomena to any exegesis or interpretation of the Judean writings, which acts form the main body and function of the text. The stated purpose of the *Dialogue* is to illustrate, for Trypho and his companions, that Jesus is the messiah prophesied in those texts. To this end, Justin quotes from and exegetes them extensively, demonstrating his interpretive superiority to that of his

capable opponent time and again. For the sake of brevity, I will examine only two examples from the *Dialogue* in which Justin exposits Isaiah 7:14 in relation to Jesus Christ.[55]

In the first discussion of Isaiah 7:14 (*Dial.* 43.5), Justin is well into his debate with Trypho but has yet to provide any justification for his position that Jesus was the prophesied messiah. Finally, Justin refers to the "mystery of his [Christ's] birth" (τής γενέσεως αύτού μυστηρίου) and launches into a long quotation from Isaiah 7:10–17, with Isaiah 8:4 "interpolated in the middle of vs. 16."[56] The debate to follow will center on Isaiah 7:14, which Justin renders as "Behold, a virgin (παρθένος) will conceive and will bring forth a son, and his name will be called Emmanuel." Approximately ten lines later, Justin anticipates an argument from Trypho about the rendering of the Hebrew *almah* as παρθένος (virgin) rather than νεάνις (young woman). Justin writes that Trypho and "his teachers" (διδάσκαλοι) say that the correct translation is "young woman," and that the prophecy does not refer to a future messiah, but to King Hezekiah, a Judahite ruler of the sixth century BCE. Justin suggests that further that these teachers—who, I suggest, stand in for any and all type of Judean expert—have intentionally mistranslated the Hebrew into Greek. As the result of their actions the prophecy *cannot* refer to Jesus, whom they reject. Interestingly, as Skarsaune notes, Justin's second quotation of Isaiah 7:14 in *Dial.* 43.8 is subtly different from that just ten lines above. Justin characterizes his text, which refers to the παρθένος rather than the νεάνις, as the "true" rendition of the Judean writings, and uses ἕξει (will have) rather than the λήψεται (will take) as he had in 43.5 above.[57]

[55] For the Greek text of Justin Martyr's *Apology* and *Dialogue with Trypho* I use Miroslav Marcovich's 1994 and 1997 editions, reprinted together in 2005. Miroslav Marcovich, *Iustini Martyris Apologiae pro Christianis. Iustini Martyris Dialogus Cum Tryphone* (Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter, 2005).
[56] Oskar Skarsaune, *The Proof From Prophecy: A Study in Justin Martyr's Proof-Text Tradition: Text-Type, Provenance, Theological Profile* (Leiden: Brill, 1987), 32.
[57] Skarsaune, *The Proof from Prophecy*, 32.

Justin's "true" text is not the one he used for his earlier lengthy quotation, but it is identical to that found in the *Apology* at 33.1, and both correspond to Matthew's quotation at 1:23.[58] Skarsaune concludes that the text Justin presents as the "true" LXX is a "testimony source" or "kerygma" (κήρυγμα), comprised of excerpts from the Judean writings, with commentary and probably some narrative exposition.[59] Skarsaune further proposes that Justin's kerygma can be identified as the *Kerygma Petrou*, or *Preaching of Peter*, an ostensibly second-century writing attested only in the later works of Clement of Alexandria, who attributes it to the apostle Peter.[60] Helmut Koester also proposes that Justin used testimony sources for his quotations, as well as a harmonized version of *Matthew* and *Luke*, and a text containing quotations from the LXX and commentary on those quotations.[61] Justin's argument, as presented in *Dial*. 43.8 and alluded to in 11.2 and 67.9, is that he is in possession of texts containing the true form of Isaiah 7:14 and the correct interpretation of that verse. The terms of competition, as Justin creates them, involve not only prophetic interpretation, but also the validity and integrity of the textual variant and translation that a given interpreter possesses. Justin presents himself as the superior interpreter, and argues that the texts Trypho and his "teachers" possess are invalid and false.

Justin's argument for Jesus's status as messiah rests in his translation of Isaiah 7:14. Justin's second discourse on Isaiah 7:14 (*Dial*. 66–67) returns to the prophecy so that he can justify

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[58] It is possible that Justin's discussion of the virgin birth conundrum is reliant on Matthew's citation of Isaiah 7:14 in Matt. 1:23, a citation that Jane Schaberg argues serves to theologically erase a tradition of Jesus's illegitimacy that predates the composition of the Gospel's. Schaberg deals intertextually with Isa. 7:14 and Deut. 22:23-27, which details the circumstance-related punishments for rape of a betrothed virgin, and argues that Matthew added the Isa citation to a "preexisting narrative of body of infancy traditions, choosing the textual tradition best suited to his purposes and adapting it further." Jane Schaberg, *The Illegitimacy of Jesus: A Feminist Theological Interpretation of the Infancy Narratives*, (San Franscisco: Harper & Row, 1987), 70.
[59] Skarsaune, *The Proof from Prophecy*, 33. Justin also refers to this text in *Dial*. 11.2 and 67.9.
[60] Michael Cameron, "Kerygma Petrou," *EBR* 15:140; Kathleen E Corley, "Peter, Preaching Of," *ABD* 5:282.
[61] Helmut Koester, "Gospels and Gospel Traditions in the Second Century," in *Trajectories through the New Testament and the Apostolic Fathers*, ed. Andrew Gregory and Christopher Tuckett (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 365; Oskar Skarsaune, "Justin and His Bible," in *Justin and His Worlds*, ed. Sara Parvis and Paul Foster (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007), 58.

precisely how Jesus fulfills it (esp. 66.3). Justin argues that none of the "fleshly descendants" of Abraham (γένει τφ κατά σάρκα 'Αβραάμ) were said to be born of a virgin, but that Jesus was; insofar as the "authoritative" Greek translation of the Judean writings uses *parthenos* rather than *neanis*, Jesus must therefore be the saviour prophesied in Isaiah. In 67.1 Trypho reiterates the translation objection from 43.8, maintaining that the events of the prophecy can be shown to be fulfilled by Hezekiah. Trypho then compares Justin's claims that Jesus was born of a virgin to the myth of Perseus's birth from Danae, who was impregnated by Zeus without intercourse; Trypho argues that anyone who repeats such myths should feel ashamed (αίδεισθαι οφείλετε) to repeat such stories. For Trypho, it would be better if Jesus were born an ordinary human (ανθρωπον έξ ανθρώπων γενόμενον), who could then be called *christos* because of his strict adherence to the law and righteous living. The position he embodies refutes that anyone could be the messiah simply as a matter of his birth (*Dial*. 67.1-2).

In *Dial*. 71, Justin argues on the basis of the discrepant translations of Isa 7:14 that Judean teachers have intentionally altered Judean prophecy to mask its correspondence with the events and circumstances of Jesus's life, and his messianic status. The chapter opens with the assertion that the Ptolemaic translation described in the *Letter of Aristeas* is the only correct translation of these texts, even if subsequent Judeans removed or altered passages in it. It is worthwhile to explore, then, how and why Justin authorizes the Ptolemaic translation at the expense of any other, since these questions bear on his reading of the Isaiah prophecy under consideration. Additionally, I propose that Matthew's presentation of interpretive authority shares features with Justin's and may be influenced by similar considerations of translation and word agreement, to say nothing about their common positioning as would-be Christ experts.

2.3.1 Excursus: The Aristeas Translation

The Ptolemaic Greek text to which Justin appeals, most commonly referred to as the Septuagint (LXX), was completed before the end of the first century BCE, and contained Greek translations of the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings. The authorization of the Greek version of this group of texts displays awareness of the difficulties of translation. All who have attempted to translate a text from one language into another, particularly a text from a different time, have encountered the impossibility of a true verbatim translation. The translator is both a linguist and an interpreter, forced to make decisions about the intent of the original composer, and choose words for translation that are often approximate, rather than equivalent. Questions of translation are particularly important when the original composition is comprised of laws, prophecies, and histories thought to be divinely inspired. The production of the LXX was legitimated by a legend preserved in the pseudonymous *Letter of Aristeas,* a panegyric to Ptolemy II Philadelphus addressed to a certain Philocrates. Justin includes this letter in his text to make a point that is also evident in *Matthew*: that like the Hebrew versions on which they were based, the Greek translations of biblical texts, as well as the process that produced them, were divinely inspired. As such, there are "true" versions of the Greek texts, and inferior ones that have either been corrupted, or produced subsequently.

The putative author, "Aristeas," a member of a diplomatic legation sent to meet with Eleazar the high priest, recounts the details of a meeting with the High Priest in Jerusalem, and the subsequent divinely-inspired translation of the five books of the Torah from Hebrew into Greek for deposit into the great library at Alexandria. After a description of the manumission of Judean slaves in Egypt, the gifts given by Ptolemy II to the Temple in Jerusalem, and a disputation on the nature of the Law by Eleazar the High Priest, Aristeas describes the meeting between Ptolemy and the elders sent to his court to perform the translation. The elders of Judea brought

with them a copy of the Law transcribed on parchment in gold lettering, and when Ptolemy is shown the scrolls he performs obeisance (προσκυνήσας) to the texts, thanks Eleazar for sending the elders and the scrolls, and then thanks God, whose words, he says, are contained in the scrolls (μέγιστον δὲ τῷ θεῷ, οὗτινός ἐστι τὰ λόγια ταῦτα).[62] Through Ptolemy's words and actions, the author of the letter further establishes the divine origin of the words contained therein. The elders who will perform the translation, six from each of the twelve tribes of Israel, are also honoured by Ptolemy with a lavish banquet during which he asks the most senior elders questions about wisdom and for advice. Through this discussion with Ptolemy, and of course their initial selection by Eleazar to perform the translation, the translators are themselves authorized as persons with access to divine wisdom. The pattern of feast and dialogue is continued for seven days.

After their lavish and honoured welcome, Aristeas tells Philocrates that the elders were taken to a secluded place where they could perform their translations, which they, the seventy-two translators, completed in seventy-two days, "as if this had been intended to come about." (οἱονεὶ κατὰ πρόθεσίν τινα τοῦ τοιούτου γεγενημένου.) Through this (miraculous) alignment, the author of the Letter divinely authorizes the translation of the Judean writings into Greek. The implication of the above quotation is that the completion of the translation in seventy-two days was the will of God, and therefore the translation itself reflected the will of God. Coupled with this divine authorization are the skill and wisdom of the translators. Line 302 of the Letter tells the reader that the elders consulted with one another until their translations agreed (σύμφωνα), and only when agreement was achieved was the final text copied out. The consultation, and the

[62] For the Greek text of the letter I am using H. St J. Thackeray, ed., "The Letter of Aristeas," in *An Introduction to the Old Testament in Greek*, by Henry Barclay Swete (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1900), 519–74. Translations are my own.

previously-established wisdom of the elders, which was evidenced by Ptolemy's dialogue with each of them, demonstrated that the elders are fit for their task. The translation they produce is one of wisdom and skill, and authorized by divine miracle.

The Letter goes even further in privileging the Ptolemaic translation: when the translation of the Law was finished, Demetrius—the librarian who convened the translators and provided for them—gathered together the Judeans in Alexandria, and the Greek translation of the Law was read to them. This episode is surely meant to invoke such paradigmatic scenes as Nehemiah 8:1-8, where Ezra read the Law to the returned exiles in front of the Water Gate in Jerusalem, and 2 Chronicles 34:29-32, where the "book of the Law of the Lord given through Moses" (2 Chron. 34:14) was read aloud to the people of Jerusalem. In both of these accounts, those hearing the Law rededicate themselves to its precepts, and affirm the rightness of the texts. In the *Letter of Aristeas*, the Judeans in Alexandria hear the translation and affirm is accuracy, and then ask for a curse to be put on anyone who changed the translation, through either substitution or omission. (*Aris.* 308-311)

The *Letter of Aristeas* provides divine sanction for the Greek translation of the Law, and provides for supernatural retribution, in the form of a curse, for anyone who in any way alters the text. Justin Martyr asks the letter to also provide sanction for the Greek translation of the prophecies of Isaiah. In Justin's account the Letter is modified, to include divine sanction for not just the Law but also the Prophets. We see this in the *Dialogue*, in the above quoted passages, and in Justin's first *Apology*, in chapter 31, where Justin recounts the legend contained in the Letter, with the modification also authorizing the prophets. Skarsaune notes this modification, and argues that it was a means of commending Justin's "OT proof-texts … to the Gentile listener

(or reader)."[63] Wasserstein and Wasserstein, in their history of the production and reception of the Aristeas legend, mention Justin's modification of the legend as well. Their focus is on the addition of King Herod and the second embassy, noting that the first addition did not last likely due to its glaring anachrony, but that the second did.[64] As for the change from the Law to Prophecies, they note only that this is a generalization of the Pentateuch. This appears, to me, to be a lack of attention to Justin's particularities, especially his interest in the prophetic books, and his doctrinal and theological reliance on their verbatim validity.[65]

Other ancient sources discuss the Aristean authorization as recounted in the Letter, but mention on the Law. In his *Life of Moses*, Philo recounts the legend without attributing it to Aristeas, but in the more familiar form: there is no mention of the Prophets. Philo's divinely-inspired translators deal only with the Law as given by Moses. Omission is not generally, of course, evidence in and of itself, but in this case I would argue that if Philo had wanted his readers to group the prophetic books with the Law, he would have explicitly stated so. The subject of Philo's biography gives us another indication that he was thinking only of the Law. Philo presents the Pentateuch as Moses's composition, and therefore it is perfectly appropriate to locate his justification for the Greek translation of the Law here. We must take Philo's silence on the translation of the Prophets into Greek as a statement that he did not include them in the texts translation by means of the "Voice of God." (Philo, *de Vita Mosis* 2.34) Josephus likewise recounts the legend, and even more extensively, in *Ant.* 12.2-15. At times Josephus quotes directly from the Letter, and names Aristeas as an envoy to Eleazar and valued advisor to

[63] Skarsaune, *The Proof from Prophecy*, 426.
[64] Minns and Parvis that Justin is here using "Herod" not as a proper name, but as a "title of principality, similar to 'Caesar' or 'Augustus'." Justin Martyr, *Justin, Philosopher and Martyr: Apologies*, ed. Denis Minns and Paul Parvis, Oxford Early Christian Texts (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 163.
[65] Abraham Wasserstein and David J. Wasserstein, *The Legend of the Septuagint: From Classical Antiquity to Today* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 98–100.

Ptolemy II Philadelphus. Here too, however, only the Law is addressed. There is no mention of the Prophets, their translation, or their use or value in Greek.

While I think it unlikely, it is possible that Wasserstein and Wasserstein are correct, that Justin took the "Law" in the Letter to refer to all of the books of the Judean writings, thereby also authorizing the use of *parthenos* in Isaiah 7:14. It is also possible that Justin received this tradition, and the version of the Letter he read, or of the legend that was told to him, included the books of the prophets as well as the Law. This is more likely in relation to the *Dialogue*, rather than the *First Apology*, which specifically attributes the legend to the books of prophecy, and makes no mention of the Law. Whether he understood the Letter to refer to the fulsome contents of the Septuagint, which is, admittedly, argued for by his naming of Moses as a "prophet" in *1 Apol.* 32.1, or his inclusion of the books of the prophets in the divine sanction created by the Letter was his own invention, in the *Dialogue* Justin makes use of the Letter to authorise his version of Isaiah 7:14 over that quoted by Trypho. Justin displays a desire for verbatim textual validity in his exegeses of Isaiah that implies a concern with interpretational authority and discursive competition that I see paralleled in *Matthew*. It is because of these similarities that while the roles of characters in the *Dialogue* are not directly parallel to those in Matthew's biography of Jesus, they and their presentation in discursive events are helpful comparanda.

2.4 Conclusion

Matthew's use of literary divinations, particularly the fulfilment formula citations, create the framework for his rhetorical goals in the text, which are to construct what it means to possess and then to display skill in the interpretation of textual prophecy and exegesis of the law.

Although slightly different in emphasis, these displays both constitute examples of divination in that for Matthew, as for Justin, the texts in question are divinely inspired. Hence, their abilities in literary interpretation establish, first, Jesus Christ, and then these authors, as religious experts superior to the assorted rivals in-kind whom they write into their texts. If we think of *Matthew* as a text in conversation with other interpreters or writings that worked in this way, then these acts of literary interpretation create opportunities for the construction of the author's own authority through implied competitive discourse, that is, underlying Matthew's composition is a conversation between interpretive rivals, vying for the position as supreme interpreter. To compose his gospel, Matthew the author seeks to supersede another biography of Jesus and a collection of his teachings, as well as any interpretations of the prophecies he has selected that do *not* point to Jesus as the messiah. Interpretation of prophecy and exegesis are the main ingredients in Matthew's recipe for authority, and ones that, as we will see, work hand-in-hand with how he fashions professional and ethnic specialty to make even more ambitious and totalizing claims to expertise.

3 Chapter 3: A Teacher and His Students

In the storyworld of Matthew's gospel, Jesus is the preeminent procurer of divine knowledge, whose status as such is justified by his identification as the messiah. Matthew's Jesus accesses divine knowledge in two distinct ways: first, he interprets current events in light of "prophecy" from the Judean writings; and second, Jesus himself prophesies about future events, some of which will come to pass within the narrative. In the Introduction I argued that a coordinated literary strategy—evinced by a systematic program of source redactions whose emphases align with material unique to this gospel—is visible throughout Matthew's text. In this chapter, I demonstrate how that strategy establishes and justifies a particular epistemological basis for religious authority that will distinguish Jesus from others along professional and sometimes also ethnic lines. I examine three scenes that aptly illustrate an implicit contention of this author: that "true" knowledge of Jesus's messianic status and teachings could only be apprehended by non-professional, inexpert characters, and further, that his disciples constituted a select group with not only access to, but also the ability to, understand God's own wisdom, as revealed to them by Jesus as their teacher. I present evidence of Matthew's desire for precision when copying his sources, a priority that emphasizes his apparent dissatisfaction with the Markan portrayal of Jesus. In the final section of this chapter, I discuss how Matthew develops Jesus's prophetic role, the misidentification of which—that is, as simply a typical prophet rather than a (or *the*) messiah with prophetic insight—exhibits the limitations of recognized Judean "experts."

3.1 Purpose of Parables

The first clue to how Matthew constructs Jesus as the supreme procurer and disseminator of divine wisdom lies in how he justifies Jesus's strategy of teaching through parables. The oblique and esoteric nature of the knowledge Jesus imparts through this teaching tool has the effect of portraying divine wisdom as something carefully allocated to only select audiences. In Matthew's version of the pericope justifying Jesus's use of parables, paralleled at Mark 4:10-12 (cf. Luke 8:9-10), we can see, through the distinct and consistent ways the author changes his sources, his presentation of the idea that certain knowledge is suitable only for particular people, and that those to whom this knowledge will be revealed is pre-determined by God. In the two sections of ch. 13 under examination, Matthew redacts his sources by adding two quotations from the Judean writings, which he presents as being fulfilled through events in the narrative present, through the actions of Jesus, his disciples, and the wider crowds.

3.1.1 *Matthew* 13:10-15

Matthew's addition and analysis of quotations from the Judean writings is one of his primary methods for bolstering his authority. As we saw in Chapter 1, Matthew and his contemporaries displayed their exegetical proficiency as a way of differentiating themselves from other textual specialists, to show that their supreme command of these sources. Matthew's explanation of the purpose of teaching in parables provides further evidence of the same dynamic. The two additional prophetic quotations in Matt 13 occur in a pericope about secret knowledge about the kingdom of the heavens and revelation of that knowledge to particular groups of people. In Matt 13:10-15, the disciples ask Jesus why he teaches the crowds using parables, presumably instead of speaking plainly so that the crowd might readily understand his teaching. Jesus explains, "to you has been given knowledge of the secrets (μυστήρια) of the kingdom of the heavens, but to them [this knowledge] has not been given." Jesus's teaching

method implies a context of esoteric knowledge; the impenetrability of his teaching is precisely the goal. Jesus only reveals the secrets—indeed, the *mysteries*—of the kingdom to a select group of people, here his chosen disciples. In general, however, this knowledge must be kept hidden, even from the crowds who follow him. The idea of secret knowledge revealed only to a chosen group is not unique to *Matthew* but is present already in his Markan source material.[1] Yet the Matthean version contains several noteworthy variations. The first is that Matthew narrows the field of recipients concerning knowledge of the kingdom.

Mark 4:10	Matthew 13:10
Καὶ ὅτε ἐγένετο κατὰ μόνας, ἠρώτων αὐτὸν οἱ περὶ αὐτὸν σὺν τοῖς δώδεκα τὰς παραβολάς.	Καὶ προσελθόντες οἱ μαθηταὶ εἶπαν αὐτῷ· Διὰ τί ἐν παραβολαῖς λαλεῖς αὐτοῖς;
And when he was alone, those who were around him with the twelve asked him concerning parables.	And the learned ones (the disciples) came and said to him: why do you speak to them in parables?

There is no indication here whether the number of people to whom this knowledge will be revealed is greater or fewer in *Matthew*, but the author clearly indicates the status and special qualities of those to whom it will be revealed. In *Mark* the questioners are a general group of people who were around Jesus, as well as his twelve companions. In *Matthew*, they are specifically the "students" (οἱ μαθηταὶ) or literally "the learned ones" likely referring specifically to the group of followers we now call "the disciples." I suggest that Matthew's narrowing and explication of the more ambiguous "those around Jesus" is intentional, and that his goal is to

[1] This is also maintained in Luke's version of the dialogue, found at Luke 8:9-10. Secret wisdom revealed to particular, worthy, persons is a wide-spread concept in literature of the period. We also find the same sentiments in the *Gospel of Thomas* at saying 62. See William Arnal, "Pedagogy, Text and the Solitary Self in the Gospel of Thomas," in *Religion and Education in Antiquity: Studies in Honour of Michael Desjardins*, ed. Alexander Damm (Leiden: Brill, 2019), 194–211. For a discussion of the dynamic of secrecy and select revelation in different modes of religion see Stowers, Stanley K, "The Secrets of the Gods and the End of Interpretation," in *Christian Beginnings A Study in Ancient Mediterranean Religion*, Edinburgh Studies in Religion in Antiquity (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2023), 267–77.

create a distinct in-group whose members are capable and worthy of receiving secret knowledge directly from Jesus. Luz writes that verses ten and eleven serve to "create a deep rift between the people and the disciples."[2] Evans disagrees, arguing that Matthew's redaction in v. 10 is stylistic, intended to "smooth out" and "simplify" Mark's "awkward" language and potentially unclear description of who questioned Jesus.[3] Matthew's gospel here displays precision lacking in Mark's, as Matthew directly identifies the disciples. With Luz I see Matthew's redaction as creating an in-group, the disciples, to whom mysteries are revealed, and an outgroup, whose members are taught using an intentionally impenetrable method.

That both gospels affirm the idea that only certain people are worthy of receiving secret knowledge is further evident in Mark 4:11 and Matt 13:11, where Jesus responds to the question they pose:

Mark 4:11	Matthew 13:11
καὶ ἔλεγεν αὐτοῖς· Ὑμῖν τὸ μυστήριον δέδοται τῆς βασιλείας τοῦ θεοῦ· ἐκείνοις δὲ τοῖς ἔξω ἐν παραβολαῖς τὰ πάντα γίνεται,	ὁ δὲ ἀποκριθεὶς εἶπεν αὐτοῖς· Ὅτι ὑμῖν δέδοται γνῶναι τὰ μυστήρια τῆς βασιλείας τῶν οὐρανῶν, ἐκείνοις δὲ οὐ δέδοται.
And he said to them: "to you the secret of the kingdom of God has been given, but those outside all things are given in parables;	And he answered them: "because to you has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of the heavens, and to those others it has not been given.

Read together, Mark's version of the verse lacks Matthew's precision. Both authors are conscious of the difficultly of gaining knowledge from parables and identify the ambiguity as

[2] Luz, *Matthew*, 2:245; Wilson, *Matthew*, 1:454. Kingsbury agrees that the verses are intended to create a rift, but identifies "them" (*autois*) throughout this chapter with "the Jews" rather than merely outsiders. Kingbury's study of the parables relies on a firm distinction and boundary between "Christians" and "Jews" in Matthew's narrative. Jack Dean Kingsbury, *The Parables of Jesus in Matthew 13: A Study in Redaction-Criticism* (Richmond, VA: John Knox, 1969), 38.
[3] Evans, *Matthew*, 268.

intentional. Matthew further expands on Mark's explanation for this pedagogy, making explicit in 13:13 the purpose of speaking in parables so that the "secrets of the kingdom" are only for select, worthy individuals. Only the disciples can decipher their true meanings, or at least they are meant to be able to do so because they alone, among all followers of Jesus, are worthy of this special knowledge. Their understanding of Jesus's teachings is the main theme of both the parables discourse in ch. 13, and the narrative section that follows.[4] As does his Markan counterpart, Matthew's Jesus possesses special insight and knowledge; however, whereas in *Mark* the disciples continuously misunderstand Jesus's teaching, in *Matthew* they are uniquely endowed with a capacity for understanding.

These redactional priorities are then corroborated by a quotation from Isaiah (LXX), absent from the Markan version, that concludes the pericope:

Mark 4:12	Matthew 13:14-15
ἵνα βλέποντες βλέπωσι καὶ μὴ ἴδωσιν, καὶ ἀκούοντες ἀκούωσι καὶ μὴ συνιῶσιν, μήποτε ἐπιστρέψωσιν καὶ ἀφεθῇ αὐτοῖς.	καὶ ἀναπληροῦται αὐτοῖς ἡ προφητεία Ἠσαΐου ἡ λέγουσα· Ἀκοῇ ἀκούσετε καὶ οὐ μὴ συνῆτε, καὶ βλέποντες βλέψετε καὶ οὐ μὴ ἴδητε. ἐπαχύνθη γὰρ ἡ καρδία τοῦ λαοῦ τούτου, καὶ τοῖς ὠσὶν βαρέως ἤκουσαν, καὶ τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς αὐτῶν ἐκάμμυσαν· μήποτε ἴδωσιν τοῖς ὀφθαλμοῖς καὶ τοῖς ὠσὶν ἀκούσωσιν καὶ

[4] Luz, *Matthew*, 2:228. The disciples' understanding is another change that Matthew makes to Mark's narrative. At Matt 16:6-11 Jesus tells the disciples to "observe and beware of the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees" (Ὁρᾶτε καὶ προσέχετε ἀπὸ τῆς ζύμης τῶν Φαρισαίων καὶ Σαδδουκαίων) which Matthew tells the reader in verse 12 that the disciples understood he did not mean "beware of the yeast of bread, but of the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees" (προσέχειν ἀπὸ τῆς ζύμης τῶν ἄρτων ἀλλὰ ἀπὸ τῆς διδαχῆς τῶν Φαρισαίων καὶ Σαδδουκαίων.) This pericope is Markan (8:14-8:21), but Matthew alters it significantly. In *Mark* the disciples interpret the metaphor of the yeast literally, misunderstanding Jesus's warning and teaching. This sense of misunderstanding, of literal interpretation of a metaphor, (Collins, *Mark*, 387.) is also present in *Matthew*, but is corrected in the final two verses, where Jesus explains the correct, metaphorical, meaning, and Matthew tells us that, in the end, the disciples understand. As in the discussion of chapter thirteen, Matthew alters Mark's narrative, to change Mark's theme of the misunderstanding disciples into a theme of the understanding disciples, who are worthy of knowledge. This theme continues in the conclusion of the transfiguration and the discussion of the coming of Elijah, where in *Mark* (9:9-13) the disciples do not understand Jesus's words. In Matthew's version (17:9-13), the disciples must ask questions, but Jesus explicates the event, and then they understand what he is speaking about.

	τῇ καρδίᾳ συνῶσιν καὶ ἐπιστρέψωσιν, καὶ ἰάσομαι αὐτούς.
So that seeing they see and not perceive, and hearing they hear and not understand, lest they should return and be forgiven by me.	Indeed, with them (the Judeans) is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah that says: hearing you will hear but never understand and seeing you will see but never perceive. For the hearts of this nation grow dull and their ears hear with difficulty, and they have closed their eyes lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears and to their heart understanding and return and be healed by me.

The quotation in *Matthew* is Isa 6:9-10, which alludes to a prophetic mission "doomed from the start."[5] The same passage is hinted at in Mark's version but Matthew interpolates the verses into the narrative, thus providing scriptural justification for his earlier statement that to those who are willing and able to learn great mysteries will be revealed, while for all others the secrets of the kingdom of the heavens will remain hidden. Luz identifies this section as an explicit statement of the separation between the followers of Jesus and the rest of Israel, who rejected his messianic status.[6] The combination of narrative and prophecy in Matt 13:13-14 also instantiates the meaning of the preceding Parable of the Sower (13:1–8), wherein the learned ones are made up of good soil so that Jesus's teaching can flourish in them, whereas those unable or unworthy to hear and learn are constituted of rocky, thin, or thorny soil. The two verses immediately following the quotation from Isaiah are also Matthean additions, emendations of a Q saying that the author has combined with material from Mark: "Blessed are the eyes that see what you see. For I tell you: Many prophets and kings wanted to see what you see, but never say

[5] Collins, *Mark*, 249.
[6] Luz, *Matthew*, 2:245.

it, and to hear what you hear, but never heard it."[7] The implication of the verses, in both *Matthew* and Q, is that the teachings of Jesus, and the ability to understand them, are greatly desired. Therefore, anyone who *can* understand (i.e. the "learned ones") is greatly blessed by God.

3.1.2 *Matthew* 13:34-35

Selective revelation of wisdom, and the compositional strategy of secrets functioning primarily to be revealed, reappears near the end of Matthew's thirteenth chapter, in 13:34-35. This short passage, which contains Matthew's eleventh fulfillment formula, likely also depends on *Mark*. If so, Matthew adds to its statement about concealed wisdom a quotation from Psalms that shifts the priority from concealment to revelation at the proper time and place.[8]

Mark 4:33-34	Matthew 13:34-35
Καὶ τοιαύταις παραβολαῖς πολλαῖς ἐλάλει αὐτοῖς τὸν λόγον, καθὼς ἠδύναντο ἀκούειν· χωρὶς δὲ παραβολῆς οὐκ ἐλάλει αὐτοῖς, κατ' ἰδίαν δὲ τοῖς ἰδίοις μαθηταῖς ἐπέλυεν πάντα.	Ταῦτα πάντα ἐλάλησεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς ἐν παραβολαῖς τοῖς ὄχλοις, καὶ χωρὶς παραβολῆς οὐδὲν ἐλάλει αὐτοῖς· ὅπως πληρωθῇ τὸ ῥηθὲν διὰ τοῦ προφήτου λέγοντος· Ἀνοίξω ἐν παραβολαῖς τὸ στόμα μου, ἐρεύξομαι κεκρυμμένα ἀπὸ καταβολῆς [κόσμου].
With many such parables he spoke the word to them, as they were able to hear it; he did not speak to them without a parable, but privately to his own learned ones he explained everything.	All these things Jesus said in parables to the crowds, and he said nothing to them that was not in parables. This was so that what was spoken through the prophet might be revealed: I will open my mouth in parables, I will tell what has been hidden from the foundation (of the world).

In *Mark*, this was simply how the crowds were able to hear Jesus's teaching, which itself provides the justification for speaking to them in parables, perhaps as a tactic of differentiation.

[7] James M. Robinson et al., eds., *The Critical Edition of Q*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2000), 196–99.
[8] Luz argues that 35c (I will tell what has been hidden from the foundation [of the world]) is "not Matthean language" and that Matthew likely did not understand this verse to describe revelation of hidden knowledge, but rather exposure of the "pre-existent kingdom of God." Luz, *Matthew*, 2:265.

Mark then tells us that Jesus "explained everything" (ἐπέλυεν πάντα) to a select group of "his own learned ones." Yarbro Collins writes that this select group is probably, in the author's mind, made up of not just the twelve, but also "those who were around [Jesus] with the twelve."[9] Explaining "the word" to a select group, while keeping all others in the dark, is part of Mark's program of maintaining the mysteries as secret knowledge. In contrast, Matthew's verses provide a prophetic justification for Jesus's method of teaching in parables. As in Matt 13:14-15, the author puts forward a quotation from the Judean writings. In *Matthew*, Jesus must teach in parables, since otherwise he would not fulfill a key prophecy about the awaited messiah as this author has identified it.[10] Here and elsewhere, Matthew invokes "evidence" of Jesus's status as the Jewish messiah from texts whose special prophetic value he repeatedly affirms. Again, such efforts are of a piece with dynamics of competition between this author and other textual experts. Matthew displays in his gospel an "expert" interpretation of the Judean writings and the teachings of Jesus. For readers, the text thus becomes an interpretive tool, analogous in its function to how Jesus acts as an interpreter of his own teachings delivered in parables. As we saw above, Matthew's Jesus interprets and explains his teaching for a select group of auditors, the disciples. The implication is that this group would otherwise not understand. Jesus interprets his own esoteric teaching for those chosen to receive his knowledge. *Matthew* the text, then, becomes a stand-in for Jesus in his absence. Where in the narrative the disciples had Jesus, readers now have in textual form Matthew's detailed interpretation of Jesus's teachings and the true meanings of the Judean prophetic writings. The narrator, as a proxy for the author, takes on the role of teacher and revealer of opaque and esoteric knowledge.

[9] Cf. verse 10 above. Collins, *Mark*, 256.
[10] Here I follow Luz, who writes that "Matthew uses a formula quotation to show how Jesus' parables discourse corresponds to God's will." Luz, *Matthew*, 2:265.

3.2 Peter's Denial Foretold 26:31-35

As I have argued above, Matthew quotes from and interprets Judean writings throughout his narrative to display his own interpretative prowess as a textual specialist. From the entry into Jerusalem to the end of the gospel, Matthew includes nine prophetic quotations, three of which showcase another principle of precision—verbatim prophetic agreement with his authoritative Judean sources—as an improvement upon what Matthew likely perceives as looser or more allusive textual engagements in Mark.[11] These quotations are found in the foretelling of Peter's denial, Jesus's triumphant entry into Jerusalem, and his cry from the cross in his death scene.[12] Due to constraints of space, I here explore only the first identified quotation. As elsewhere, I here categorize Matthew's use of biblical quotations as literary divination.

The first instance of literary divination in the passion narrative is found at the beginning of the Gethsemane scenes. Jesus and his disciples have finished their Passover meal, sung a hymn, and retired to the Mount of Olives. The hymn and the move to the Mount of Olives take place in the first verse of this passage, a verse that Luz identifies as a "transitional note."[13] Yarbro-Collins gives more weight to it, noting that the Passover meal, according to Philo, "included prayers and hymns" and that Mark had an interest in connecting the foretelling of denial with the later scene at Gethsemane.[14] I agree with her analysis, and also with Luz's observation about its transitional function. Hence, I think it likely that Matthew consciously reproduced the intended connection

[11] The quotations are found in Matt 21:5, 21:9, 21:13, 21:42, 24:29, 26:31, 26:64, 27:9, and 27:46.
[12] These three pericopes are representative but hardly the only places where Matthew displays a redactional goal of verbatim prophetic fulfilment. See Esther Guillén, "As It Was Written: The Gospel of Matthew as a Symbolic Artifact," in *Religious Inventions: Ancient Mediterranean Practice and the Study of Religion*, ed. William Arnal and Erin K. Vearncombe, Studies in Christianity and Judaism/Études Sur Le Christianisme et Le Judaïsme (McGill-Queen's University Press, Forthcoming).
[13] Ulrich Luz, *Matthew,* 3:386.
[14] Collins, *Mark*, 669.

between these two scenes, although here too he intensifies the logic by inserting a fulfillment formula into the received account of Jesus's arrest. His redactions of the arrest scene are further revealing of Matthew's broader compositional strategy.

Matthew here appears to lay claim to possessing the authoritative text of Zechariah, in contrast to that used by Mark, paralleling Justin's claim, during his disagreement with Trypho, to access to the "correct" version of the Judean writings. Verse 31 illustrates what I propose is Matthew's dissatisfaction with Mark's text. Here we find another textual fulfillment, but not one that is generally included among the fourteen formal fulfillment formulas that are the hallmarks of this gospel.[15] In this verse Matthew quotes Zech 13:7. Matthew has redacted Mark 14:27 in a small but noteworthy manner:

Mark 14:27b	Matthew 26:31b
Πατάξω τὸν ποιμένα, καὶ τὰ πρόβατα διασκορπισθήσονται	Πατάξω τὸν ποιμένα, καὶ διασκορπισθήσονται τὰ πρόβατα τῆς ποίμνης
I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered.	I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep *of the flock* will be scattered.

Matthew emends Mark's quotation to include "of the flock" (τῆς ποίμνης). Stendahl identifies the LXX^{A} as the source text for both the Markan and Matthean versions of the quotation, and Luz here follows Stendahl.[16] Luz argues that Matthew's redaction aligns the quotation more completely with the LXX^{A}, other than the opening first-person future "I will strike"(πατάξω), which is in opposition to the imperative πάταξον in the LXX^{A}.[17] Stendahl, however, disagrees, and states that it appears that the LXX^{A} was redacted to align with *Matthew*, rather than Matthew

[15] See Appendix 2 "Prophetic Fulfilment Citations"
[16] Stendahl, *The School of St. Matthew*, 80–81; Luz, *Matthew*, 3:387.
[17] Luz, *Matthew*, 3:387.

redacting *Mark* to align with the LXX^{A}. I agree here with Luz that it would be "unusual" for Matthew to add words to quotations from the Judean writings, but fully in keeping with Matthew's redactional style to amend Mark's quotations so they more closely aligned with the LXX with which Matthew was most familiar.[18]

Zech 13:7 LXX^{B}	Zech 13:7 LXX^{A}
πατάξατε τοὺς ποιμένας καὶ ἐκσπάσατε τὰ πρόβατα	πάταξον τὸν ποιμένα, καὶ διασκορπισθήσονται τὰ πρόβατα τῆς ποίμνης

Clearly Matthew redacted his Markan source at 26:31, but the intended function of this redaction is less clear. Senior argues that Matthew's addition of "of the flock" (τῆς ποίμνης) was "probably intended to emphasize the breaking up of the community of the disciples."[19] Willitts disagrees, arguing that Matthew's use of "will be scattered" (διασκορπισθήσονται) instead of "will be driven away" (ἐκσπάσατε) shows his attentiveness to the Hebrew version, whence we can surmise that he intended the reader to understand the "flock" as Israel, not the disciples: "Israel will be dispersed and ultimately restored as a consequence for the slaying of the shepherd [Jesus]."[20] While both Senior and Willitts remind us of important elements of Matthew's compositional strategy, the first the importance of the disciples and the second Matthew's desire for textual precision, both have overlooked the theological argument advanced through the text's

[18] Luz, *Matthew*, 3:387.
[19] Senior, "The Lure of the Formula Quotations: Re-Assessing Matthew's Use of the Old Testament with the Passion Narrative as a Test Case," 109. This thinking is suggested in Stendahl as well, though not written explicitly. Stendahl, *The School of St. Matthew*, 81.
[20] Willitts, *Matthew's Messianic Shepherd-King*, 140. Willitts argues further that there is convincing evidence that Matthew's source was not the LXX^{A}, or any other Greek text, but rather the Hebrew. While Willitts' textual criticism in comparison of the LXX versus the Targum and the MT, with the MT as the ultimate winner, is thorough, he ignores the likelihood, as posed by Stendahl, and supported by Senior (1997) and Luz, that Matthew's Greek text of Zechariah more closely resembled the LXX^{A} rather than the LXX^{B}. Willitts' argument is clouded by his focus on the Israelite motifs in the gospel, and his goal of presenting the gospel as a Judaizing text.

construction in favour of only its content. In other words, their focus on the allegorical referent of "flock" has distracted from the meaning latent in the very *act* of redaction. I argue that the purpose in of the act was to align fully material inherited from *Mark* with his LXX source, and that the act itself has a theological basis in Matthew's understanding of prophecy and literary divination as requiring verbatim prophetic fulfillment. Additionally, redacting Markan citations, specifically, positions Matthew as a more authoritative literary specialist than the author whose work he coopts. By redacting *Mark* in view of biblical texts, Matthew affirms his own authority as a literary interpreter and composer, over and above that of the author from whom he borrows.[21]

Verses 33–35 comprise a short conversation between Jesus and Peter, in which Jesus prophesies that Peter will repudiate Jesus, which Peter denies, "Even if I must die with you, I will not repudiate you."[22] Luz notes the negative parallel with 16:22, wherein Peter rebukes Jesus for prophesying that he must be killed in Jerusalem. Peter is appalled by the idea of Jesus's suffering and death, insisting that this shall never happen. As per Luz, "Peter now appears to have learned his lesson," and is ready—in words at least, though not in deeds as will be seen—to die with Jesus.[23] Because Matthew's readers know the outcome of the story, both that Peter will repudiate Jesus and that Jesus will be put to death in precisely the manner he details, they can also ascertain that Jesus has correctly interpreted the prophecy from Zechariah. I here align with Senior and against Willits that the flock in v. 31 refers to the disciples, and therefore that Jesus predicts his arrest and death. These events come about at the hand of the Romans and the

[21] We see a related phenomenon in Luke's address to Theophilus. Luke tells the reader that while many others have written accounts of Jesus's life, Luke's account is set down "truthfully" after "careful investigation" of the events. (Luke 1:1-4) The primary difference between Luke's prologue and Matthew's program is that where Luke asserts his superior knowledge of events, Matthew asserts his superior knowledge *of the texts*.
[22] Κἂν δέῃ με σὺν σοὶ ἀποθανεῖν, οὐ μή σε ἀπαρνήσομαι. Matt 26:35b
[23] Luz, *Matthew*, 3:389.

Sanhedrin, but we can see from the prophecy in v. 31 that the author of the pericope portrayed both as mere instruments of God. Both Matthew and Mark preserve the sense that the "I" in the Zechariah quotation is God. The gospel authors interpret Zechariah through "Christian" lenses, and therefore identify the shepherd as Jesus. For both, this literary prophecy predicts Jesus's arrest as well as the "scattering" of the disciples in *Matthew* 26:56 and *Mark* 14:50. Matthew's retention of not only the Markan passage but also the meaning his source adduces from the prophecy suggests general interpretive agreement with his source author. And yet, with a redaction that brings the Zechariah text more closely into line with the LXX version, the former showcases a superior and technical form of literary authority, namely, as the more knowledgeable textual critic.

3.3 Arrest of Jesus 26:47-56

Matthew's arrest scene also depends on *Mark* and continues form the previous scene of prayer and admonition in Gethsemane. It opens with the arrival of Judas, who interrupts Jesus "while he was still talking" and greets him with a kiss of friendship, a signal pre-arranged to identify Jesus from among his crowd of followers. Judas has brought a crowd of his own, with clubs and swords, and they seize Jesus and take him to Caiaphas to be questioned. The sense of prophetic fulfillment, that the events of this scene were pre-ordained and must take place, is already present in Mark.[24] Matthew, however, redacts his source in three ways that serve to enhance the theme of fulfillment he inherits. His three additions are: (1) a line that Jesus speaks to Judas in v. 50; (2) a requirement for scriptural fulfillment in v. 54; and (3) an expansion of Mark's prophetic fulfillment (14:49) in v. 56 to specify the source, the prophets, of the scripture

[24] "It is certainly the case that Mark does not develop the idea of the fulfillment of scripture to the extent that Matthew does, but be does seem to express the notion here." Collins, *Mark*, 686–87.

to be fulfilled.[25] Matthew's use of "rabbi" in his scene is a key to his systematic redactional program; throughout it, the author emphasizes textual prophecy and the requirement of prophetic fulfilment.

3.3.1 Matthew's use of "Rabbi" (26:49, 23:7-8)

Before turning to the implied prophetic fulfillment in v. 50 a brief comment on Matthew's holistic literary strategy and intentional composition choices evident in the exchange between Jesus and Judas in vs. 49-50 is necessary. Immediately before kissing Jesus, Judas addresses him, "greetings, rabbi" (Χαῖρε, ῥαββί, 26:49). Matthew uses the term "rabbi" only three other times in his gospel: twice in his teachings about the hypocrisy of the scribes and Pharisees (23:7, 8), and in 26:25, where Judas first addresses Jesus so. The two instances in ch. 23 are both Matthean redactions of Q and invoke "rabbi" in a derogatory sense: as Jesus is teaching in the Temple in the presence of the chief priests and Pharisees, he admonishes his hearers to follow the teachings of scribes and Pharisees, but not to emulate their behaviour. The scribes and Pharisees want to be elevated above others through their teaching, to be greeted respectfully in the street as "rabbi" and thereby publicly acknowledged as authoritative interpreters and teachers of the writings. In the following verse, Jesus tells his hearers that they cannot be called "rabbi" because they are all brothers (and therefore equals) with only one teacher (ὑμεῖς δὲ μὴ κληθῆτε· Ῥαββί, εἷς γάρ ἐστιν ὑμῶν ὁ διδάσκαλος, πάντες δὲ ὑμεῖς ἀδελφοί ἐστε, Matt 23:8). Here Matthew does not present the title "rabbi" as one to be sought, but rather as a negative affectation of the scribes and Pharisees, whose teaching he recognizes but whose behaviour he shames. Interestingly, that

[25] Matthew uses the term "prophet" in reference to textual composers, their texts, or citations from such throughout his gospel, but only twice does he use the term in the plural, here and at 2:23. Foster notes that both instances represent deviances from Matthew's general prophetic quotation pattern. The usage at 26:56 lacks the direct quotation we would expect to either precede or follow the formulaic "that the writings of the prophets might be fulfilled." (Matt 26:56) 2:23 does include a quotation, but that quotation is unidentifiable and is not found in the Judean writings. Foster, "Prophets and Prophetism in Matthew," 120–22.

Matthew omits other uses of "rabbi" presumably inherited from Mark—for instance, Peter addressing Jesus as "rabbi" during the transfiguration (Mark 9:5), which Matthew changes to "lord" (Κύριε), and again in Mark 11:21, which Matthew eliminates entirely (//21:20)—further indicates his reticence about this language.

In Matt 26:49, where Judas addresses Jesus as rabbi, there is also a source bias in that Matthew reproduces the term already present in Mark 14:45. In both texts, the implication is that Judas believes he is conferring honour on Jesus by addressing him as rabbi. That Matthew reproduces Mark's term must not be taken as also a reproduction of his meaning, however. As we see in the two omissions of the term notes above, Matthew did not maintain the Markan understanding of Jesus as rabbi and therefore we must look for another explanation for the term in this verse. I propose that Matthew's intention was to—however subtly—link Judas with the hypocrites of ch. 23. By addressing Jesus as "rabbi" Judas shows that he has misunderstood Jesus's teaching, and misunderstood Jesus's purpose.[26] Jesus, by calling out the scribes and Pharisees who seek to be called rabbi, identifies himself as one who *does not seek that title*. Matthew, by putting that title into Judas's mouth, shows Judas' lack of ability to receive Jesus's teaching. That Matthew kept this use of "rabbi" while removing Mark's others, along with his addition of "rabbi" into the passage from the Q source in chapter twenty-three, further supports this argument. Much like the author's mentions of "Nazorean" in the infancy narrative (2:23) and the passion (26:71) which bracket the events of Jesus's life, Matthew's consistent use of "rabbi" across his gospel indicates a coherent literary plan. The text displays compositional forethought,

[26] While Peter and Judas may believe they confer honor on Jesus by their use of the title rabbi, it is possible that in both texts the author intends it as an indictment, in *Matthew* of Judas, and in *Mark* of Peter.

which serves to further illustrate my argument that the author seeks to present himself as a literary expert.[27]

3.3.2 Prophecy in the Arrest Scene

There are three mentions of prophetic fulfillment in the arrest scene in *Matthew*, each with a corresponding redaction of Mark. The first, at v. 50, poses something of an interpretive problem. Matthew's addition here reads, in the Greek, Ἑταῖρε, ἐφ' ὃ πάρει. This has been variously understood as a question ("Friend, why have you come?"); as an ellipsis that would be supplemented in some way that was obvious to the intended audience ("It shall happen" [γενηθήτω]); or as a statement ("You came for this purpose!").[28] The final option is favoured by Luz, while Davies and Allison, and Albright and Mann, suggest that that the short sentence may be a textual corruption or an intentional fragment.[29] Wilson suggests that Jesus's use of "friend" here is ironic, and introduces the "theme of betrayed friendship" in the exchange.[30] Luz also discerns a sense of betrayal in this verse, that the purpose in question is not the kiss with which Judas signals the guards, but rather Judas' betrayal of Jesus. I generally agree with Luz but for

[27] Dale C. Allison further discusses the possible allusions to Matthew's Passion narrative found in four other parts of the gospel. The Isaiah passage used in 5:38-42 is alluded to in 26:67; 10:17-23 appears to be an allusion to the events of the Passion, in that the same language is used to describe being delivered to councils, flogged in synagogues, and dragged before governors; in 17:6 the disciples "feared exceedingly" when they heard the voice of God, a phrase that appears again only at 27:54, where those who witness the signs at Jesus's death "feared exceedingly; at 20:22 Jesus asks the sons of Zebedee if they are able to drink the cup that he will drink, alluding to the later events of the Last Supper and Jesus's prayer at Gethsemane. Allison concludes that "Matthew's story is woven largely of the threads that run from 26:47-27:56 to the preceding narrative." That these allusions are largely unaddressed in the commentaries on *Matthew* lies in the reality that "allusions demand both imagination and prior knowledge of an absent text. It is up to the reader, stimulated by common words, themes, and images, to divine connections and to join separated passages." Allison's attention to the above found passages, and my reference to the use of "rabbi" by Judas are of a piece: Matthew's skill with literary allusion has been largely neglected, and therefore his literary technique has been also. Dale C. Allison, "Anticipating the Passion: The Literary Reach of Matthew 26:47-27:56," *CBQ.* 56 (1994): 701–14. Wilson notes the connection between 23:7-8 and 26:49, but does not discuss the literary implications. Wilson, *Matthew*, 3:365.

[28] Luz, *Matthew,* 3:419.

[29] Luz, *Matthew*, 3:419; Allison and Davies, *Matthew: A Shorter Commentary*, 485; Albright and Mann, *Matthew*, 329.

[30] Wilson, *Matthew*, 3:365.

his characterization of Jesus's words as "reproachful."[31] Matthew presents Jesus as the supreme diviner, able to read all signs and to correctly interpret the prophecies in the Judean writings. In just a few verses Jesus will tell the disciples that this all must come to pass, that it was foreordained by God. I argue, therefore, and in contrast to Luz, that Matthew did not intend Jesus to be read as "reproachful" but as accepting of the inevitability of the following events. Judas' betrayal was inevitable because God had ordained that it should happen this way, and Matthew's Jesus has comprehensive knowledge of the fullness of God's plan. As such, we could go even further and suggest that we are to read Jesus's statement to Judas in v. 50 as an assurance of forgiveness. Judas will later repent of his actions, and as such Matthew has Jesus provide pre-emptive forgiveness, since Judas and Jesus will not meet again. Whether we take Jesus to be forgiving or reproachful, I read v. 50 as a divinatory statement intended by the author as further evidence of Jesus' prophetic acumen.

The second instance of prophetic fulfilment in the arrest scene comes after a companion of Jesus cuts off the ear of a slave belonging to the high priest. Here, Matthew interpolates an ethical teaching into his narrative source, as Jesus reminds his followers that he could have asked his father for an army of angels to deliver him from the arrest, but chose not to: "How then could the writings be fulfilled, that it must be so?"[32] The exchange between Jesus and the companion who drew his sword is unique to Matthew and therefore poses less analytical difficultly than passages that have been merely redacted. Verse 54 is not a fulfillment formula, as Matthew does not quote any specific prophecy here and he does not use the formulaic language usual to the fulfilment citations. It is, however, a direct statement of the general requirement that Jesus's story

[31] Luz, *Matthew*, 2:419.
[32] 26:54 πῶς οὖν πληρωθῶσιν αἱ γραφαὶ ὅτι οὕτως δεῖ γενέσθαι;

fulfill Judean prophecy. Luz notes that v. 54 invokes God's overall plan for Jesus without "referring to a particular passage of scripture."[33] Davies and Allison appear to agree, writing that the implicit referent is the Judean writings "in their entirety" that are fulfilled "in Jesus and his redemptive work," while Wilson emphasizes how the writings referred to express the "will of God."[34] The scholarly consensus appears to be that this verse refers to how Jesus' life fulfills the entirety of the writings, an argument Matthew weaves throughout in the gospel. When looking at this verse in particular a narrower focus of fulfilment is appropriate. I would argue that the event presumed in the question "how then" (πῶς οὖν) is not Jesus' entire life and work, but instead his arrest. In the previous verse Jesus tells his companions that he has a way to avoid arrest, which is directly followed by the statement of textual prophetic fulfilment. While the larger argument is defensible, I am convinced that the narrower one better suits the immediate context of the verse.

The final textual prophetic fulfilment occurs in v. 56, where the general idea of prophetic fulfilment is already present in Mark.

Mark 14:49b	Matthew 26:56a
ἀλλ' ἵνα πληρωθῶσιν αἱ γραφαί.	τοῦτο δὲ ὅλον γέγονεν ἵνα πληρωθῶσιν αἱ γραφαὶ τῶν προφητῶν.
But in order that the writings might be fulfilled. (but let the scriptures be fulfilled NRSVU)	For all of this has happened in order that the writings of the prophets might be fulfilled.

Matthew reproduces Mark's terminology with small additions, specifying that it is the writings "of the prophets" that are here fulfilled, and expanding the first clause. Yarbro-Collins suggests that the verse in *Mark* is elliptical, and implies "a verb analogous to Matthew's γέγονεν," in

[33] Luz, *Matthew*, 2:421.
[34] Allison and Davies, *Matthew: A Shorter Commentary*, 487; Wilson, *Matthew*, 3:367.

which case Matthew has correctly interpreted Mark's ellipse and rather than let it stand as such has provided the missing verb.[35] Notwithstanding that the language used in both verses in much the same, the sense gleaned from each iteration is distinct. Because Mark on the whole expresses less interest in the fulfillment of scripture than does Matthew, Yarbro Collins proposes that Mark 14:49b should be understood as imperatival—*let* the writings be fulfilled—rather than as a criterion of "proof from prophecy."[36] In contrast, Matthew's expansion of the Markan verse invokes the latter sense of prophetic fulfillment, thus conforming to a broader redactional logic and authorial priority coordinated across this gospel, as expressed with particular clarity in Matt 1:22. It is possible, however, that Mark intended 14:49b to be understood in the same way as we now understand Matthew's fulfilments, and Matthew simply expanded on Mark's meaning. I would suggest that this does not dimmish the weight of Matt 26:56a: Matthew chooses to reproduce *Mark* with small redactions, and therefore if the sense of proof from prophecy or prophetic fulfilment is already present in *Mark*, that Matthew makes the choice he does carries that sense into his text as well. It is evident, from the multitude of such phrases in *Matthew*, that the author intended his audience to understand that prophetic fulfilment was imperative to Jesus's mission and status; therefore, this verse, while not a Matthean invention, has been redacted to emphasize a broader program of authority from textual prophecy.

3.4 Jesus the Prophet

Jesus is explicitly described as a prophet three times in Matthew's gospel, at 16:14, 21:11, and 21:46. All three instances represent some degree of failed understanding by those Jesus sought to teach. The descriptions of Jesus as a prophet serve to illustrate Matthew's presentation of siloed knowledge, wherein God has determined that some should know Jesus's true status as

[35] Collins, *Mark*, 686.
[36] Collins, *Mark*, 686–87.

the messiah, and others should be unable to know this, and can see him in the lesser role of prophet.

3.4.1 16:14-17 Revelation to Peter

Mathew 16:14 depends on Mark 8:28, though the former author redacts the Markan pericope extensively to shift its focus from Mark's characteristic secrecy, especially about Jesus's messianic identity (Mark 1:44, 8:30).[37] In Matthew's version, Jesus asks his disciples whom people think him to be, and the disciples respond, "Some say John the baptizer but others Elijah and still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets" (16:14). When questioned further, Simon Peter responds that Jesus is the messiah (*christos*). Foster argues that Matthew has "recast" Mark, particularly by adding the reference to Jeremiah.[38] My interest here is on another aspect of this pericope, which is the contrast between the knowledge of the crowds and that of Simon Peter. The first time Jesus questions the disciples about his perceived identity, the question and response refer to earthly, fleshly, knowledge. Jesus's response to Simon Peter at 16:17, after the latter's confession of Jesus as the messiah, attributes this knowledge not to Simon Peter's fleshly humanity, but to revelation from God. Matthew parallels the human belief of the crowd, that Jesus is a resurrected prophet—whether John, Elijah, or Jeremiah, or just "a prophet"—with Simon Peter's divinely granted wisdom that Jesus is the messiah and son of God. R.T. France notes that the crowds give honour to Jesus by identifying him as a prophet, but that this attribution "still falls short of the true estimate of his mission."[39] France argues that Matthew presents Jesus as a prophet, but also, like John the baptist, as "more than a prophet."[40] I disagree

[37] For discussions on Mark's messianic secret motif from a variety of perspectives, see Christopher Tuckett, ed., *The Messianic Secret*, Issues in Religion and Theology 1 (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983).
[38] Foster, "Prophets and Prophetism in Matthew," 124.
[39] R. T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 617.
[40] Matt 11:9 // Luke 7:26

with this position in that I see Matthew's referral to divine wisdom in 16:17 as an assertion that Jesus' status as messiah not just supersedes but overpowers any identification as a prophet. Here we have another example of insider versus outsider knowledge, where to Simon Peter the mystery has been revealed. Those who identify Jesus as a prophet have failed to understand, whereas Simon Peter, through wisdom granted by God, recognizes Jesus's true identity.

3.4.2 21:10-11 Entry into Jerusalem

The crowds' inability to recognize Jesus as the messiah and misidentification of him as a prophet continues in ch. 21 with his entry into Jerusalem. As above, Matthew takes the frame and most of the content for this pericope from *Mark*. When the crowds misidentify Jesus as a prophet, he has just entered Jerusalem in a triumphant procession with his followers proclaiming his identity as the son of David; Matthew's genealogy, among other clues in the text, insist that he is therefore the messiah. Matthew refers to both the followers in the procession and the people who call Jesus "prophet" as "the crowds" (οἱ ὄχλοι). Sjef van Tilborg argues that these two groups are to be understood as different crowds, one that correctly proclaims Jesus messiah, and the other that misidentifies him as a prophet, just "Jesus of Nazareth."[41] J. R. C. Cousland disagrees, arguing first on linguistic grounds that van Tilborg's position is "doubtful." Cousland further rejects van Tilborg's theory on narrative grounds, and asks where the second crowd could have come from if the "entire city" was asking who Jesus was (21:10).[42] While Cousland's grammatical argument is tenable, his narrative argument is not sustainable. Matthew calls the first group, which proclaims Jesus the son of David, "the crowds that went ahead of him and that followed." The identification of this group as people who were with Jesus is present in *Mark* and reproduced by Matthew with the addition of "the crowds." The second unit, the crowds who

[41] Sjef van Tilborg, *The Jewish Leaders in Matthew* (Leiden: Brill, 1972), 145.
[42] JRC Cousland, *The Crowds in the Gospel of Matthew* (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 207.

name Jesus a prophet, are more appropriately associated with the residents of Jerusalem. Foster, with Cousland, groups 10-11 with the triumphal entry, and identifies both mentions as the same crowd.[43] Notwithstanding Cousland's linguistic argument, I am still convinced that van Tilborg's position is correct. Matthew refers to two different "crowds" and signals this to the reader by identifying the first crowd as followers of Jesus who therefore know that Jesus is the messiah. The separate nature of the crowds is further upheld in that those who call Jesus "prophet" are associated with the Jerusalemites, who are "shaken up" (ἐσείσθη) over the hubbub Jesus's procession has created.[44] As in the revelation to Peter, we see select groups given particular knowledge about Jesus's status, and other groups failing to understand Jesus's true status as the messiah, and identifying him as a prophet. Matt 21:10-11 should be understood as the beginning of the pericope of the cleansing of the Temple, not as the conclusion to the triumphal entry, and the identification of Jesus as a prophet as a failure to understand his status as the messiah.

3.4.3 21:45-46 Teaching Parables

The third time Matthew tells the reader that the crowds thought Jesus was prophet is at the end of ch. 21 and is embedded in a series of teaching parables. The chief priests and Pharisees, hearing Jesus's teaching in the Temple, decide that he must be silenced, and want to arrest him. (21:45) They refrain, Matthew tells us, only because they "feared the crowds, because they regarded him as a prophet." (21:46) The focus of these two verses is not on Jesus' identity, but on the actions of the chief priests and Pharisees, and the fact that their actions are hampered

[43] Foster, "Prophets and Prophetism in Matthew," 125.
[44] Luke's redaction of *Mark* explicitly identifies those in the procession with Jesus as the "whole multitude of the disciples." (Luke 19:37) Matthew restricts the title "disciple" to only the twelve, and is therefore unable to be this precise.

by the beliefs of the crowd. 21:46 is set up by 21:11, where Matthew lays the foundation for the chief priests' and Pharisees' fear of the crowd.

Three times Matthew tells the reader that the crowds call Jesus a prophet, but never does Matthew, or a character he identifies as authoritative, use this identifier for Jesus. The opposite is in fact true: Matthew notes that Simon Peter (16:14) and Jesus's followers (21:9) explicitly identify Jesus as the messiah and son of David, and in the first instance Matthew has Jesus praise this wisdom as a contrast to the incorrect belief of the crowds. From this evidence we can surmise that Matthew intended the identification of Jesus as a prophet to be understood as false, a misinterpretation of his status and his mission as the messiah.[45] Further, we can see in these three pericopes illustrations of the same basic contention: certain knowledge is suitable for only particular people. The disciples, and "those with Jesus", know that he is the messiah, but the general crowds of Jerusalem identify him only, and falsely, as a prophet.

3.4.4 Jesus behaves like a prophet

Matthew's rejection of the title "prophet" for Jesus does not negate that his Jesus engages in various prophetic activities. It appears that Matthew sees prophecy, of which there are thirty-four examples in the gospel, as an appropriate function of Jesus' role as the messiah.[46] Luz notes that in post-exilic times "the term נָבִיא, in the LXX προφήτης, became a general term for all people acting as empowered "spokesmen" of God."[47] Luz cautions against thinking of prophecy

[45] A contrasting argument, in addition to those made by to Foster and Cousland, is made by Michael Knowles in his study of Matthean redaction. Knowles argues that Matthew's gospel creates Jesus in the model of the rejected prophet, particularly using Jeremiah and his warnings of the destruction of Jerusalem as a model. Michael Knowles, *Jeremiah in Matthew's Gospel. The Rejected-Prophet Motif in Matthaean Redaction*, JSNTSup 68 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993).
[46] See Appendices 8.4 for a list of non-literary prophetic events in the gospel.
[47] Ulrich Luz, "Stages of Early Christian Prophetism," in *Prophets and Prophecy in Jewish and Early Christian Literature*, ed. Joseph Verheyden, Korinna Zamfir, and Tobias Nicklas, WUZNT 286 (Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), 58.

as a monolithic phenomenon, and notes that in our texts we find multiple different forms of prophecies, and multiple different kinds of prophets.[48] Matthew's reluctance to refer to Jesus as προφήτης may be analogous to that of Flavius Josephus. Josephus uses προφήτης as a valid term only for figures from the past, and appears to believe that prophecy, of all kinds, had ceased.[49] It is possible that for Matthew Jesus was a נָבִיא (prophet) in the strictest sense, in that he was a spokesperson for God, but that for him the term "prophet" was technical and specific, referring only to a particular class of such figures, one that included the likes of Elijah, Jeremiah, or John the baptist as Elijah returned. While Jesus takes on the functions of these voices of revelation, his status as the prophesied messiah supersedes his functions as a prophet.[50]

3.5 Conclusion

The above chapter has detailed how Matthew's narrative establishes the ability of non-professional, inexpert characters to comprehend Jesus's teachings, and through this his status as the messiah. The disciples, a group of unschooled followers of Jesus, are singled out for revelation, and are able, through Jesus's explication of that revelation, to understand God's wisdom. For Matthew's intended audience, the gospel functions analogously to Jesus: the narrative becomes the explicator through which they come to their own state of comprehension. Matthew's desire for textual precision and his compositional attentiveness form key components of this coordinated literary strategy. Together, these elements create textual clarity that facilitates the reader's understanding, and through this understanding, also facilitates acceptance of Jesus as

[48] Luz, "Stages of Early Christian Prophetism," 60.
[49] Josephus does refer to some of his contemporaries as prophets, but either with the prefix pseudo- or the caveat that they were sent by the enemies of the Jews. Rebecca Gray, *Prophetic Figures in Late Second Temple Jewish Palestine: The Evidence from Josephus* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 23–26. All Greek quotations and English translations from Josephus's writings are taken from the Loeb Classical Editions of these texts.
[50] This thinking is already present in Mark, who presents Jesus simultaneously as one of the biblical prophets, and also a figure who supersedes these prophets who "(out)performs their signature abilities." Wendt, "Secrecy as Pauline Influence on the Gospel of Mark," 593.

the messiah. In the following chapter I introduce non-textual divinatory interpretations, showing how in Matthew's gospel God communicates Jesus's status through dreams and natural phenomena, to further solidify the ethnic and professional divinatory boundaries Matthew introduces in his infancy narrative.

4 Chapter 4: Dreams, Stars, Earthquakes

The author of the Gospel of Matthew constructs a narrative that displays ability in the interpretation of divine wisdom and supernatural communication to assert his authority as a religious expert. In laying claim to these specialized skills, the author usurps the authority of various figures whom he positions as "traditional" interpreters of the Judean writings, which texts the author considers prophetic. In the previous chapters I have shown how a coordinated literary strategy is visible through the redactions the author makes, and that this strategy constructs Matthew as the supreme interpreter of these prophecies. In addition, we have seen that he possesses such interpretative authority because, unlike traditional interpreters, he recognizes Jesus as the messiah adumbrated by the specific prophecies he selects, among other signs. In this chapter I turn from this sort of literary interpretation to other examples of divination performed in the narrative through signs, wonders, and dreams. Through analysis of the many dreams that occur throughout the text, I demonstrate the author's preference for spontaneous or unanticipated divinatory experiences over and above those requested of Jesus, and argue that Matthew presents his gentile characters as especially able to participate in such divinations. Matthew's primary area of expertise is literary divination, and he seeks additional credence by displaying his mastery of other forms of divination and specialized religious practices. This argument is carried into my discussion of celestial divination and reading of other natural phenomena in the gospel, in particular the earthquake as interpreted by the centurion present at Jesus's death.

4.1 Dreams

In *Matthew* dreams function as literary devices that propel the narrative plot, as well as indications of a particular character's ability to divine God's wisdom. They are also enculturated events that would have not only resonated within the Greco-Roman context of their composition

but also evoked renowned precedents from the "Judean" past. Matthew was highly influenced by Israelite and Judahite traditions, Hellenistic Jewish writings, and broader Greek and Roman divinatory sensibilities. Therefore, we must analyze the dreams in his gospel within an amalgam of interpretive spaces.

The first step is understanding Matthew's epistemology of dreams. For this, we must think of the dreams not as something the characters *had*, as purely psychological occurrences in the way that we might describe a dream ("I had a dream last night where I finished my dissertation"). Instead, for inhabitants of the ancient Mediterranean world, dreams served as important conduits for divine communication, as states of mind within which supernatural beings could share information directly with humans. While "our scientific consideration of dreams starts off from the assumption that they are products of our own mental activity," in Matthew's narrative dreams always originate outside the mind of the dreamer, in the divine realm.[1] In the five examples that occur in the gospel, he uses the same vocabulary to indicate the method by which the revelation was given. All are described as revelation κατ' ὄναρ, which is almost universally translated as "in a dream."[2] However, this translation is not the only possible option. The Greek term ὄναρ can be translated more literally as a "vision in sleep," while κατα followed by the accusative case, consistent in all five dreams, is best understood as "downward" motion. Hence "a vision in sleep [sent] down" would be a more accurate, if less concise, rendering of κατ' ὄναρ, though one that underscores the religious dimensions of dreaming. Kyung S. Baek makes no distinction between dreams and visions, instead referring to them as dream-visions.

[1] Frances Flannery-Dailey, *Dreamers, Scribes, and Priests: Jewish Dreams in the Hellenistic and Roman Eras* (Leiden: Brill NV, 2004), 1.

[2] ὄναρ is one of two most frequently used terms to denote dreams in Josephus's writing as well, where ὄναρ and ὄψις tend to be interchangeable, and are often found together with ὕπνους and ἐνύπνιον as synonyms. Robert Karl Gnuse, *Dreams and Dream Reports in the Writings of Josephus: A Traditio-Historical Analysis* (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 202.

Baek follows John S. Hanson, who argues that "the rather rigid modern distinction between the terms dream (a sleeping phenomenon) and vision (a waking phenomenon) is not paralleled in antiquity."[3] Using this framework, Baek groups the dreams discussed in this chapter with the waking visions that occur during the gospel's baptism and transfiguration scenes.[4] While I agree that the five supernaturally communicative events I identify as dreams, and the auditory and visual signs found in the baptism and transfiguration scenes, are epistemologically of a piece, I am hesitant to equate them fully in Matthew's gospel. He does not describe the latter events using language suggestive of the same mechanisms, and therefore, I argue, intends them to be understood as different types of divination. Dreams and visions both communicate divinely-sourced knowledge to a character in the narrative, but the method of communication, like its reception, is marked as different. Dream visions are given privately and personally to specific characters (or groups thereof, as in the case of the magi), and should be understood by readers to indicate limited use and understanding. The visions and auditory phenomena found of the baptism and transfiguration scenes are less limited; Matthew names specific witnesses to these events, but for the baptism especially the divine communication that transpires is available to any bystanders. Given the author's pervasive interest in delineating levels or groups of understanding, I thus maintain a distinction between dreams and other visions in the gospel.

The private nature of dream communications is most evident in the dreams given to Joseph, all of which are in service to fulfilment citations. Joseph is the only recipient of knowledge whose revelator is an "angel of the Lord" (ἄγγελος κυρίου), a clear indication that

[3] John S Hanson, "Dreams and Visions in the Graeco-Roman World and Early Christianity," in *Band 23/2. Halbband Religion (Vorkonstantinisches Christentum: Verhältnis Zu Römischem Staat Und Heidnischer Religion, Fortsetzung)* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1980), 1409.
[4] Baek, "Prophecy and Divination in the Gospel of Matthew: The Use of Dream-Visions and Fulfillment Quotations," 653.

God is its ultimate source.[5] Interestingly, in the two remaining dreams—those of magi and Pilate's wife—the source (whether the dream comes from the Judean god) and method of transmission (whether there is an angelic intermediary) of what is revealed are not specified. The lack of angelic intermediary in the latter case could be because this particular dream is simply auxiliary to the prophetic goals of the text; rather, it serves to absolve Pilate of responsibility for Jesus's death after he receives knowledge of what it revealed. The magi's dream, however, does occur in fulfilment of prophecy, even if the source of their revelation is not specified. Hence, as I discuss below, it is more likely that Matthew's vagueness lies in ethnic distinction in that he stops short of depicting God or one of his intermediaries appearing to gentile dreamers. Notwithstanding the lack of clarity about source and transmission, I would argue that the implied agent of revelation in these two dreams is nevertheless God, since Matthew uses the same phrase (κατ' ὄναρ) to describe them.[6] Matthew's choice of terms is likely influenced by his cultural context. All of the dreams in the Greek version of the Judean writings are identified as "ἐνύπνια" rather than "ὄνειροι". It is striking that Matthew would choose a different term, but this may reflect contemporaneous understandings of prophetic dreams. In his *Onirocritica,* Artemidorus, a rough contemporary of Matthew, identifies five different types of dreams, three of which can be prophetic. Interestingly, in Artemidorus's schema, ἐνύπνια (as dreams are identified in the LXX) describes the present, while ὄνειροι (the term favoured by Matthew) are predictive of the future

[5] Matthew's use of an angelic intermediary in Joseph's dreams is in keeping with Hellenistic Judaism. Flannery-Dailey has shown that a shift occurs from Israelite texts to Hellenistic, where in the former the messenger in dreams is consistently YHWH, whereas in the latter the messenger is normally identified as an angel of the Lord. Flannery-Dailey suggests that this shift may be attributable to the increasingly distant nature of God in Hellenistic Judaism, where God is thought of as located firmly in the heavenly realm, rather than in the Israelite imagining of a God who walks among God's people. Flannery-Dailey, *Dreamers, Scribes, and Priests*, 44–45, 124.

[6] Flannery-Dailey argues that ὄναρ, out of the common terms used to describe the phenomenon I am discussing has the "plainest meaning of 'a dream' but notes, first, that in "all texts in antiquity, one *sees* a dream" and two, that when thinking about literary descriptions of dreams in antiquity we must separate our modern, post-Freudian, understanding of dreams from that of the ancient Mediterranean. Flannery-Dailey, *Dreamers, Scribes, and Priests*, 131.

(*Onir* 1.1). I do not suggest a direct reliance on Artemidorus, but rather that both the *Onirocritica* and *Matthew* operated with shared conceptions of predictive dreams.[7] In further support of this possibility, so too does Josephus describe his own prophetic dreams as νυκτὸς ὀνείρων (*Wars* 3.351). This discussion, and the more literal translation, of Matthew's κατ' ὄναρ is intended to capture nuances for ancient dreamers that are not obvious to contemporary readers. I thereby intend a complete separation of "vision in sleep coming down" from the modern category of "having a dream."[8]

Dreams that facilitated communication with supernatural beings can be categorised as either anticipated, that is, induced for intentional communication, or spontaneous, if the impetus of the communication was believed to be a supernatural interlocutor.[9] The distinction lies in how an author presents a dream, and whether the dream was preceded by ritual behaviours. Sometimes an anticipated dream was compelled by particular materials, such as laurel leaves under one's pillow, "magical" practices such as recitation of special phrases, or incubation in a temple or another religious site. Dreams induced by such practices stood in contrast to so-called "ordinary" dreams, wherein the dreamer was thought to receive spontaneous communication from a supernatural interlocutor, and the meaning of such a dream required interpretation, often by a professional.[10] Discernment by an author between these two types of dreaming is an

[7] The two other predictive dream types are χρηματισμός (oracle) and ὅραμα (vision), and the final dream type, which cannot predict the future is the φάντασμα (apparition). Harris-McCory, *Artemidorus' Oneirocritica: Text, Translation, and Commentary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 13.
[8] Matthew's use of dreams may have been part of his narrative association with Moses, whom Pompeius Trogus describes as a dream-interpreter. More generally, knowledge of dream-interpretations was attributed to the Hebrews by multiple ancient authors. Wendt, *At the Temple Gates*, 91.
[9] Routledge Encyclopedia of Ancient Mediterranean Religions, 273-4.
[10] Christine Walde, "Dream Interpretation in a Prosperous Age? Artemidorus, the Greek Interpreter of Dreams," in *Dream Cultures: Explorations in the Comparative History of Dreaming*, ed. David Shulman and Guy G Stroumsa (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 122.

exercise in determining whether divine communication was spontaneous and unanticipated, or induced.[11]

Matthew's first four dreams, those of Joseph and the magi, are all spontaneous: the dreamer does nothing to induce the dream, and the implied impetus lies is in the supernatural realm. The fifth dream, which leads to Pilate abdicating responsibility for Jesus's crucifixion, is less clear than the previous four, and may have been induced by the dreamer, his wife; the author simply does not specify who instigated it. However, Matthew's consistent use of expression—that he uses κατ' ὄναρ to describe Pilate's wife's dream as well as the first four—points toward communication of divine origin. Dreaming creates a liminal space in the gospel, where the barriers between divine and human characters are thin, and information can be imparted from the former to the latter. Dream communication is also unidirectional: a supernatural being imparts information, but the being is unaffected by and acquires nothing from the encounter.

4.1.1 Joseph 1:18-21, 2:13-15a, 19-23a (Emmanuel, Flight, and Return)

The first, third, and fourth dream in the gospel are received by Joseph and occur within Matthew's infancy narrative. Joseph's first dream contains two directives: not to cast Mary out because of her pregnancy, and to name the child she bears Jesus. The first dream fits in the category of annunciation dreams, such as those found in Herodotus and Suetonius that foretell the birth of future emperors.[12] Luz notes the close parallels in Matthew's infancy narrative to the

[11] Matthew shows a strong preference for spontaneous divinations. Section 4.2 of this chapter further expands on this preference, as does Ch. 5.

[12] In the *Histories* Herodotus tells us that Astyages is sent dreams that his grandchild by his daughter Mandane and the Mede Cambyses will overthrow him, and, in a narrative parallel to that of Jesus's birth, when Cyrus is born Astyages sought to have Cyrus killed. Like Herod, Astyages failed to have his supposed rival murdered. Hdt. 1.107-109 Suetonius, in his *Life* of Augustus, recounts an annunciation dream had by Atia, Octavius' mother, in which she dreamed that "her vitals were borne up to the stars and spread over the whole extent of land and sea, while Octavius dreamed that the sun rose from Atia's womb." (somniavit intestina sua ferri ad sidera explicarique per omnem terrarum et caeli ambitum. Somniavit et pater Octavius utero Atiae iubar solis exortum.) Suetonius, *Aug.* 94.4.

statements made about Moses's birth by Josephus, referring to the dream sent to Amram.[13] In Josephus's retelling of the Exodus narrative (*Ant.* 2.212), he recounts a number of extraordinary events preceding Moses's birth. Amram, Moses's father as he is named in Exodus 6:20, receives a dream wherein God reminds him of the divine gifts previously bestowed upon his Hebrew ancestors and presages the greatness that Moses will achieve. Amram, who feared that the Hebrews would be annihilated, and was therefore distressed about the fate of his own family, was persuaded by God not to despair but to protect the coming child and to expect greatness from him. This account is directly paralleled by Matthew in the annunciation dream and prophetic fulfillment found in 1:18-22. John Meier draws attention to Joseph's role in this part of the narrative by noting his similarity with the patriarch Joseph, who also received revelation through dreams. While Davies and Allison grant the possible typological parallel, they argue that Matthew's inspiration is more likely to be found in Moses traditions of the sort that Josephus transmitted.[14]

Biblical birth announcements are, of course, not uncommon. Examples are found in Genesis (16:11-12, 17:19-21), Judges (13:3-5), Isaiah (7:14-17), 1 Kings (13:2) 1 Chronicles (22:9-10), in addition to the announcements in *Luke* (John the baptist at 1:13-17 and Jesus at 1:31-33) and *Matthew*.[15] The standard form, as identified by scholars by the acronym ABND, respects the following formula: announcement with the particle "behold" (*hinnēh* in Hebrew, ἰδοὺ in Greek), the name of the child, and the future destiny of the child.[16] The annunciation to Joseph in *Matthew* is a precise example of this form, whereas Josephus's account of Amram's

[13] Luz, *Matthew 1-7*, 92.
[14] John P Meier, *Matthew*, vol. 3 of *New Testament Message* (Wilmington, DE: Glazier, 1980), 7; Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 1:207.
[15] Gnuse, *Dreams and Dream Reports in the Writings of Josephus*, 210.
[16] Gnuse, *Dreams and Dream Reports in the Writings of Josephus*, 210. The ABND formula was developed and codified by Robert Neff, *The Announcement in Old Testament Birth Stories* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1969). See Gnuse, *Dreams*, 210 n.15.

dream, which is without biblical parallel, is not.[17] I draw attention to parallels between Josephus and Matthew not to suggest intertextual awareness per se, but rather to highlight the prevalence and importance of similar themes in the writings of both.[18] I would argue that Matthew, with his desire to link an obscure figure (Jesus) with the great heroes of the Judean writings, must be constrained by the formula found in Genesis and elsewhere. I am convinced that Matthew was aware of this formula and patterned his annunciation to Joseph intentionally, to bring to mind those earlier heroes. Josephus does not have the same constraints. Moses is already an established "great man" of Judean antiquity in need of no further corroboration; therefore, Josephus can exert more narrative freedom.

Joseph's second (Matt 2:13-15a) and third (Matt 2:19-23a) dreams contain locational directives. In the first, Joseph is instructed to take Mary and Jesus to Egypt, so that Jesus would not be found, and subsequently killed, by Herod. In the second, Joseph is told the danger is passed, and he should return to "the land of Israel" with his family. As in the first dream, Joseph receives revelation through an angelic mediator, which Allison and Davies argue indicates Joseph's importance.[19] Matthew uses "behold" (ἰδοὺ) to introduce both dreams, indicating divine intervention in human life. Matthew uses ἰδοὺ fifty-nine times in the gospel: thirty-eight of these are independent uses; three come from the Judean writings; ten are from Mark; and eight are

[17] Gnuse notes that while there is nom biblical parallel for Amram's dream, there are other reports of a dream theophany in connection with Moses's birth. *Dreams and Dream Reports in the Writings of Josephus*, 162.
[18] Josephus, like Matthew, uses his compositional power to construct his own authority. Like Matthew, he takes existing material and rewrites it, sometimes in the manner of an amanuensis, but more often as a creative composer. In the act of composition, Josephus, like Matthew, constructs his authority. He tells his readers that while they may have seen other versions of the events, his account is authoritative, and therefor he is also authoritative.
[19] Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 1:259. In the fourth dream (2:22) no angelic intermediary is identified, however, I would argue it is implied, as the fourth dream is linked with the third, as they both are in service to the fourth fulfilment formula citation in v. 23. Meier suggests that we should understand the "angel of the Lord" in 1:20, 2:13, and 2:19 as God himself, and not as an intermediary, but Davies and Allison reject this, and state firmly that the angel is a messenger, and not a narratively veiled appearance of God. Meier, *Matthew*, 7; Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 1:206.

from Q.[20] The vast majority of Matthew's independent uses of ἰδοὺ, thirty-one out of thirty-eight, signal imminent supernatural interventions into the lives of human characters. It is likely that Matthew associates this term with such divine interference, since here and elsewhere in his gospel Matthew shows an interest in reproducing Septuagint language and this is how ἰδοὺ is commonly used in the LXX.[21] Luz notes that in 1:22, as well as 2:15, the speaker of the prophecy is God, which imbues the quotation and the words of the angel with ultimate divine authority.[22]

Joseph is unique among Matthew's Judean characters for not only receiving but also correctly following instructions specified through divine communication. As will be seen in Chapter 5, other Judeans in the gospel prove unable to correctly interpret wisdom from God, whether delivered through dreams or signs manifest in natural phenomena, or by way of textual prophecies. In contrast, non-Judean or gentile characters are consistent in their ability to interpret and understand signs. For his effective receipt of divine communications, Joseph stands in contrast to these other Judean characters. Indeed, the inclusion of an angelic intermediary in his dreams alone may suggest that Joseph would have been unable to do without an interpretive guide, although there are other precedents. Daniel, for example, is guided in his interpretation of a spontaneous prophetic vision by the angelic interpreter Gabriel (Dan 8:15-26). Matthew's other recipients of divinatory dreams might both be understood as capable interpreters in their own right, particularly the magi, which term denoted Persian divinatory expertise.[23] When taken with other examples of correct interpretations by gentile characters, the chronic inability of Judean

[20] See Appendices 8.3 "Behold."
[21] "The word and its Semitic equivalents were traditionally associated with angelic appearances or theophanies." Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 1:206. Five of the ten uses of ἰδοὺ Matthew adopted from Mark signal supernatural intervention, as do five of the eight uses from Q, and all four of those from the Judean writings.
[22] Luz, *Matthew*, 1:96.
[23] Wendt, *At the Temple Gates*, 116–19.

characters to understand various signs and prophecies emerges as an important factor in how Matthew is recalibrating divinatory abilities. In several cases, ethnicity emerges as the more important determinant of true understanding than technical ability.

Joseph's second dream puts into motion the events that fulfill Matthew's fourth textual prophetic fulfilment, found at 2:15b. The quotation from Hosea 11:1—"Out of Egypt I have called my son" (Ἐξ Αἰγύπτου ἐκάλεσα τὸν υἱόν μου)—serves as Matthew's introduction of Exodus parallels in his narrative. The association of Jesus with Moses, and the parallels with Exodus, have been extensively documented.[24] Matthew claims Moses's heritage for Jesus through the refuge in and departure from Egypt, as he will do for Moses's literary authority and wisdom in his retelling of the transfiguration as discussed in Chapter 2. Together, these Mosaic typologies imbue Jesus with the status and positive associations of his illustrious precedent. They should further be understood, I argue, to authorize Matthew's own interpretations of not only Judean law and prophecy, but also the story of Jesus, which the author arranges in such a way as to demonstrate *his* expertise in a plethora of sought-after skills. These dreams, like that of the magi in the same sequence, are all unanticipated by the dreamer; a key piece of information is imparted from a supernatural being to Joseph, with no indication of inducement of the dream by Joseph.

4.1.2 Magi 2:12 (A Different Road)

We move now to the dream of the magi, which comes at the end of their participation in Matthew's narrative. The final mention of the magi in the gospel describes their retreat from Bethlehem and return to the east. Previously, during their visit to Jerusalem, Herod had asked the magi to tell him the location of the child they sought, so that Herod could "also go and pay him

[24] For a comprehensive discussion of Mosaic typologies in Matthew's gospel see Dale C. Allison, *The New Moses: A Matthean Typology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993).

homage" (ὅπως κἀγὼ ἐλθὼν προσκυνήσω αὐτῷ Matt 2:8b). However, rather than return to Herod, the magi were "warned by means of a dream" (χρηματισθέντες κατ' ὄναρ Matt 2:12a) to return home by a different road. Davies and Allison argue that the passive form of "warned" (χρηματίζω) indicates this dream's divine origin and propose that it may have been given in response to a request for guidance.[25] I think it likelier that the dream of the magi was spontaneous and unanticipated, since there is no indication in the text that they induced it,

The text also indicates "divine sanction" for actions undertaken in response to dream revelations; the same approval redounds implicitly to the prophetic fulfilments that Matthew coordinates with this dream episode.[26] The warning the magi receive causes them to ignore Herod's request that they identify the child born as king of the Judeans; instead they bypass Jerusalem after delivering him their gifts. That decision thwarts Herod's attempt to kill the infant Jesus, thus fulfilling Matthew's fifth prophetic formula when the king massacres the children at Bethlehem (2:16-18). By proffering a supernatural impetus for the magi's actions, Matthew bolsters the prophetic significance of what follows. The dream sets the events of the massacre in motion, and by controlling its significance Matthew assumes the divine sanction implied by the dream.

Flannery-Dailey argues that the idea of divine sanction through dreams is an "innovation particular to a Jewish audience."[27] By locating *Matthew* in the first century, and asserting that it "relate[s] in a significant way to a Hellenistic Jewish context," Flannery-Dailey justifies her use of the gospel as evidence for conceptual trends in Hellenistic Judaism.[28] While I am not

[25] Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 1:251–52.
[26] Flannery-Dailey, *Dreamers, Scribes, and Priests*, 6. Flannery-Dailey refers to the "divine sanction for pseudepigraphical community leaders" implied by revelatory dreams described in such pseudepigraphal texts.
[27] Flannery-Dailey, *Dreamers, Scribes, and Priests*, 247.
[28] Flannery-Dailey, *Dreamers, Scribes, and Priests*, 3, 118.

convinced by arguments for the traditional dates assigned to the text, I agree that it shares representational and conceptual elements with many Hellenistic Jewish texts.[29] However, this may be because Matthew intentionally *evokes* that context. The difference is slight but significant: whereas relation implies that the author was himself a product of Hellenistic Judaism, it is also possible that Matthew was merely staging a text to accord with that trend.[30]

In Hellenistic and earlier Jewish texts that feature dreams, divine sanction accrues to the dreamers in the vast majority of cases.[31] Flannery-Dailey argues that we should see Joseph's dreams in the gospel "in a similar context," insofar as the dreams "provide divine protection for Jesus."[32] Undoubtedly this is the case: Joseph's dreams do motivate him to take actions that spare Jesus harm from other human characters situated within the narrative. However, as with the dream of the magi, each of Joseph's dreams sets in motion events that will fulfill a prophecy. At the most basic level, Joseph is persuaded not to cast Mary aside, to flee to Egypt with his family, and to settle in the Galilee upon their return. Yet if we examine the dreams more holistically, then the ultimate conclusion to events orchestrated by the information communicated therein is the satisfaction of a literary prophecy *the author* deems significant. Hence the divine sanction typically associated with dreams has the effect of sanctioning another level of divination, Matthew's correct exegesis of inspired texts.

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[29] Parallels with the blessings and commands found in the testamentary genre, which is likened to "deathbed exhortations" (Brad Emery, Ronald Herms, and Archie T Wright, eds., *Early Jewish Literature: An Anthology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2018), 2:597.) are found in Matthew's great commission at 28:16-20. This genre, examples of which include Aramaic *Levi* and the *Testament of Moses*, is characterised by statements of blessing and admonitions to right behaviour spoken by a patriarch to his sons. In the commission of Matthew, Jesus adopts the role of patriarch, already established for him by his associations with Moses, and the disciples the role of his offspring, who will carry on his teaching and carry his blessing.

[30] The messenger "angel of the Lord" was "traditionally associated with announcing miraculous conceptions and the name of sons." Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 1:207. See Genesis 16:7, Judges 13:3.

[31] Flannery-Dailey, *Dreamers, Scribes, and Priests*, 164.

[32] Flannery-Dailey, *Dreamers, Scribes, and Priests*, 165.

4.1.3 Pilate's Wife 27:15-23 (I have been much troubled)

The third and final dream recipient in *Matthew* is the woman introduced only as Pilate's wife. After Jesus's arrest and trial before the Sanhedrin, he is taken for questioning by the Roman governor, who was, according to Matthew, "on the occasion of a feast…accustomed to release to the crowd one prisoner whom they wanted" (27:15). Thus, Pilate offers the crowd a choice: to release Jesus Barabbas, or Jesus the "so-called messiah" (27:17). Before the crowd can respond, Pilate's wife sends him a message: "Have nothing to do with that just man, for I have suffered many things today from a dream because of him (κατ' ὄναρ δι' αὐτόν)" (Matt 27:19). Matthew lifts much of his trial narrative prior to this scene from *Mark*, though this verse is a Matthean addition. I propose that the function of this dream is twofold*:* first, it justifies Pilate's abdication of responsibility for Jesus's death; and second, it illustrates further how gentiles are able to correctly sense Jesus's divine significance but not its particularization, whereas Judeans are equipped for the particularization but cannot recognise it in Jesus.

Flannery-Dailey notes that the dream of Pilate's wife is one of only five occasions in early Jewish literature whereupon women receive dreams; she then argues that the wife is "disbelieved," a reading that undermines her ability to interpret correctly and act on the dream's information.[33] I would argue that this interpretation is the opposite of what Matthew intends. It is because of his wife's report that Pilate "washes his hands" of Jesus's blood, which sequence of events exonerates him of responsibility for Jesus's death and places it firmly on the shoulders of the Judean "crowds" and local authorities. Pilate's acceptance of the interpretation she reports undergirds his absolution. My reading enjoys support from Luz, who also sees the dream as a divine warning intended for Pilate.[34] Luz writes that Pilate's handwashing was most likely

[33] Flannery-Dailey, *Dreamers, Scribes, and Priests*, 267.
[34] Luz, *Matthew*, 3:498.

understood by the gospel's earliest readers as the "biblical ritual of the exoneration from bloodguilt that is found in Deut 21:1-9."[35] This Deuteronomic ritual serves to absolve a city through ritual sacrifice and then handwashing performed by its elders of bloodguilt for a person murdered in their precincts when the identity of the murderer is unknown. In Deut 21:7, the elders who perform this ritual declare that their "hands did not shed this blood, nor were [they] witnesses to it." While, as Luz notes, Pilate's declaration in v. 24 does not appeal to God directly in the manner of that ritual precedent, it serves the same function. Pilate's purificatory actions, like those of the elders, transferred bloodguilt from one party (a Roman governor, serving as proxy for all Romans) to another (the crowd, as proxy for all Judeans). Matthew's additions of the dream and ritual handwashing narratively bookend the crowd's request that Pilate release Barabbas instead of Jesus, with the former supplying divine sanction for the latter.

In order for the dream of Pilate's wife to function effectively in this gospel narrative, its reader must know that she understood well the implications of the many things she suffered (πολλὰ γὰρ ἔπαθον) while having it. As in the revelatory dream of the magi, divine sanction for Pilate's actions is implied in the antecedent dream sent to his wife, even if its divine impetus is not explicit in Matthew's description. While the Judean sources on which Matthew seems to have drawn lack descriptions of incubation rituals most familiar from Greek religion, there are some indications in these texts that dreams might be sought by priests and other wisdom interpreters. First Kings 3:5-15 contains a description of communication from YHWH to Solomon that occurs through a dream. The text implies that following a sacrifice at Gibeon, one of the "high places" where sacrifices were performed prior to the construction of the Temple, "YHWH appeared to Solomon in a dream by night" (3:5). Gnuse identifies this as a "discreet and

[35] Luz, *Matthew*, 3:500.

ambiguous" reference to an intentional incubation ritual.[36] We find an analogous event in Josephus's account of how the high priest Jaddus, seeking protection from God, made sacrifices at the Temple and thereupon received a revelation in a dream (*Ant*. 11.327).

Dream incubation accounts from Greece contain more detailed information about the practice of seeking communication from a god through a dream. "The devotee would offer a sacrifice, pray, lament, and sleep in the shrine," with the goal of inducing the god to visit them in sleep.[37] Gnuse argues that such rituals would have been offensive to biblical authors since they aim to "force God to speak by human manipulation."[38] However, the sort of rituals performed by devotees of Asclepius and those described in 1 Kings 3:5 and *Ant* 11:326 are quite similar: in all cases, a devotee offers sacrifices before incubating in the place where they were offered, to then receive divine communication during sleep. Although the dreams in 1 Kings and *Antiquities* are not presented unequivocally as the results of sacrifices offered in advance of their receipt, Gnuse argues that they are nevertheless incubation rituals. The ambiguity about cause and effect is intentional evasion, since "deliberate incubation would appear as an attempt to manipulate God and would impinge upon divine freedom and majesty."[39]

The dream communications in *Matthew* lack the characteristics that would mark them as incubation rituals: there is no description of desire to receive revelation, the dream does not obviously occur at a shrine or other sacred site, and no rituals are performed prior to the dream. From this it seems likely that Matthew intended the reader to understand that the dreams were spontaneous rather than ritually coerced: God instigated the communication. The source of

[36] Robert Gnuse, "The Temple Experience of Jaddus in the Antiquities of Josephus: A Report of Jewish Dream Incubation," *JQR* 83 (1993): 354.
[37] Gnuse, "The Temple Experience of Jaddus," 358.
[38] Gnuse, "The Temple Experience of Jaddus," 356.
[39] Gnuse, "The Temple Experience of Jaddus," 362.

wisdom is not explicit for the gentile recipients, as in Joseph's three dreams. However, that God is their source is implicit in the text, not only because the dream recipients behave in a way that supports its theological goals, but also because the author is terminologically consistent across all five dreams in the narrative, irrespective of the ethnicity of the dreamers.

When Pilate receives his wife's report of her dream, he chooses to interpret it as an affirmation of his instinct that Jesus was arrested due to the jealousy of religious rivals rather than to any unlawful actions. Matthew is here faced with a conundrum: Jesus must be crucified as the culmination of the eschatological plan laid out in the gospel, but responsibility for his death must lie solely on the Judeans. Matthew does not invent this requirement, which is present in Mark. But Matthew supplies divine sanction for Pilate's actions by means of a dream whose significance he and his wife both appreciate. For the gospel's readers to grasp this mandate, Pilate's actions need to be understood to result from the correct interpretation of a divine communication. Matthew may even be hinting that Pilate is acting here not only as civic official but also as civic priest—roles that regularly coincided in Roman religion—and therefore someone who would possess the requisite skills to divine. While Matthew may indeed intend to imply that Pilate is an able interpreter, in keeping with the narrative logic it is not just his status as a civic authority but equally his ethnicity that results in the correct interpretation. Throughout *Matthew*, gentile characters are consistently shown to recognize and interpret divine communications when Judean characters cannot.

4.2 Signs (Natural Phenomena)

Dreams are not the only non-literary sources of divination in Matthew's gospel; the narrative also portrays certain natural phenomena as signs issued by God. The most obvious example is the star that, for their renowned astrological expertise, the magi discern to portend the imminent

birth of a Judean king. However, other, inexpert gentiles prove equally capable of divining the meaning of natural occurrences, as does the Roman centurion who observes the moment of Jesus's death. In the section that follows I treat these other examples of divination in *Matthew*, which likewise adhere to the pattern I have deduced for dreams.

4.2.1 Magi 2:1-2, 7-9a, 9b-11a (The Star)

The visit of the magi in Matthew's infancy narrative is rich in divinatory significance, collating multiple forms of the practice and dynamics treated in individual chapter of this dissertation. The episode contains an illustration of literary divination, foreshadows Jesus's own religious expertise, underscores the purpose of dream communication, places the skills of traditional Judean interpreters in tension with those of other experts (Persian magi), and ultimately "globalizes" the eschatological significance of Jesus's birth by corroborating Judean textual prophecies with another divinatory episteme. I begin by examining what astral divination adds to Matthew's narrative, while also briefly considering early receptions of this story to determine how it was understood by roughly contemporary audiences.

4.2.1.1 Influences on Matthew

There are no synoptic parallels for the story of the magi, nor for the use of astrology as a tool for supernatural communication. The story is, according to Luz, either a wholly Matthean invention or the first written record of a "traditional piece that had been transmitted to [Matthew] orally."[40] The magi's journey to see Jesus was precipitated by the appearance of a star, either "at its rising" or "in the east" (εἴδομεν γὰρ αὐτοῦ τὸν ἀστέρα ἐν τῇ ἀνατολῇ). (Matt 2:2) According to these Persian religious experts the star was a clear indication of the birth of a person of import, in this case a new king. A star that functions as a sign of a hero or god's birth is a not uncommon

[40] Luz, *Matthew*, 1:103.

motif in Hellenistic and Greco-Roman literature. Pausanias relates that a star marked the birth of Asclepius, and reports of unusual lights accompanied the birth of Mithras as well.[41] Astral phenomena were also thought to signal monarchical change. Suetonius remarks that a comet is "commonly believed to portend the death of great rulers," while Tacitus concurs that a sighting of one be understood as "an apparition boding change to monarchies."[42] Luz draws attention to the story of Balaam, a gentile prophet found in Numbers, who prophesies that a star from Jacob (ἀνατελεῖ ἄστρον ἐξ Ιακωβ) will overcome all enemies and rule over Israel. While Luz does entertain whether the Balaam story may have influenced Matthew's inclusion of the star, he concludes that it is unlikely, even if some early readers of the text made the connection.[43]

Another comparandum is the *Testament of Levi*, which is part of the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*. These poorly attested Greek pseudepigrapha were roughly contemporaneous with *Matthew* and purport to contain revelations given to the twelve sons of Jacob.[44] Of particular interest here is Levi's presentation of a priestly anointed figure of deliverance, often referred to by scholars as a "messiah."[45] It has been suggested that the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* present hope for two distinct saviour figures, one kingly and from the tribe of Judah,

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[41] Luz, *Matthew*, 1:104.
[42] Suetonius, *Nero* 36 "quae summis potestatibus exitium portendere vulgo putatur." Tacitus, *Annals*, 14.22 "tamquam mutationem regnis portendat."
[43] Luz, *Matthew 1-7*, 104–5.
[44] Marinus de Jonge, "The Main Issues in the Study of the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs," in *Jewish Eschatology, Early Christian Christology and the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs: Collected Essays*, NovTSup (Leiden: Brill, 1991), 145–63.
[45] De Jonge cautions against use of "messiah," particularly with the definite article, when translating texts from Hebrew. "Great caution is advisable; משיח should simply be translated 'anointed one' and any implication of a technical use of the term should be avoided." Marinus de Jonge, "The Role of Intermediaries in God's Final Intervention in the Future According to the Qumran Scrolls," in *Jewish Eschatology, Early Christian Christology and the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*, NovTSup (Leiden: Brill, 1991), 29. While *T. Levi* is not a Hebrew text, is attested in Greek and Aramaic, and my analysis has relied on the Greek version, de Jonge's caution is here applicable and valid. The author of the text does not use "christos" to refer to the priestly saviour it announces, but only that this figure will be "anointed into the priesthood (χριόμενος εις ἱερωσύνην)" (*T. Levi* 17.3). I am firmly persuaded that Greek *T. Levi* reflects Christian, and not Jewish expectations of a saviour, indeed that the foretold priest refers to Jesus, but as the text refers to anointing as an action and not as a technical term, the language used to discuss the text should reflect that.

and one priestly and from the tribe of Levi.[46] The conclusion that this text presents hope for two saviour figures is, according to Marinus de Jonge, too heavily reliant on the parallels between the *Testaments* and the Qumran texts, the latter which, according to de Jonge, clearly identify two distinct anointed saviours.[47] De Jonge presents the *Testaments* as Christian texts, arguing that if there were any earlier pre-Christian versions, they cannot be reconstructed due to the manuscript reliance on later Christian translations and Greek fragments.[48] For de Jonge, only one messiah is described in the *Testaments*, and that messiah is Jesus.[49] The *Testament of Levi* introduces the reader to the priestly saviour, who will "carry out a judgement of truth (ποιήσει κρίσιν ἀληθείας)" (18.2) in the world after a period of darkness.[50] Chapter seventeen of the text tells of seven jubilees, which will each see a priest anointed (χριόμενος). The jubilee of the first anointed will be one of "cosmic salvation (σοτερίᾳ κόσμου)" where the priest will "speak to God as if to a father (λαλήσει θεῷ ὡς πατρί)" (17.2), however the following six jubilees display a marked decline, culminating in a world of darkness (σκότει) and pollution (μιασμός) in the seventh.

In chapter eighteen the author introduces the expected figure of deliverance, the priest to whom "all the words of the lord will be revealed (λόγοι κυρίου ἀποκαλυφθήσονται)" (18.2). At his appointment, his "star will rise in heaven (ἀνατελεῖ ἀστρον αὐτοῦ ἐν οὐρανῷ)" (18.3) and he "will drive away all darkness from (the world) under heaven (καί ἐξαρεῖ πᾶν σκότος ἐκ τῆς ὑπ' οὐρανόν)" (18.4). In an "allusion" to the baptismal accounts found in the canonical gospels, *T.*

[46] G.R. Beasley-Murray, "The Two Messiahs in the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs," *JTS* 48 (1947): 1–12. For a survey of the literature see also Marinus de Jonge, "Two Messiahs in the Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs?," in *Jewish Eschatology, Early Christian Christology and the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs: Collected Essays*, NovTSup (Leiden: Brill, 1991), 191–92.
[47] de Jonge, "The Role of Intermediaries in God's Final Intervention in the Future According to the Qumran Scrolls."
[48] de Jonge, "Levi, the Sons of Levi and the Law, in Testament Levi X, XIV-XV and XV."
[49] "Wherever 'a human agent of divine deliverance' comes into the picture, there is only one: Jesus Christ." de Jonge, "Two Messiahs in the Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs?," 192.
[50] Greek quotations from *T. Levi* and *T. Judah* are from Marinus de Jonge, ed., *The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs: A Critical Edition of the Greek Text* (Leiden: Brill, 1978). Translations are my own.

Levi 18.6-7 describes how the *pneuma* and "holiness" (ἁγίασμα) of the lord will be upon heralded priest.[51] *T. Judah* likewise alludes to Jesus's baptism, in its description of the coming kingly saviour, who is referred to as a "star" (ἄστρον) that will come from the "seed" (σπέρματός) of Judah, bringing to mind the quotation from the Judean writings Matthew puts into the mouth of the chief priests and scribes in Matt 2:6. While parallels between *T. Levi* and *T. Judah* and the canonical baptismal accounts are apparent to scholars, as discussed above, as far as my research has indicated a potential referential relationship between the star and seed imagery in these two texts and the Gospel of Matthew has not been extensively explored, beyond the suggestion that both are reliant on the fourth oracle of Balaam (Num 24:15-19.[52] If de Jonge is correct in his assertion that the *Testaments* are Christian in nature, then the *T. Levi* 18.4 may represent an independent attestation of star and seed motifs in Jesus-messianic narratives. It is also possible that we have here texts with stronger referential relationships, wherein one author was influenced by the other. Further study is surely warranted.

4.2.1.2 The Magi for Matthew

I am convinced that Matthew intends the star as a sign foretelling Jesus's birth, and that the reader is meant to infer that magi are a type of religious expert renowned for their skill in astrology.[53] They alone in the narrative "observed his star at its rising" and correctly interpret it

[51] John J Collins, *The Scepter and the Star: Messianism in Light of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 104–5.
[52] Of particular interest is Num 24:17 "a star shall come out of Jacob, and a scepter shall rise out of Israel" (NRSV). Wilson, *Matthew*, 1:53.
[53] Wendt argues that astrologers should be included among Greco-Roman religious experts, freelance or otherwise, as "many imagined celestial bodies to be under the control of the gods … thus their calculations were undergirded by a religious epistemology." *At the Temple Gates*, 22. Johnston notes that celestial divination and astrology, as performed by Greek intellectuals, were adapted from systems "developed by the Mesopotamians many centuries earlier and transmitted to the Greek world through Egypt." *Ancient Greek Divination*, 133.

as a sign of the imminent birth of the king of the Judeans.[54] What is abundantly clear in the text is that Matthew presents prophecy as relevant and ongoing: events once foretold are coming to pass in the present time of the gospel story world, while new prophecies issued therewithin foretell events (e.g., the destruction of the temple) still yet "to come," although ones that had already transpired at the time of its composition. Going beyond Mark, who makes minimal use of textual prophecy and other forms of divination, in *Matthew* divination is affirmed as both laudable and necessary.[55] But the point this author is at pains to make is that God alone is the source of all signs and the eschatology they portend, whatever the divinatory technologies or epistemologies that might reveal them. Apropos of this reading, Celsus claims that second-century Christians believe that all things in the cosmos were put there for the benefit of humanity, even the stars.[56] While Celsus polemicizes, his perception of a Christian understanding that the Judean god controls the whole cosmos aligns with the world that Matthew constructs.[57]

Like the competition between Moses and Aaron and Pharaoh's Egyptian "magicians," the magi function in Matthew's narrative to underscore the superiority of the Judean god and his human agents. The authors of Exodus and *Matthew* clearly make statements about the superiority of their preferred religious experts; significantly, however, Exodus is at pains to distinguish the divine source of Moses's abilities from the magicians' (ἐπαοιδοὶ) human tricks (φαρμακείαις), whereas Matthew grants divinatory expertise to the magi. (Ex 7:22; 8:7; 18) Where these two narratives diverge though is in the power being accessed by the secondary characters. The

[54] "The idea is widespread that every person has a star – important and wealthy people a bright star, the others a dim one – that comes into existence at birth and is extinguished at death." Luz, *Matthew*, 1:104.
[55] For *Mark* vs *Matthew* and uses of interpretation of natural phenomena as signs from the supernatural see "The Centurion" below.
[56] Origen, *Cels* 4.23 From Origen's account it appears very likely that Celsus had access to Matthew when writing his polemic against the Christians. From Book 1 alone see *Cels* 1.38; 40; 58.
[57] In his Origen seems comfortable with the concept that all parts of the cosmos were put in place by God for the benefit of humanity, and his primary concern is that Celsus likens all Christians to bats, frogs, and worms. *Cels* 4.24

Egyptian magicians are, in Justin Martyr's understanding and in the Exodus narrative, performing their feats through false magic and demonic power.[58] It is less clear what is happening in the Matthean nativity. The two displays of divine communication and wisdom from the magi bracket their visit to Jesus: beforehand they correctly interpret the sign of the star, and after their visit they are granted a communicative dream. From this we can surmise that even after they have given their gifts to Jesus they continue in their functions as religious experts. They have extended their functions to Jesus, and in their prostration acknowledged his imminent superiority, but not at the expense of their own abilities. Additionally, their correct interpretations of divine signs and wonders—the star and the dream—are performed in the service of the Judean god, so it can follow that they perform these acts by accessing the same divine power as Moses and Jesus. The magi display their ability to receive and interpret divine wisdom by their correct interpretation of the sign of the star itself. The association between eastern wisdom and astrology in the ancient imagination is well established,[59] and by effectively following the sign of the star to Jesus, Matthew's magi perform that function without assistance in interpretation.[60] The magi use the technical abilities for which their ethnicity is most renowned to discern that something is

[58] As Phil Harland notes Philo of Alexandria identified Magian wisdom and practices as genuine and valid pursuits, practiced by ordinary folk and Persian kings. There were genuine practitioners of Magian skills in Egypt, but those that "opposed Moses before the departure from Egypt are evidently not among" them. Phillip A. Harland, "Putting the Persian Back in 'Magic': Problems with Ignoring Ancient Ethnographic Discourses," in *Canadian Society for Biblical Studies*, 2024.

[59] Luz identifies the society the magi hail from as the "origin of magic, astrology, and religious wisdom." Luz, *Matthew*, 1:112.

[60] There is room to argue that the astrological skill of the magi was somewhat limited, as they arrive first in Jerusalem rather than Bethlehem, and have to seek the counsel of the "chief priests and scribes" to follow the sign to its eventual location. (Matt 2:2) There are two narrative possibilities here. The first is that Matthew intended the reader to understand that all other religious experts are inferior to the Jews, and therefore the magi requesting help from Herod was always intending to lead to consultation with the "chief priests and scribes" to show their superior abilities. The second possibility is that this episode is set up to lead to the massacre of the innocents and provides opportunity for Matthew to quote the prophecy found at 2:17. The massacre needed to happen, so Herod needed to find out about Jesus's birth and status somehow, and so, enter the magi. Both possibilities can be argued as probable. Matthew's reliance on prophecy as well as textuality strongly allows for the second option, while his understanding of the Israelite scriptures and teachings by the scribes as superior to all others and correct *up until the point of the beginning of Jesus's career* allows for the first.

afoot within another ethnic idiom. By the time Matthew was writing the term *magos* had shifted from referring to a Persian expert in the "magical" arts to one who offers "initiation into the quite unPersian institution of the mystery-cult."[61] The term no longer referred only priests of Zoroaster, or even (only) to ethnic Persians.[62] I am convinced, though, on account of the technical divinatory skills displayed by Matthew's magi, that the author wanted his readers to think of them as agents of eastern wisdom. In particular, the reader is meant to identify the magi as skilled specialists *who are not Judean*. Their gentile identity, be it Persian or simply "eastern," is, for Matthew, part of their success as communicators with the unseen realms. The effect of this is that the magi, specialists in an ethnically specific form of divinatory expertise, reveal knowledge about another ethnic population, the Judeans, thereby implying the global superiority of the latter's god, and the event discerned.

The gifts the magi bring to Jesus in 2:11b are the clearest expression of the value Matthew places on these religious experts. All three items were rare and expensive luxury goods: gold signalled wealth and prestige the ancient Near East and Mediterranean world, while frankincense, produced, Pliny tells us (*Nat*. 12.30), in only one location in Arabia, was highly sought-after for long-distance trade due to its rarity and potential for profit, and myrrh was used as a cosmetic (Esth 2:12), for multiple medicinal purposes, as per Hippocrates,[63] and possibly as a lubricant (Song 5:5). But all three items carry additional associations of religious efficacy and wisdom. Frankincense and myrrh are both tree-resins regularly enlisted in ritual and healing practices, while gold, for those who could afford it, was the metal of choice for inscribed

[61] Matthew W Dickie, *Magic and Magicians in the Greco-Roman World* (London: Routledge, 2001), 41.
[62] For the gradual change in referents of *magos* see Wendt, *At the Temple Gates*, 116–19; Dickie, *Magic and Magicians in the Greco-Roman World*, 41–44.
[63] Hippocrates recommends myrrh for multiple uterine complaints, both as a cure for infertility (*Steril*. 15) and to bring on menses (*Mul*. 155), and for severe headache accompanied by blindness (*Morb. II* 25), as well as other varied complaints.

amulets.[64] Furthermore, two of these materials crop up in relation to the divinatory practices foremost in view in *Matthew:* myrrh ink was used for writing oracular requests,[65] while frankincense smoke and gold are ingredients called for in a number of spells to beckon revelatory dreams.[66] That these items were used for divination and other "magical" purposes does not certify beyond a doubt that Matthew imagines them in kind. Yet it is unlikely that an author so interested in varieties of divination would have been unaware that the gifts he specifies possessed such properties and functions. The people who thus crafted spells and composed oracles were themselves skilled religious specialists. Divination, dream solicitation and interpretation, and healing were all practices Matthew is comfortable attributing to Jesus and his disciples.[67] I am convinced that Matthew likewise meant for his implied readers to grasp the

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[64] For these varied uses of gold, frankincense, and myrrh, see Luz, *Matthew 1-7*, 114–15; Britta K Ager, *The Scent of Ancient Magic* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2022), 58, 76; Samson Eitrem, "Dreams and Divination in Magical Ritual," in *Magika Hiera: Ancient Greek Magic and Religion*, ed. Christopher A. Farone and Dirk Obbink (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 180. For amulets, see Roy Kotansky, "Incantations and Prayers for Salvation on Inscribed Greek Amulets," in *Magika Hiera: Ancient Greek Magic and Religion*, ed. Christopher A. Farone and Dirk Obbink, 107-137 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 110.

[65] Myrrh ink is referenced throughout the Greek Magical Papyrus as a preferred ink for writing magic incantations. Eitrem, "Dreams and Divination in Magical Ritual," 180. It was also used as a perfume that was in turn associated with attractiveness in young men, whereas an old man who uses myrrh is laughable. Ager, *The Scent of Ancient Magic*, 29. According to Aelian (*Natura Animalium* 1.38, 6.46, in Ager) myrrh also had an antipathetic effect on beetles. "Beetles are themselves bad-smelling animals and cannot bear myrrh's pleasant odor." Ager, *The Scent of Ancient Magic*, 52.

[66] Eitrem, "Dreams and Divination in Magical Ritual," 177–79. The olfactory effects of different incenses were also known and noted in the magical papyri, which suggest that "the magicians using them were well aware of the mental effects of odor and deliberately deployed it, to induce dreams." Odors may also have been intentionally used to "evoke memories and emotions" in ritual practices. Certain incenses, in common use in particular temples or cults, would bring to mind the deities associated with them, and may have added to the authorization of a practice performed by freelance experts in less "official" settings. Ager, *The Scent of Ancient Magic*, 33. There is also evidence from the magical papyri that scents such as myrrh and frankincense were used as a method of control of the person the magic was being worked on and as a way of controlling deities and directing divine intervention. Ager, *The Scent of Ancient Magic*, 101. The efforts of communication with and control of deities through smell is also present in the Israelite writings. While the smells at Genesis 8:21 and Leviticus 1:9 are both produced with animal sacrifice, the aromas are pleasing to YHWH, and produce positive results. Conversely, we have Leviticus 10:1 where Aaron's son's offer the wrong kind of fire and are subsequently killed by YHWH in retribution for sending up smoke that did not produce a pleasing aroma. Taking into account both systems of thought, one represented by the magical papyri, and one by the Israelite writings, and the likely social location of both the author and consumers of *Matthew*, I suggest that these two gifts brought by the magi would bring to mind communication with deities in general and God in particular.

[67] Giovanni Bazzana notes that the commission to heal (and preach) was present prior to *Matthew*, in Q, and that this earlier commission "shows some features that equate the [sic] Jesus' missionaries to Greco-Roman medical practitioners" and that Matthew interpreted successful healing as a sign of the coming kingdom of the heavens.

valences of these specific gifts, as indices not only of Jesus's power and status, but also the religious skills he will command. As such, Matthew positions his readers to be themselves interpreters of signs. Sharing his acculturated sensibilities, they are expected to see that Jesus is forecast as both an eschatological king—*the* messiah—and a totalizing religious expert, identifications corroborated multiply throughout the text by various forms of divination. In so doing, Matthew extends to the astute reader the same capacity for insight he assigns to the privileged characters within his narrative.[68]

Matthew's magi do quite a lot of heavy lifting in the opening chapters of the gospel. First, they provide space for Matthew to attribute capacity for prophetic interpretation to the chief priests and scribes—the traditional religious authorities—and then diminish that capacity and authority by showing that these authorities failed in their important function of identifying the messiah. They also illustrate the importance of astral divination for Matthew, as part of his program of divining through (super)natural phenomena, as well as that of dream divination. Finally, as shown immediately above, they communicate to the reader Jesus's future abilities as the premier communicator with God: he will be the premier diviner. These characteristics form the *logos*—the subject and content—of the stories about the magi and work as communication devices, imparting the reader information about Jesus, the magi, and the other characters that make up these scenes, but also information about Matthew. Throughout his gospel, and most especially in the scenes under consideration here, Matthew showcases his command of "global" religious skills. He is not only an expert in Judean writings, who can identify prophecy and

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Giovanni B. Bazzana, "Early Christian Missionaries as Physicians: Healing and Its Cultural Value in the Greco-Roman Context," *NT.* 51 (2009): 250; 234.

[68] Matthew's ethnic coding of interpretive ability throughout his gospel presents Judeans as unable to interpret, and non-Judeans as capable interpreters, signs that Jesus is the messiah. If we understand the gifts of the magi as signs that Matthew expected his readers to be able to interpret, then we attribute interpretational ability to the intended consumer of the text. This may point to a non-Judean audience as Matthew's intended consumer.

interpret its true meaning, and exegete and explain the Law in a manner superior to the Pharisees and scribes, he is also an expert in astral divination and dream interpretation. Matthew portrays himself, through his characters, as reigning supreme in all forms of divination.

4.2.1.3 Matthew's Early Readers

Matthew's early readers interpret the function of the magi somewhat differently than what have here argued. Matthew's early readers, while they maintain the goal of revealing Jesus to be the expert of all experts, appear to present a solely allegorical interpretation of the visitation and gifts, removing the possibility of a non-symbolic interpretation. Where Matthew, I argue, shows Jesus receiving the tools of his future trade from exemplary practitioners of that trade, early readers of Matthew present the narrative as purely allegorical. This reading is unsurprising; debates about magic and divination were de rigueur for second and third century intellectualizing religious experts. Systems of thought about divination were in flux, and many Christian texts display interest in hashing these out, and in elevating one method or another as supreme. Part of this effort lies in the discursive categories of "magic," "religion," and "miracle," as discussed in Chapter 2, a subset of which is the nature of the magi, and how their nature theologically interacts with that of Jesus. Ignatius of Antioch, perhaps relying on *Matthew* or another early tradition about the magi in his letter to the Ephesians, presents the visit of the magi, in extremely poetic language, as a subsummation of their power by Jesus. "And all the rest of stars, with the sun and moon, formed a chorus to this star, and its light was exceedingly great above them all" (*Eph.* 19).[69] The author unequivocally understands Jesus to be "this star," and the magi as "the

[69] This reading of Ignatius is dependent on prior knowledge of the Gospel of Matthew. In *Eph*. 4 Ignatius entreats the recipients of the letter to "become a choir … that you may with one voice sing to the Father through Jesus Christ." It is possible that the turn of phrase in *Eph.* 19 is merely a poetic parallel frame to this earlier phrase. There are other notes in *Ephesians* reminiscent of *Matthew*, such as in 14 where the Ephesians are told that "the tree is made manifest by its fruit", in reference to false teachers, which of course we, who are well-schooled in the New Testament, immediately recognise as Matt 7:16 and Luke 6:43. There is, however, no *direct* evidence that Ignatius

rest," whose light is dimmed by his brightness. With his incarnation, Jesus destroys all "magic" in the world and brings about the new kingdom. "Hence all magic was vanquished and every bondage of evil came to nought. Ignorance was destroyed and the ancient realm was brought to ruin, when God became manifest in a human way, for the newness of eternal life" (Ignatius, *Eph*. 19.3).[70] The narrative function of the magi for Ignatius, if we understand his account to be reliant on *Matthew*,—namely, to prostrate themselves before the infant Jesus in affirmation of his superiority and "miraculous" (as opposed to "magical") nature—continues throughout much of the reception history of *Matthew* and is particularly present in the second century.[71] Multiple second-century passages relating to the magi assume that "readers and hearers will know what *magoi* or *Chaldaioi* and *astrologi* are and that these are reprehensible titles."[72]

The purely allegorical interpretation of Matthew's star among the tradition's earliest interpreters may stem from a (proto)orthodox rejection of astrology. I wonder, however, if such a rejection is not actually implicit the story of the magi. Matthew's eastern visitors, the only practitioners of astrology in the gospel, acknowledge Jesus as a king through their words and prostration. They also, as establish above, provide Jesus with the tools for his future trade as a

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knew *Matthew* and therefore our understanding of 19 as a reference to the magi must be understood as a supposition, and not as a direct reference.

The traditional dating of *Matthew* to 85CE does allow for Ignatius' s familiarity with this version of the nativity, and of course there is always the assumption that the story of the magi predates *Matthew* itself, and was merely incorporated into the gospel. This is the view presented by the community production model of gospel composition.

[70] ὅθεν ἐλύετο πᾶσα μαγεία καὶ πᾶς δεσμὸς ἠφανίζετο κακίας· ἄγνοια καθῃρεῖτο, παλαιὰ βασιλεία διεφθείρετο θεοῦ ἀνθρωπίνως φανερουμένου εἰς καινότητα ἀϊδίου ζωῆς·

[71] For an extensive treatment of the reception of the magi see Eric Vanden Eykel, *The Magi: Who They Were, How They've Been Remembered, and Why They Still Fascinate* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2022).

[72] Remus, "'Magic or Miracle'? Some Second Century Instances," 131. In addition to the passage from Ignatius's letter to the Ephesians quoted above, see also Justin Dial. 77.4-78.9 in which Justin describes the infancy narrative as found in *Matthew*. This passage culminates in Justin's condemnation Damascene religious practices, and how the open worship (προσκυνήσαντες) of Jesus by the magi showed their rejection of such "wicked demonic" (πονερου̂ δαίμονος) power. As noted by Remus see also Justin *Dial*. 88.1; 102.2-4; Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* 3.9.2; Tertullian, *De idol.* 9. Remus, "'Magic or Miracle'," 131 n.11. Not all early commentators on and exegetes argued that Matthew intended his readers to understand the power of the magi as reprehensible and destroyed or subsumed by Jesus. "The possibility that Matthew was *approving* of magic and encouraging Christian patronage of the wise art whose exponents could even seek out the Christ was an embarrassment to a number of them." John M Hull, *Hellenistic Magic and the Synoptic Tradition*, SBT 28 (London: SCM, 1974), 123.

ritual specialist. Importantly, however, they do not become *followers* of Jesus per se. One early Christian concern about astrology, and the star of Bethlehem in particular, is one of causality: If the star seen by the magi foretold the birth of Jesus, then was Jesus himself not subject to astrological prognostication? This question, posed by Celsus in *On the True Doctrine*, led to what Nicola Denzey describes as "preliminary products of debates concerning concepts of signification versus concepts of causality" in the second century.[73] Was the star a sign that Jesus's birth was part of a cosmic plan within which he possessed no agency, or was it merely a sign marking the occasion and location of his birth? Denzey argues that Tatian's solution to this problem, though not necessarily as posed by Celsus, was to posit two parallel systems of fate. The first, for non-Christians, in which stars and planets ruled; and a second, in which "Jesus Christ had abrogated destiny for all those to whom he had granted new genesis through the sacrament of baptism."[74] I argue that underlying the story of the magi is Matthew's theme of ethnicizing divinatory practices, and that Tatian's explanation of two systems of fate parallels Matthew's delineations of practices. The magi are recognized as knowledgeable specialists in astrological and "magical" practices, and through their visit to Jesus and the gifts they give him Matthew implies that Jesus takes on these functions and specialist practices as well. This does not mean, however, that practices such as astrology are acceptable or viable for all people, but only that Jesus is now provided with the tools to undertake such practices. The magi, in conjunction with ethnicizing and professionalizing distinctions I discuss in Chapter 5, form part of Matthew's creation of distinct systems of communication with gods and other non-obvious beings.

[73] Nicola Denzey, "A New Star on the Horizon: Astral Christologies and Stellar Debates in Early Christian Discourse," in *Prayer, Magic, and the Stars in the Ancient and Late Antique World*, ed. Scott Noegel, Joel Walker, and Brannon Wheeler (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2003), 211.
[74] Denzey, "A New Star on the Horizon: Astral Christologies and Stellar Debates in Early Christian Discourse," 210.

4.2.2 The Centurion 27:51-54 (Death of Jesus)

Matthew's account of the death of Jesus relies structurally on the Markan passion. Following *Mark*, *Matthew* uses temporal markers to mark events: in Matt 27:45 (// Mark 15:33) the reader is told that it became dark from the sixth hour until the ninth, after which hour Jesus died. In the immediate aftermath of his death, Matthew interpolates new details into his source. There, in the instant Jesus "breathed his last," the curtain in the sanctuary was torn from top to bottom (Mark 15:38). Matthew's slight addition of "behold" (καὶ ἰδοὺ, 27:51a) to this verse, which he otherwise reproduces verbatim, is revealing. Luz mentions the interjection as an afterthought, writing only that καὶ ἰδοὺ serves to "indicate a new entry."[75] I take this to mean that Luz sees it as nothing than a formulaic tendency typical of Matthew's style, just a way to break up the death and the events following. However, I would argue that Matthew's language here, as above, is intended to signal to the reader an event or sign of divinatory significance, as argued in section 4.1.1.

In this section of the Passion, indications of a divine plan in action take the form of three signs linked to events that occur in the immediate aftermath Jesus's death. Two of these are original to *Matthew*, though interpolated into Mark's narrative: in the first, the tearing of the sanctuary curtain is accompanied by an earthquake that causes rocks to split and tombs to open, with the result that "saints who had fallen asleep were raised" (Matt 27:52). In 27:54, Matthew retains the centurion who, in Mark 15:39, declares that Jesus must have truly been the son of God (or a god). "Then the centurion standing in front of him, having seen that he stopped breathing, said, "Truly this man was the son of God." (Ἰδὼν δὲ ὁ κεντυρίων ὁ παρεστηκὼς ἐξ ἐναντίας αὐτοῦ ὅτι οὕτως ἐξέπνευσεν εἶπεν· ἀληθῶς οὗτος ὁ ἄνθρωπος υἱὸς θεοῦ ἦν.)" As

[75] Luz, *Matthew*, 3:560. None of the other commentaries consulted made mention of it at all. (Wilson, Davies and Allison, Albright and Mann)

Yarbro-Collins notes, the "referent of the word οὕτως ("in this way")" in *Mark* is unclear.[76] Both Bultmann and Gould argued that the centurion was responding to an omen, either the "darkness over all the land" or the rending of the curtain.[77] Yarbro-Collins concludes that the reader is meant to understand that the centurion has correctly identified Jesus as a son of God, but that the phrasing is ambiguous, since he may either be responding to a specific omen or else οὕτως is simply emphatic. Matthew, I would suggest, appreciates and seeks to redress the ambiguity of his source text. As we have seen, this author often alters his sources in pursuit of greater specificity, and this verse is no different. In Matthew's version, with the inclusion of a formula that he regularly uses to signal instances of divine communication through signs, the impetus for the centurion's declaration becomes incontrovertibly the correct interpretation of the original and additional omens.

Verses 51b-53 are, as noted above, Matthean insertions into Mark's framework. Luz argues that statistical linguistic analysis of these verses does not prove Matthean authorship, and the additions likely preserve pre-Matthean tradition, possibly a "Christianized" Jewish apocalyptic text.[78] However, since we cannot reliably distinguish material composed by Matthew from otherwise unattested material "taken over" by him, I find it more plausible to assume that Matthew himself was responsible for these verses, whether or not we understand Matthew as their original author. Whether Matthew wrote these verses or reworked them to fit in his biography of Jesus, they bear evidence of Matthew's authorial choice and are therefore "Matthean." The phenomena Matthew recounts are intended to be understood as signs with divine origin: in the text the earthquake and the dead walking into Jerusalem are results of direct

[76] Collins, *Mark*, 765.
[77] Collins, *Mark*, 759.
[78] Luz, *Matthew*, 3:561.

intervention by God, and therefore must be correctly interpreted as omens so that their import is understood. The astute reader of *Matthew* will already understand well that these signs confirm Jesus's true identity as the messiah and son of God. In biblical texts, earthquakes are often signs that indicate God's presence.[79] An earthquake that splits rock and opens tombs as results likewise indicate some sort of divine phenomenon, and one with clear eschatological significance.[80] Interestingly, the diviner in this scene is neither a Judean nor an expert, but an ordinary Roman.[81] As with his depiction of dreams, here again Matthew connects ethnicity with successful or correct divinatory interpretation. This instance relates most closely to the dream of Pilate's wife, not merely because both characters are Roman, but also because neither has any claim to specialized abilities in divination and arrives at the correct conclusions on the basis of religious intuition alone. Extreme caution should be taken when moving from narrative text to reality, but if we imagine Matthew as an author who writes in the service of his own, the present ethnic and social constructions of non-specialist gentiles as superior diviners invites serious reflection about what the author intends to accomplish by such privileging, at the expense of Judeans who are not Jesus followers.

[79] Davies and Allison note three occurrences in the writings at Judg 5:4; Ps 18:6-8; 77:19. Earthquakes as advent of gods or other nonobvious beings are also found in *T. Levi* 3.9; Josephus, *Ant* 7.77; and Acts 4:31. *Commentary on Matthew*, 3.632 n115. Of note also is the earthquake that precedes the arrival of the angel at Matt 28:2. For earthquakes as indicators of the eschaton see Luz, *Matthew*, 3:566, note 63.
[80] Luz identifies the opening of the tombs as the intended climax of the scene (*Matthew*, 3:567).
[81] I would argue that the centurion is meant to interpret only the earthquake and the raising of the dead, signs that he would have been able to perceive from his position on Golgotha, and not the rending of the curtain in the Temple, of which he could not have been aware.

5 Chapter 5: Missed Communications

Divinations, those supernaturally communicative events that purport to allow mortals to solicit or identify divine communications, form the foundation of the worldview presented in Matthew's gospel. The author constructs a narrative in which the Judean god is palpable, interested in the lives of the human characters, and intervenes regularly to guide events to his liking. Supernatural communication occurs through specific methods, which are distributed among the different types of authority and groups of characters that appear in the narrative. Moreover, certain divinations are successful, in that they lead to recognition that Jesus is the messiah, as in the case of Pilate, the Magi, or the Roman Centurion who observes Jesus's death, while others fail, as is the case time and again for traditionally authoritative Judean interpreters. Sometimes cases of success and failure converge in the same act of interpretation. In Matt 2:4-6, for instance, Herod inquires of the chief priests and scribes, figures who ought and prove to know the content of the Judean writings, where the messiah is to be born; they "correctly"—as per the author—identify Bethlehem, even citing the relevant prophecy, but the limits of their interpretive abilities are evident in their failure to recognized it has been fulfilled by Jesus's birth. And yet, the consultation is occasioned by the magi's correct discernment that the "king of the Judeans" has been born using a form of divination, astrology, redolent of eastern, or specifically Persian, expertise. This chapter explores such divinatory failures, and the ethnic and professional boundaries that they help Matthew to draw.

5.1 Failed Divinations

Of the fifteen instances of non-literary divination in the gospel, five are examples of what I would call failed divinations, in the sense that the intended interpreter incorrectly interprets the meaning of or neglects entirely a sign sent by God. Matthew uses these failed divinations to demonstrate how characters cast as traditionally authoritative interpreters are unable to deduce, or to fully understand, supernatural communications. In these narrative events, "valid" supernatural communication occurs through natural signs or textual prophecy. Those who witness these events *should* possess either the skill or innate abilities to correctly interpret the sign in question. And yet, whether because of lack of attention, hard-heartedness, or loss of divine favour, they fail to read the communicative signs correctly. Four of the five examples of failed divinations that I identify in *Matthew* have parallels in *Mark*, and one in Q, although Matthew has redacted all five such instances to emphasize consistently the Judeans' inability to arrive at the correct interpretation of prophecy and other signs. The failed divinations are thus ethnically and professionally delineated: all involve ostensibly "expert" Judean interpreters, who fail even as "inexpert" or untutored Judeans—for instance, a group of illiterate and untutored "disciples" of Jesus—and even gentiles succeed. The failures stem from an inability to understand either that Jesus is the messiah or other signs that portend God's eschatological plan, for instance, that John the baptizer is Elijah returned. While, again, Matthew's reliance on his sources makes clear that he did not invent the logic of failed divinations, his redactions to and expansions of them exaggerate and, in some instances, ethnicize the differential abilities of various interpreters.

Matthew's failed divinations likewise exhibit a similar pattern as famous court divination episodes in Genesis 14 and Daniel 2, wherein professional Egyptian and Babylonian diviners are

bested by inspired Judean "amateurs" in their interpretation of signs, whether dreams or natural phenomena. Matthew's episodes mimic this pattern but, here, it is *Judean* experts whose interpretations falter as others, typically gentiles, succeed. *Matthew* differs from the earlier texts in that it reverses their ethnic logic for determining true divine insight: the inadequate "professionals" are now Judeans, while the accurate position is occupied by gentiles, expert and inexpert alike.

Jesus's disciples occupy an altogether different space in the narrative, outside the pattern's binary terms. In one sense they are positioned as Judeans—although interestingly *Galileans*—and, therefore, should be incapable of successfully reading divinations according to this logic. Where they differ, is that they are *inexpert* diviners. Matthew creates four categories of diviners in his gospel: expert and inexpert Judeans, and expert and inexpert gentiles. However, ultimately, these four overlapping groups are reduced to just two categories defined by success and failure in the author's terms. In his gospel, successful diviners consist of either inexpert Judeans (e.g., Jesus or his disciples) or gentiles, whether expert (e.g., the magi) or inexpert (e.g., the Roman centurion or Pilate's wife). Expert Judeans, such as the chief priests and scribes, may know the *contents* of a textual prophecy, but they are unable to currently *interpret* it; hence they never succeed. The distinguishing factor, the characteristic that creates the possibility of correct divination, including interpretation of textual prophecy, is acceptance of Jesus as the foretold messiah. In each instance of successful divination, the divining character has first acknowledged Jesus: when Joseph is told that the child Mary carries is the messiah, he believes the angelic intermediary, and is therefore able to correctly follow instruction. Pilate's wife accepts that her disturbing dream portends something important about the man about to be crucified, and so warns Pilate to absolve himself of responsibility for Jesus's death. The disciples accept Jesus as

the messiah, and so receive special knowledge and insight, for instance, as Peter, James, and John discern the significance of Jesus's transfiguration (Matt 17:9), or as Peter recognized his status as the anointed one (ὁ χριστὸς) and son of the living God (Matt 16:16). In contrast to the acceptance displayed by these inexpert Judean and gentile characters, "expert" Judeans repeatedly reject Jesus, resulting in an inability to recognize or interpret accurately. At its core, this rejection forecloses divine communication, while acceptance of Jesus is its precondition, irrespective of an interpreter's own status or prior training. Thus, interpretive ability is predicated on nothing more than the demonstrated recognition of Jesus in precisely the terms that Matthew has devised. In principle, and God willing, a Judean could change his mind, soften his heart, acknowledge Jesus as the messiah, and then (re)gain the ability to divine correctly. The important factor is recognition of Jesus in a particular way, and in the gospel we see this factor delineated on ethnic and professional boundaries.

Typically, acts of correct and incorrect interpretation are performed by characters in relation to the same sign, albeit with each type of interpreter arriving at a different conclusion about its meaning. An exception to this pattern is found in the scenes of the magi, in which these renowned Persian diviners correctly interpret both dreams and a naturally occurring sign. Here, *Matthew* exhibits a straight reversal of interpretive authority as presented in the earlier sources: gentile experts correctly recognize and interpret phenomena of significance within a Judean idiom, while "expert" Judean interpreters fail to even "observe his [the messiah's] star at its rising" (Matt 2.2).

The successful divinations in *Matthew* differ from those of the Judean writings in an additional way, in that they lack elements of inquiry or request for intercession. Each accurate divinatory interpretation occurs spontaneously rather than as the result of an inquiry or a request

for a sign. In this respect they are, I argue, set up as foils for the expert Judean interpreters, traditional authorities, who repeatedly request signs from Jesus, and are repeatedly refused. My emphasis on Matthew's framing of divinatory abilities in ethnic terms does not yield any conclusions about the author's own ethnic identity. I am interested in how Matthew's choice to ethnicize and de-professionalize divinatory expertise plays out in his storyworld to the advantage of certain Judeans and gentiles. Also at play here is how such exercises of preference work implicitly to bolster Matthew's own authority as a diviner of many stripes. His acts of redaction, textual criticism, and prophetic interpretation identify him as an expert, though not one traditionally authorized.

5.2 Sign of Jonah 12:38-42, 16:1-4

In Matthew's pericopes of the sign of Jonah we see explicit rejection of requests for signs. Traditional Judean experts, here scribes and Pharisees, are rebuked for their demands, demonstrating Matthew's preference for spontaneous divinatory experiences. The pericopes pull elements from Q and Mark, and it is in the redaction and blending of these passages that we can see Matthew's authorial intent. The events of Matt 12:38-42 follow a section in which Jesus displays his healing abilities and, thereby, comes into conflict with the same figures; hence vv. 38–42 are the culmination of these events. Matthew's first pericope of the Sign of Jonah, at 12:38-42, opens with a challenge to Jesus by "some of the scribes and Pharisees," who demand to see a sign from him.[1] I am convinced, on account of Matthew's earlier use of the principle of

[1] The Greek σημεῖον, according to Luz, is "usually something visible by which one can clearly identify something else." Luz, *Matthew*, 2:216. Outside of the NT, the term is more open, but is used in Biblical texts more formally. Signs can be miracles, but do not have to be. Matthew's use of "signs" in 12:38 does, I think, refer to the miracles most immediately performed, healing the man with the withered hand and healing the demoniac. However, as we will see, Matthew's redacted pericope identifies "signs" both past and future.

hard-heartedness that the implication is that if Jesus *would* perform such a sign, then the scribes and Pharisees would accept him as the prophesied saviour. If Jesus acquiesced, then their hearts would be softened, and they would accept him as the messiah. This will not take place, though, since Matthew's requirement is that acknowledgement and acceptance *must come first*. The author's first redaction of Q is to identify Jesus's challengers; the same verse in Q (11:16) simply refers to them as "some people" (τινὲς), without a partitive genitive for specificity, let alone "of the scribes and Pharisees" (τῶν γραμματέων καὶ Φαρισαίων).[2] The specification has the effect of linking this pericope with earlier events from the same chapter in which characters whom Matthew positions as the "traditional" religious authorities of Jesus's time continuously challenge his ability to perform inspired healings.[3] His redaction at 12:38 thus serves the larger purpose of illustrating how their general inability to recognize signs that Jesus is the Messiah is of a piece with their inability to understand textual prophecies.

Jesus refuses to comply with his challengers' demand: he will not provide a novel "sign" to convince them; the only one that will be given is the "sign of Jonah the prophet" (σημεῖον Ἰωνᾶ τοῦ προφήτου). Matthew's redaction of Q in 12:39b is subtle but likely significant: an addition of "the prophet" to Jonah's name, which identifies him as someone with special access to divine wisdom and the mission to disseminate it. Matthew's second request and refusal of a sign is found at 16:1-4. This pericope, which is primarily sourced from *Mark* but also incorporates the "sign of Jonah" element from Q, joins the prior reference to the sign of Jonah with a statement about predicting and reading the weather.[4] The scene immediately follows the feeding of the four

[2] Luz, Wilson, and Allison and Davies all agree that this redaction is Matthean. Luz, *Matthew*, 2:214; Wilson, *Matthew*, 1:435. Allison and Davies, *Matthew*, 2:135

[3] See particularly 12:24; Jesus has healed a demoniac, and the Pharisees argue that he has done this not through the power of God, but through accessing the power of Beelzebub, "the ruler of the demons" (ἄρχοντι τῶν δαιμονίων).

[4] Luz argues that 16:2b-3 is a later interpolation, and not part of the original *Matthew*. This is argued on the basis of poor manuscript evidence of the longer version (the shorter text is attested by "the best manuscripts); the weather

thousand, a deed of power Matthew maintains from *Mark*, and the close proximity of the two scenes serves to further illustrate the inability of the traditional Judean interpreters to understand that Jesus is the messiah. Jesus has just performed a grand miracle, turning seven loaves of bread and a few small fish into enough food to satisfy a crowd of four thousand who had not eaten in three days, and immediately following the miraculous multiplication the Pharisees and Sadducees arrive asking for a "sign from heaven (σημεῖον ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ)" (Matt 16:1). Jesus's final response that they will receive no sign other than the sign of Jonah reinforces the possibly intentional blindness of the traditional religious authorities. In Q it is not entirely clear what the "sign of Jonah" is meant to be, since the text as it has been reconstructed supplies no explanation. Paul D. Meyer views the sign of Jonah as an indication that Q affirmed a mission to the gentiles, and as an admonition of Judeans. Jesus, like Jonah, had sought to deliver his message to the community of Israel and been rejected, and because of this rejection Jesus's message was now "bringing the Gentiles to repentance."[5] Luz argues that the sign refers specifically to Jesus's death and resurrection, as paralleled in Jonah's three days inside the fish.[6] Beate Kowalski argues that the sign of Jonah in *Matthew* serves to illustrate the "unrealistic expectations of Jesus's opponents." God is not, according to Kowalski's reasoning, palpable and available to give signs on command.[7]

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rule in *Matthew* is widely attested in texts from antiquity and could therefore have been added at any time in the history of the manuscript; and, though of lesser importance for Luz, the verb πυρράζω is not attested before Byzantine Greek. Following this argument, 16:2b-3 cannot therefore be attested in Q. Luz, *Matthew*, 2:347. In his position on the attestation in Q Luz is in opposition to Robinson, Hoffman, and Kloppenborg who do locate this verse in Q, and present *Matthew*, rather than *Luke*, in closer agreement with Q.

[5] Paul D Meyer, "The Gentile Mission in Q," *JBL* 89 (1970): 407.

[6] Luz, *Matthew*, 2:218.

[7] Beate Kowalski, "Meaning and Function of the Sign of Jonah in Matthew 12:38-42 and 16:1-4," *Stud. Koszal.-Kołob.* 22 (2015): 52. Kowalski also acknowledges the enigmatic nature of the "sign of Jonah" in *Matthew*, and proposes that this is intentional. The difficultly in interpretation, in clearly identifying what this passage means, was part of the function of the passage. The riddle is only understood by an elect few (who Kowalski identifies as the Matthean community), and was *meant* to be misunderstood by all others. This reasoning is reminiscent of the intentional difficulty of the *Gospel of Thomas* as identified by William Arnal in Arnal, "Scribal and Social

Kowalski's inference about God's remoteness stands in contrast to the argument that the gods were understood as present and interested in the actions and lives of human in Greek, Roman, and Judean thinking of this period. Gods were not only present but also desired to communicate with humans, and signs "were means by which such beings contacted mortals to demonstrate this presence and convey privileged information."[8] Such ideas pervade Roman-period literature of all genres, and across all literary or intellectual registers.[9] From this perspective, the scribes and Pharisees were within their rights and expectations to request a sign, either from Jesus as in the pericope under discussion, or "from heaven" (σημεῖον ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ) as in 16:1. Jesus's refusal, then, is due not to an improper request, but to their failure to recognize a sign *already given.* That is, their failure lies not in the solicitation but in the misapprehension that now obscures Jesus's true nature and role.[10] I propose that the pericope contains two different, though complementary, meanings: in verse 12:40 an allusion to Jesus's time in the tomb and his resurrection, and in vv. 41-42 a privileging of inexpert, non-Judean divinatory interpreters. The second meaning is best understood within Matthew's presentation of divinatory understanding throughout the gospel. Verses 41 and 42 recall narratives from the Judean writings in which non-Israelites receive wisdom from God through an Israelite

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Structures." In Arnal's reasoning *Thomas* is composed in such a way that only those with the needed technologies and skills were able to penetrate the true meaning of the text, and the successful interpreter "will not taste death". (269) Whereas *Thomas*'s hidden meaning was constructed through placement of paired sayings and exegesis of texts, *Matthew*'s intentional obscurity is found in the ambiguity and opacity of its references to the Judean writings.

[8] Eyl, *Signs, Wonders, and Gifts*, 47.

[9] See Stanley Stowers, "The Religion of Plant and Animal Offerings Versus the Religion of Meanings, Essences, and Textual Mysteries," in *Ancient Mediterranean Sacrifice*, ed. Jennifer Wright Knust and Zsuzsanna Varhelyi (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011); Iles Johnston, *Ancient Greek Divination*. For a discussion of the immanence of God in the Rabbinic texts see Steve Mason, "Prophecy in Roman Judea: Did Josephus Report the Failure of an 'Exact Succession of the Prophets' (Against Apion 1.41)?," *JSJ.* 50.4–5 (2019): 530.

[10] Allison argues that there are parallels to be seen here with the traditions about Moses, particularly the scene in Exodus 7. In 7:9 God tells Moses and Aaron they will be challenged by Pharaoh to work a sign (σημεῖον ἢ τέρας) to prove themselves. Moses, unlike Jesus in *Matthew*, does perform multiple signs at the instigation of his antagonist, but Pharaoh, like the scribes and Pharisees, and the Sadducees of 16:1, is unable to recognize the proof given. Allison, *The New Moses: A Matthean Typology*, 235–38.

intermediary, whose power and status the former recognize. In Jonah, the Ninevites heard Jonah and followed his teaching, which resulted in God sparing their city from a previously planned destruction. First Kings 10:1-13 recounts a visit from the Queen of the Sheba—in *Matthew* the queen of the south—to Solomon, during which she was astonished by his wisdom. Jonah and Solomon each received their prophetic power and wisdom from God (Jonah 1:1, 1 Kings 10:1) and this wisdom and prophecy was recognized by gentiles. Matthew takes this one step further in that neither Jonah nor Solomon was rejected by Israelites, as Jesus was by most of his Judean contemporaries. By coopting these examples to the disadvantage of the scribes and Pharisees, the implication of the "sign of Jonah" is an indictment of the latter. Why can gentiles and non-experts correctly read and interpret the signs and wisdom from God if traditional Judean authoritative interpreters cannot?[11]

5.3 John was Elijah

Like those of Jonah in the Judean writings, characterizations of John the baptizer present him as a man called by the god of the Judeans to forewarn of his divine plan for humanity; hence John, too, is a prophet of God's word. Matthew's insistence that John is Elijah returned, and the failure of authoritative Judean interpreters—whom I have delineated as "experts"—to recognize him as such, illustrates both the requirement for acknowledgement and acceptance in the gospel, and also its circular nature. Matthew designates John *a* prophet three times (11:9; 14:5; 21:26);

[11] We see a similar phenomenon in Matt 11:20-24, the woes to unrepentant cities, and in Matt 21:23-27, where Jesus's authority is questioned. In the first, Jesus admonishes residents of the cities who witnessed his deeds of power but did not "turn about" (μετενόησαν) and accept that Jesus was the prophesied messiah. In the second, it is the chief priests and elders of the people who receive Jesus's ire, for questioning his authority to teach in the temple. In both cases Jesus's interlocutors have been provided with signs indicating the rightness of Jesus's teaching and position, in the first the deeds of power he performed, and in the second, those performed by John the baptizer, but the witnesses deny that power for either is sourced from God. The acts of Jesus and of John here serve as divinatory signs that both figures were authorised by God, and the fault lies in the failure of the Judeans to recognize this.

he is first heralded thus by Jesus, and then twice more by "the crowds."[12] John's prophetic status is found in both Q, which supplies Matthew's first affirmation thereof, and in Mark, the source for Matthew's third. The second instance, in 14:5, is embedded within a Markan pericope, though here the use of "prophet" in reference to John appears to be a Matthean addition.[13] The identification of John with Elijah returned is likewise present in Mark; however, Matthew's intervention completes the connections he makes between John's status as a prophet, his identification with Elijah, and the requirement of understanding for recipients of this information in order that they might also grasp and accept that the messiah has come in the person of Jesus. The typological fulfilment of John's identity requires both conditions: through analysis of 11:2-17 I show that in *Matthew* John is Elijah returned *only for those who are willing to accept it*.

5.3.1 Questions: 11:2-17

Chapter eleven, which follows a teaching section comprised primarily of pithy sayings sourced from Q, opens with a question from John, which his disciples pose to Jesus on his behalf since he has been imprisoned by Herod Antipas: Is Jesus the "one who is coming" (ὁ ἐρχόμενος)? Jesus responds with a summary of his career. Meier notes how Matthew took care that his account of Jesus's career would match the order of events as listed in the Q source, which serve as signs anticipating the return of the messiah.[14] For Luz, Jesus "evades" what the disciples are really ask by responding instead to their "question about the *person* of Jesus by referring to the present *time* of salvation."[15] In other words, Jesus summarizes his activities from chs 8-9 here to direct the John's disciples to the coming time of salvation, by allusion to the

[12] Foster, "Prophets and Prophetism in Matthew," 122.
[13] Luz, *Matthew*, 2:307.
[14] Meier, *Matthew*, 392.
[15] Luz, *Matthew*, 2:134.

Judean writings passages that, according to Luz, undergird vv 4-5.[16] Meier argues that Jesus's answer is not evasive but rather cautions John and his disciples to accept the Messiah they have been sent instead of holding out in error for the one they had anticipated.[17] Jesus does not correspond to the "fearsome, fire-breathing judge" whom John prophesied in *Matthew* 3:11-12; hence in place of *that* sort of messiah, they should acknowledge the work Jesus has done and not be "scandalized" or "caused to stumble" (σκανδαλισθῇ).[18] John's disciples, who were instructed to expect a different kind of messiah, must adjust their expectations: Jesus's actions are those of the messiah *because Jesus is the messiah*. The essence of his message, as detailed by Matthew, is not judgement by fire but preaching of goodness. Frustratingly to Matthew, it seems from this exchange that John has ultimately failed to recognize Jesus's messianic status despite intuiting as much in his baptism. Indeed, Matthew's redactions to the Markan baptism scene underscore this point: John immediately subordinates himself to Jesus, insisting, "I need to be baptized by you" (Matt 3:14). The Q material Matthew reproduces in 11:2-6, however, undermines that apparent understanding, presenting Matthew with a need to rehabilitate him, as he will go on to do in 11:10-11 (cf. Luke 7:28 // Gos. Thom. 46) wherein Matthew, reproducing Q, has Jesus tell the crowds that of "those born of women none has arisen greater than John the baptizer" who is "more than a prophet" and the one sent to prepare the way for the messiah.

In v 14, unique to *Matthew*, we find the culmination of Matthew's earlier verses about John. Here Jesus states unequivocally that John the baptizer was Elijah returned with one significant a caveat: John is Elijah, the prophet whom Jesus will later tell the disciples foretells the coming of the messiah, *if you are willing to accept it*. Like that of the messiah, the

[16] Luz identifies the following passages as "in the background" of this pericope: Isa 29:18-19; 35:5-6; 42:18; 61:1. *Matthew 8-20*, 134.
[17] Meier, *Matthew*, 120.
[18] Meier, "John the Baptist in Matthew's Gospel," 393.

typological fulfillment of John's role requires acceptance and understanding, which includes the ability to comprehend each fulfilment as a whole. Each element of the two—Elijah and the messiah—and the immanence of both are interwoven: Elijah must come before the messiah, Elijah has come, therefore the stage is prepared for the messiah. Matthew sets up the requirement for acceptance and understanding in 11:14:

καὶ <u>εἰ θέλετε δέξασθαι</u>, αὐτός ἐστιν Ἠλίας ὁ μέλλων ἔρχεσθαι.	And if you are *willing to accept it*, he is Elijah who is to come.

These words are spoken by Jesus to the crowds (τοῖς ὄχλοις) as part of a longer discussion of John's typological identity, and what role he played in the coming of the kingdom of the heavens. Matthew's inclusion of the admonition "let anyone with ears listen" (ὁ ἔχων ὦτα ἀκουέτω) (11:15) further illustrates the seemingly intentional obtuseness of Jesus's hearers. The sense of the verse is that most people can hear, but not all listen, and therefore do not understand the significance of John's mission and his association with Elijah. In these verses, I propose, Matthew constructs a scheme of messianic salvation that is contingent on one's understanding and acceptance of the identities of both John and Jesus within Matthew's particular salvation scheme, and that the traditional Judean religious authorities—the traditionally accepted interpreters of texts and signs—have failed to divine the implications of John's mission, and their failure stems from an inherent unwillingness to release their implied stranglehold in interpretive authority.

5.3.2 Understanding: 17:9-13

The second half of the Transfiguration narrative in *Mark* and *Matthew* cements John the baptizer's identification with Elijah returned. This episode follows Jesus's first prophecy of his

death and Peter's confession of Jesus's status as the prophesied messiah, connecting narratives of deeds of power and healings with the teachings to follow. The scene is of particular interest to this study as it illustrates Matthew's portrayal of scribes as knowledgeable about the requirements for the return of the Son of Man and their inability to recognise that the requirements have (according to Matthew) been met.[19] Both *Matthew* and *Mark* recount a short exchange between Jesus and the disciples who accompanied him to the mountain, wherein they discuss the requirement that Elijah must return before the Messiah can appear. In both versions, Jesus tells them that the scribes who interpret the Judean writings in this manner are correct.[20] However, Elijah has *already* returned, yet the temple priests, Pharisees, and scribes did not recognize him.

Matthew follows Mark to this point, but expands his account in a predictable manner by explicitly identifying John the baptizer as Elijah.[21] As elsewhere in this gospel, the scribes and other traditional Judean experts are granted partial knowledge of the writings, in this case, that the messiah's arrival will be anticipated by a typological forerunner.[22] Notwithstanding this expectation, they are unable to recognize that this eschatological condition has indeed been satisfied: *John* was Elijah. Paradoxically, then, a lack of understanding is both the cause and

[19] Matthew's passages on the son of man may rely on the *Similitudes of Enoch*, a text John Collins identifies both as "Jewish" and earlier than *Matthew*. Collins and Collins, *King and Messiah as Son of God: Divine, Human, and Angelic Messianic Figures in Biblical and Related Literature*, 87.
[20] According to Yarbro Collins he teaching that Elijah will precede the Messiah appears to be a Christian innovation, as there is "virtually no evidence that the notion of Elijah as a forerunner of the messiah was widely known in the first century CE." Collins, *Mark*, 430. Marcus Öhler agrees that the OT and other Jewish writings of the first century make no mention of Elijah returning before the messiah, or any other connection between these two figures. Eschatological expectation for Elijah, without association with the messiah, is present in the Judean writings and texts from Qumran. The foundation of this expectation is, according to Öhler, is found in Malachi 4:5: "I will send you the prophet Elijah before the great and terrible day of the Lord comes." Marcus Öhler, "The Expectation of Elijah and the Presence of the Kingdom of God," *JBL.* 118 (1999): 461–63.
[21] John is already identified with Elijah in Mark's gospel, but where Matthew is explicit in his identification, Mark presents John as "Elijah incognito." Meier, "John the Baptist in Matthew's Gospel," 384.
[22] See especially Matt 2:3-6, discussed in Chapter 1. The traditional interpreters – here the chief priests and scribes – know the content of the writings, but not how to correctly interpret this content.

effect of their inability to accept Jesus as the messiah. Their hardness of heart prevents them from recognizing the fulfilment of either condition, and prevents them from receiving the vision (*horama,* Matt 17:9) revealed by God.[23]

In contrast to traditional authorities, and *Mark* for that matter, the Matthean disciples *are* able to glean the correct meaning of his words. In 17:13, Matthew indicates that Peter, James, and John understood (συνῆκαν) that the Elijah figure to whom Jesus referred (v. 12) was, in fact, John the baptizer. Unlike the crowds in 11:14, these disciples do not need to be told this explicitly because they have heard and comprehended Jesus's previous teachings. Öhler argues that the "explicit recognition of the disciples reported by Matthew" at 17:13 "is not really necessary" because Mark has been clear enough in his version that the reader would understand Jesus refers to John when he mentions Elijah.[24] I disagree slightly with Öhler in that Matthew's statement of understanding serves a didactic purpose, to explicitly identify the disciples as capable of understanding Jesus's purpose and teachings. From a narrative perspective, 17:13 is probably superfluous; Matthew has clearly stated in 11:14 that John is "Elijah who is to come" (ὁ μέλλων ἔρχεσθαι), and so a reader who used *Matthew* to learn about the life of Jesus would presumably already *know* this information. If, however, we consider 17:13 to be in the service of a different goal, it is not superfluous but identifies the reader with the disciples in their explicit and mutual understanding. This is in keeping with Matthew's scholastic goal: whereas the disciples received explanations directly from Jesus, the reader learns everything from *Matthew*, and ipso facto, its author. Hence, the gospel's readers are intended to understand their structural alignment with the disciples. The author wants them to understand Jesus through a self-

[23] There are parallels in verses 9 and 6-7 with the revelation granted to the apocalyptic seer in the Book of Daniel. "After seeing the "vision" and hearing the "voice," Daniel, full of terror, "falls on his face"; but the angel "touches" him, "wakes him up," and says, "do not be afraid" (Dan 8:16-17; 10:9-12, 16-19). Luz, *Matthew*, 2:398.
[24] Öhler, "The Expectation of Elijah and the Presence of the Kingdom of God," 465.

consciously scholastic pedagogy, and to recognise that the knowledge he imparts is special and intended for a select group of "students." Matthew is hardly unique for these aims. Mark creates a similar didactic environment, predicated on the existence of secret knowledge, as does Paul. For Paul, knowledge of Christ is meant to be mysterious, and requires *pneuma* for understanding.[25] For Mark, the rhetoric of secrecy constructs a reading experience that actually privileges the reader above the twelve, who never "grasp his true nature or purpose while he is among them."[26] In Mark, it is the reader who truly comprehends, possibly, because the text is meant to anticipate Paul's letters, whose author never actually knew Jesus Christ. All three authors create a textual space in which secrecy, revelation, and understanding exist as part of the experience of Jesus, but in *Matthew* secrecy *needs to be explicated*. Matthew presents himself as in possession of special knowledge, as do Mark and Paul, as well as unique conceptual keys to unlock other knowledge, which, rather than having value in its secrecy, has value in its revelation. In addition, the author's implied possession of these special keys to understanding, along with his unique knowledge, creates his authority, as an interpreter of the Judean texts, and of Jesus's life and role as the messiah. Whereas Mark presents his readers with puzzles that they must solve, Matthew wants to control precisely *how* the audiences understand Jesus, through emphasis of a didactic student-teacher model. Where in the storyworld we see Jesus the teacher and the disciples the students, in Matthew's framework the author acts in the teacher role embodied by Jesus in the text: where the disciples had Jesus to help them understand the meaning and function of the Judean writings, the readers of *Matthew* have the author as explicator. If the sole function of the gospel is to impart to the reader Jesus's teaching and the stories about his life, then Matthew's explicit statement that the disciples understand in 17:13 is

[25] Wendt, "Secrecy as Pauline Influence on the Gospel of Mark," 589.
[26] Wendt, "Secrecy as Pauline Influence on the Gospel of Mark," 586.

not necessary. But, if the purpose is to show the reader or auditor that one interpretive option is superior to another, and that divine wisdom will flow from the primary recognition that Jesus is the messiah, then the statement becomes essential and serves well its intended function.

5.4 Josephus on Judean Misrecognition

I have characterized Matthew's presentation of traditional Judean interpreters as incapable of correctly divining that Jesus was the messiah as failed divinations. In the gospel, God has sent signs to the Judeans through Jesus and John the baptizer, so that they might understand and accept the former as his messiah. Traditional interpreters are unable to access the special wisdom sent to them through the prophetic writings and other signs, and so God has instead bestowed that wisdom on others able and willing to accept it, inexpert Judeans and gentiles. Although Judeans in a sense, the disciples are nonetheless able to perceive Jesus's true nature because of revelations received from him, while three types of non-Judean diviners, both expert and inexpert, serve to illustrate the ethnic and professional distinctions I have identified. The magi's astral and dream divinations, along with the dream of Pilate's wife, and the Centurion's correct interpretation of the omens that accompany Jesus's death, provide divine sanction for Matthew's narrative innovations. In other words, Matthew creates narrative events that show divine approval for his version of Jesus's biography, and in contrast evidence divine *dis*approval for the incorrect interpretations and blindnesses of the traditional Judean religious authorities. The gentile successes, like the dedication and comprehension of Jesus's uncanny disciples, stand in contrast to the failures of traditional Judean interpreters, who chronically misrecognize or misinterpret signs, including the fulfilment of prophecies which they correctly identify as significant. These traditional interpreters have, in Matthew's portrayal, led the people of Jerusalem astray, so that they will ultimately forsake Jesus over and against an initial impulse to

welcome him into Jerusalem as their messianic deliverer. In parallel to the arc of understanding we see in the characterization of John the baptizer, who initially recognized Jesus as messiah and later, while in prison, appeared to reassess that understanding, the people of Jerusalem first welcome Jesus as their teacher and saviour, but then default on that welcome and call for his death by crucifixion. Jesus's initial welcome and the reception of the crowds to his deeds of power in the temple (Matt 21:12-15) is contrasted with the persuasion of the crowd, by the chief priests and elders (27:20), to ask for Barabbas's release, rather than Jesus's. Throughout this portion of the narrative, Matthew identifies the traditional religious authorities as the instigators Jesus's rejection by the people of Jerusalem.

The writings of Flavius Josephus, whom we first met in section 2.3.1, and was a first-century Judean general, priest, diviner, and author, serve here as helpful comparanda to Matthew's strategy of differentiation on account of their contemporaneity and similar interests in Judean religion and history.[27] Indeed, Josephus shows many parallels with the NT texts, particularly *Luke-Acts*, which Steve Mason has convincingly shown display both generic and content dependencies on Josephus's writings.[28] Likewise, Mason argues that Matthew's presentation of Herod the Great, particularly the account of the massacre of male children in Bethlehem "fits well with Josephus's descriptions of Judean life under Herod and Archelaus: many Jews at the time lived in great fear, and any rival claimant to the title "King of the Jews" would have been ruthlessly exterminated."[29] Matthew's knowledge of Josephus has not been established, but his *War* and *Antiquities* attest to a contemporary and widespread interest in

[27] Josephus, who self-identifies as a priest in the proem of his *War* (1.3), gives his priestly lineage in the proem to his *Life* (1.1-6). His position as a Judean general is described throughout his compositions, and his role a diviner is discussed further below.
[28] Steve Mason, *Josephus and the New Testament* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2003). See especially 251-302.
[29] Mason, *Josephus and the New Testament*, 160.

Judean culture, foremost oracular interpretation, owing to the Judean War. Moreover, as I will argue below, Josephus's use of prophecy and other forms of divination reflect similar concerns with interpretative authority as those displayed in *Matthew*.

Josephus wrote primarily in Greek, while living in Rome as part of the Flavian household, and his lengthy account of the recent conflict between Judea and Rome constitutes our most extensive contemporary account of this or perhaps any war waged by Rome.[30] Josephus's *War*, written in Rome soon after his arrival in 71 CE, describes the events of the war and his own part in them, including his capture by the Roman army and eventual audience with Titus and Vespasian.[31] From the prologue, Josephus presents the war and ultimate destruction of the temple in Jerusalem as the fault of the Judeans themselves, perpetrated by the "unwilling hands of the Romans" but caused by the "Judean tyrants" (Ἰουδαίων τύραννοι; *War* 1.10).

Josephus's places considerable emphasis on the correct interpretation of prophecy, and how incorrect interpretation led the people of Jerusalem astray. Indeed, he attributes the cause of the war to incorrect interpretation of divine communication. In Book 6 Josephus tells his readers that an "ambiguous oracle" (χρησμὸς ἀμφίβολος, 6.312) saying that a person from Judea would become the ruler of the world was understood to refer to "someone of their own race" (6.313). This interpretation incited the people to war. The author, however, assures his readers that not only was this interpretation incorrect, but that he knew the true interpretation: the person referred to was Vespasian, "who was proclaimed Emperor on Jewish soil" (6.314). Josephus here identifies himself as an expert interpreter of divinely-sources wisdom, and places himself in

[30] Josephus tells us his *War* is a Greek gloss (Ἑλλάδι γλώσσῃ, 1.3) of an earlier Aramaic composition by the same author, now lost. Steve Mason, "Josephus's Judean War," in *A Companion to Josephus in His World*, ed. Honora Howell Chapman and Zuleika Rodgers (Malden, MA: Wiley & Sons, 2016), 16.
[31] The date of composition is not certain, but 75 CE is a likely *terminus ante quem*. Mason, "Josephus's Judean War," 14–16.

opposition to Judean men he calls "wise" (6.313). In this way Josephus reinforces his superior abilities as an interpreter of oracles and of the Judean religious writings, and he establishes the role of prophetic interpretation in the war. Implicit in Josephus's account of the oracle and its interpretation is the negotiation of who has religious authority, who is empowered to interpret the Judean writings for the general, lay, public. Here and elsewhere, Josephus positions himself as the empowered interpreter.

Josephus's account of the burning of the Jerusalem temple and his explanation of the causes of this event also both rely on divine prophecy and intervention. In Book 6 we read about Titus's siege of Jerusalem, and how initially the Judeans held the city walls, but through the prowess of the Roman soldiers they were eventually left only the temple precincts. Titus had sought to spare the temple from destruction, hoping to maintain it as an "ornament to the empire" (6.242). In the final stage of the siege, Titus realized that he could not spare the temple, as this endeavor was leading only to the "injury and slaughter of his troops" (6.228), and he ordered the temple gates to be burned. Through this act, Titus's soldiers were able to gain access to the inner precincts, and eventually destroy the temple, an act Josephus constructs as ordained by God, brought about by the impiety of the Judeans. Once the conflagration that began in the temple precinct had reached its sanctuary, Titus's soldiers, despite his attempt to urge restraint, were unable to halt their violence and plunder (6.260-261). One outer portico of the temple was yet undestroyed, and there "poor women and children of the populace and a mixed multitude had taken refuge" (*War* 6.284). Josephus places their death at the feet of a "false prophet" (ψευδοπροφήτης) who had told them to go to the portico, where God would deliver them from the Roman soldiers. Many prophets, who were under instruction from the tyrants in Jerusalem to keep the people from fleeing the city, told the people that if they stayed in the temple precincts God would provide

deliverance. The people of Jerusalem were thus kept in the city and met their deaths due to the actions of "false" prophets. Furthermore, they were denied the opportunity to flee by the inability of the priests and other trusted interpreters to correctly interpret signs that the destruction of Jerusalem was imminent and preordained.

Josephus describes a series of portents, warnings from God in advance of the temple's destruction, that were disregarded or misinterpreted. First, a star and a comet hung over Jerusalem, then at the feast of Passover an unknown light shone in the Sanctuary. These signs were followed by a sacrificial cow giving birth to a lamb in the temple, and then the door of the eastern gate opening of its own accord. This last sign was interpreted by the most as a good omen, a sign that God was opening for them the "gate of good things" (ἀγαθῶν πύλην). There were some, though, who recognized the gate opening as a portent of destruction. Josephus tells his consumers that "learned ones" (οἱ λόγιοι) were able to correctly interpret this sign, and that the "sacred scribes" (ἱερογραμματεῦσι) had also interpreted the sign of the unknown light as a sign of the coming desolation. The people of Jerusalem, though presented with portents of destruction by their authoritative interpreters, reject this in favour of the encouragement of those Josephus marks as false prophets.

One other episode of omens ignored is worth noting here. Into his description of the siege of Jerusalem Josephus embeds a vignette about a certain Jesus, son of Ananias. This Jesus was not, according to Josephus, a learned man, but rather a "rude peasant" (ἰδιωτῶν ἄγροικος) (*War* 6.300) who appeared in Jerusalem for the Feast of Tabernacles four years before the war began.[32] While standing in the temple, Jesus was compelled by supernatural forces (δαιμονιώτερον) to cry out an omen against the temple, the city, and the people of Judea. For seven years Jesus

[32] Williamson, in his translation originally published in 1959, calls this Jesus "a very ordinary yokel." Josephus, *The Jewish War*, ed. E. Mary Smallwood, trans. G. A. Williamson, Revised. (London: Penguin Classics, 1988), 361.

continued his lament, responding to all inquiries and violence with "woe to Jerusalem" (αἰαὶ Ἱεροσολύμοις, *War* 6.305). The people of the city thought he was a maniac, and ignored his prophecy, and when Jesus knew that Jerusalem was besieged and would likely fall, he walked the walls with his usual cry, and then said, "woe to me also" (αἰαὶ δὲ κἀμοί) at which he was struck by a stone from a Roman weapon and died. Josephus is clear that this Jesus was truly a mouthpiece for God, and that his omens were repeatedly ignored by leading citizens of Jerusalem and other officials who were should have taken heed of his warnings. Josephus's choice to make a country bumpkin a vessel for divine communication is suggestive, as is his insistence upon the inability, or unwillingness, of Jerusalem authorities to correctly interpret a series of omens about the impending destruction. Analogous to *Matthew*, Josephus's narrative here presents improbable, untutored individuals as capable recipients or mouthpieces of divine knowledge when "experts" fail. As for ethnic delineations, which I argue are present in *Matthew* in conjunction with those of expertise, Josephus's interests are somewhat different; his goal is to present *intra*- rather than *inter*-ethnic differentiation. His text displays interpretive ability along lines of legitimate versus illegitimate Judeans, including to his own advantage as a Judean priest. The situation is somewhat less clear in *Matthew*—Jesus, who embodies prophetic and legal authority, is Judean, as are the disciples—and for this reason we should not infer that his strategy of ethnically delineated divinatory failures is evidence of supersessionism or pro-gentile leanings in any straightforward sense.

5.4.1 Vespasian, Titus, and Josephus

Josephus's presentation of his ability to see through the lies of the false prophets and correctly interpret the omens of destruction for Jerusalem and the Judeans has proved helpful for thinking about interpretation of signs in *Matthew*. I am convinced that Josephus's self-

presentation is also a valuable comparandum for thinking about Matthew's own, particularly because Josephus, unlike Matthew, is a central character in his own narrative. Here too, character and author are not necessarily one and the same, but the author's presentation could be considered an idealized or aspirational version of himself.[33] In this way, we as readers become acquainted not with Josephus the unvarnished historical person, but his ideal self-fashioning. The latter Josephus can thereby provide an instructive picture of how an author furthers certain rhetorical goals through literary composition, and a fuller understanding of how the author wants to be thought of by his readers. We have seen above that Josephus presents himself as a paramount interpreter of all manner of divine communications, foremost dreams and literary prophecy, and will now turn to his presentation of these skills as a method of gaining favour with Vespasian and Titus.

Following his surrender, Josephus was meant, according to his own account, to be taken as a high-value prisoner to the emperor Nero (*War* 3.398). Before this could take place, Josephus spoke privately with Vespasian and Titus, and told them that he was an appointed messenger of God, sent to tell Vespasian of his "greater destinies" (μειζόνων) (*War,* 3.400). According to Josephus, Vespasian will be Ceasar and Emperor, and his son also. This news strikes Vespasian initially as suspect, a mere ploy of Josephus to save his own life. Gradually, however, Vespasian came to believe the prophecy, a change of heart which is presented by the author as caused by God.[34] Vespasian was further influenced by assurances that Josephus was a true prophet (3.405). In this passage we see two important examples of divine communication and their impetus. First, that Josephus is a mouthpiece for God's plan, and second, that God has brought about

[33] See Section 1.7 "Narratology" for a discussion on the author / narrator divide.
[34] "To this speech Vespasian, at the moment, seemed to attach little credit, supposing it to be a trick of Josephus to save his life. Gradually, however, he was led to believe it, for God was already rousing in him thoughts of empire and by other tokens foreshadowing the throne." *War* 3.403-405, LCL.

Vespasian's change of heart in furtherance of his universal plan. Mason writes that a theme of "divine (and *not* Roman) control is basic to the *War*" and runs throughout Josephus's composition.[35] God is the prime mover in his narrative, and makes use of the tools available, be they Judean or Roman, in furtherance of his plan.[36]

Some scholars suggest that Josephus's *War* is primarily Flavian propaganda, produced by a freedman and client of Vespasian; hence it exhibits a clear Roman bias.[37] Tessa Rajak tempers this position, arguing that Josephus's "Palestinian prejudices … have a deeper effect on his writing that the Roman bias which tends to be automatically ascribed to him."[38] Regardless of whether the *War* tilts more decisively toward a Roman or a Judean bias, the text participates in the legitimation of Vespasian's rule as emperor, and that of his heir Titus, through prophetic utterances and statements of divine participation in securing Vespasian's political ascent. As Rajak notes, "it is good for rulers to be seen as marked out by destiny."[39] Vespasian's biographers are sensitive to the global legitimation of his rule, listing the many and varied marvels that accompanied his accession. Suetonius and Cassius Dio both include Josephus's prophecy in their lists of Flavian omens, which Mason attributes to the "wide circulation" of Josephus's prediction, as neither of the Roman authors appears to have read the *War*, or Josephus's other texts.[40]

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[35] Mason, *Josephus and the New Testament*, 47.
[36] The theme that God uses foreign powers to punish the Judeans for some perceived infidelity is not unique to Josephus, but rather is pervasive throughout the Hebrew Bible. By framing his history in this way, Josephus aligns himself with the historical authors of the Hebrew Bible, which Mason argues Josephus was well-versed in by the time he wrote the *War*. Steve Mason, "Did Josephus Know His Bible When He Write the Jewish War? Elisha at Jericho in J.W. 4.459-465," in *Reading the Bible in Ancient Traditions and Modern Editions: Studies in Memory of Peter W. Flint*, ed. Andrew B. Perrin, Kyung S. Baek, and Daniel K. Falk, Early Judaism and Its Literature 47 (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2017), 603–28. For arguments that Josephus only became familiar with the biblical texts when writer the *Antiquities*, see Seth Schwatz, *Josephus and Judean Politics*, Columbia Studies in the Classical Tradition 18 (Leiden: Brill, 1990), 24–44.
[37] Tessa Rajak, *Josephus: The Historian and His Society*, 2nd ed. (London: Gerald Duckworth & Co. Ltd, 2002), 10.
[38] Rajak, *Josephus*, 185.
[39] Rajak, *Josephus*, 187.
[40] Mason, *Josephus and the New Testament*, 48. Suetonius *Vesp.* 4-5; Cassius Dio 65.1.4. Tacitus also gives a list of marvels, but does not include Josephus's prediction. Rajak, *Josephus*, 191.

Josephus's prediction of Vespasian's rise to power was part of Flavian legitimation, but, as Rajak points out, by recounting the prophecy in his text Josephus also participates in rehabilitating his own reputation, providing cover for his alignment with Rome: if God is for Vespasian, then surely it is right that Josephus is also.[41] I think it possible that the Flavian prophecy also provided Josephus with authority as a communicator with God, one who was specially selected to receive future-looking wisdom. As in the case of the portents of the destruction of the temple discussed above, Josephus here uses historical events as legitimation of his position as a religious expert. Josephus, like Matthew, legitimates himself through his prophetic legitimation of the characters in his text.

As noted above, Josephus presents the destruction of the temple as an act of God, carried out by the Romans at God's instigation. This theme extends to the character of Titus, particularly in his speech upon seeing the towers of Jerusalem. With the siege of Jerusalem complete, and the city having been destroyed by fire, Titus entered what remained of the town and expressed his awe at the towers still standing. When he saw the quality of their construction and their strength, Titus attributed his success at Jerusalem not to his own strategic abilities, or the prowess of the Roman army, but rather to the will of God. "God indeed," he exclaimed, "has been with us in the war. God it was who brought down the Judeans from these strongholds; for what power have human hands or engines against these towers?"" (σὺν θεῷ γ᾽ ἐπολεμήσαμεν," ἔφη, "καὶ θεὸς ἦν ὁ τῶνδε τῶν ἐρυμάτων Ἰουδαίους καθελών, ἐπεὶ χεῖρες ἀνθρώπων ἢ μηχαναὶ τί πρὸς τούτους τοὺς πύργους δύνανται;) (*War* 6.411-412) Mason argues that, rather than absolving Titus from blame

[41] Rajak, *Josephus*, 188. Rajak sees a similar phenomenon at work in the Flavian prophecy ascribed to Rabban Johanan ben Zakkai. "If God had singled out Vespasian for greatness, it was surely right for a pious man to strike at agreement with him." (ibid. 189)

for the total destruction of the city, Josephus is denying him the credit for this feat.[42] In a subtle effort to undermine Titus, and through him the Flavian dynasty, Josephus attributes Roman success to God and the actions, though negative, of the Judeans, thereby diminishing the Flavians' accomplishments in Judea. I would like to suggest an accompanying theme, that the recognition of the power of the Judean god by Titus and a sort of veneration of that god by him was part of Josephus's narrative construction. In the scene currently under consideration, after Titus attributes his success to the will of God, Josephus tells us he left the towers standing even as the rest of the city was razed to serve as a "memorial of his attendant fortune" (μνημεῖον εἶναι τῆς αὐτοῦ τύχης) to which he owed his victory; this, I propose, is an oblique reference to God. Titus sees the towers as a monument to God's power, and Josephus wants the reader to understand that this Roman found favor with God by acknowledging this.

Like Matthew's story of the centurion, in which a gentile recognizes the divine signs of Jesus's true nature as Judean witnessed fail to do so, Josephus here uses a non-Judean character to indicate the divinatory failures of the Judeans in his narrative. If the Judeans in Jerusalem had recognized and heeded the various signed and interpretations of *legitimate* interpreters, several of whom Josephus affirms, rather than follow the false prophets, the death and destruction in Jerusalem could have been avoided entirely. As Josephus recounts in 6.310-314, misinterpretation of an oracle and a textual prophecy was the first cause of the war, and, as

[42] Mason, *Josephus and the New Testament*, 85. Mason goes on to argue that Titus' clemency in the *War* is not written in praise, but in mockery: Titus, by sparing lives and attempting to prevent the destruction of the temple, is portrayed as soft and weak, according to understood Roman values and rules of war. Mason's argument is compelling, particularly in light of John Barclay's work using post-colonial theory as a lens through which to read Josephus's *Against Apion*. Barclay suggests that Josephus's works may contain a "hidden transcript" by which those on the know – the subjugated peoples – can "detect the oblique and circumspect strategies by which the subordinate maintain an alternative discourse." John M. G. Barclay, "The Empire Writes Back: Josephan Rhetoric in Flavian Rome," in *Flavius Josephus and Flavian Rome*, ed. Jonathan Edmondson, Steve Mason, and James Rives (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 320.

Josephus implies, if the Judeans had listened to his interpretation, rather than the "wise men" they did listen to, all would have been well.

5.5 Conclusion

Not unlike Josephus, Matthew presents the traditional interpretative authorities as unable to correctly interpret the supernaturally given signs. This is unsurprising, despite the different positions the two narrator / authors sought to bolster. Josephus presents himself as a priest traditionally ascribed interpretive authority.[43] While he wrote for a non-Judean audience in Rome, Josephus is a Judean insider, who constructs his authority through an established cultic institution, but one who still finds himself in competition with others of priestly eligibility, not over the nature of priestly authority itself, but in who is qualified, through lineage and education, to hold that authority. Matthew, on the other side of the coin, constructs his authority from what he presents as an outsider position. The author's own divinatory actions—the fulfilment formulas found in his account of Jesus's life—present traditional authorities as possessing some knowledge of the writings but also incapable of applying that knowledge correctly to present circumstances. In this way Matthew invents divinatory authority for gentile and inexpert characters in his text. We see a similar dynamic in the writings of Justin Martyr as well. Justin's *Dialogue with Trypho* employs a similar strategy to usurp the interpretative authority of Judean "experts," and with the result that Justin himself emerges as the supreme authority. Like Matthew, Justin allocates greater ability to gentile interpreters than to Judeans so that he may claim textual expertise for himself. Justin differs from Matthew in that he locates his skills at the highest intellectual register; his authority derives foremost from membership in a lineage that originated with Jesus, but he is equally distinguished for his education and *bona fides* as a trained

[43] For Josephus's status and lineage see *Life* 1-2. Throughout the *Life* Josephus refers to his priestly status and dues, even so far as to say he rejected the financial benefits he was entitled to reap from tithes. (*Life* 15)

philosopher. Justin claims superior insight through the combination of these credentials, which includes acceptance of Jesus as the messiah prophesied in the Judean writings, but also relies on Greek credentialing through philosophic heritage. Matthew's self-authorizing strategy is subtler, and therefore opaquer with respect to its effect or what it might disclose about the author. Nevertheless, his methods of deauthorizing Judean interpreters serve the same purpose as in Justin and Josephus: to shore up the authors' own authority at the expense of others, positioning them as supreme examples of the skills and knowledge they put on display in their narratives.

As I said above, implicit in the gospel is that the Judean experts in *Matthew* could come to be successful diviners if they would only allow God to soften their hearts and acknowledge, as Peter has, that Jesus is the messiah. It is their unwillingness to accept that the anointed of God has been born and is teaching throughout Judea that prevents successful communication with God. This is the key factor that extends the argument out of the storyworld, and into Matthew the author's world. Matthew the author has, skill-wise, much more in common with the expert characters in the gospel than with the inexpert, in that he is, first and foremost, a textual interpreter. This skill is never attributed to inexpert characters, but only to experts, such as the chief priests, scribes, and Pharisees.

6 Conclusion

At the beginning of December every year I dig out my collection of crèches, at least four different nativity groupings that range in media from sparkly concrete to plush felt and batting. I situate the assorted family casts—Mary, Joseph, and the infant Jesus—somewhere in my living room, often in a different location from the previous year but always at the western end of the apartment. The magi, in contrast, begin Advent in the easternmost position possible, the bedroom windowsill in the current apartment. Over the next five weeks, they, with their ceramic camels, will travel across my apartment until they arrive in "Bethlehem" at Epiphany and join the family groupings. This ritual has become the fulcrum around which I do all other Christmas decorating; no trees, wreaths, or candles can be set out until I have plotted the journey of the magi. Matthew's experts in eastern wisdom, whose presence in his narrative occupies only twelve verses out of more than one thousand, loom so large in my imagination that they, known only from this gospel, have become so familiar as to feel like old friends. I have spent the last twelve years reading and analyzing texts written during, about, or around the early years this thing we now call "Christianity" but return to *Matthew* more than any other text, I think to determine *why* I find his characters so compelling, his storyworld so intriguing. Who is the author behind this text that I can read it time and again, yet always discover new narrative patterns and connections on each reading. Whence comes the richness of this text? These are the questions I have tried to answer by analyzing *Matthew* as a text devised in the service of various authorial prerogatives.

In this dissertation, I have identified particular compositional strategies in the Gospel of Matthew and argued that they constitute the author's methods of self-authorization. His redactional choices vis-à-vis *Mark* and Q produced a wholly new narrative, one propelled less by secrecy than by divine communications that occur through dreams, (super)natural phenomena,

and, above all, the fulfilment of eschatological prophecies in the distant Judean past. This careful construction of the gospel's narrative framework, especially its dimensions of literary divination and competitive legal interpretation, work together to promote Matthew as the supreme interpreter of the Judean writings, on the one hand, and to demonstrate how the destination of their profoundest meanings are the events of Jesus's life, on the other. The tools Matthew used are not unique to his text. Two authors whom I introduced as comparanda, Justin Martyr and Josephus, exhibit the same prerogative of self-authorization sought through literary composition, tactics similar to Matthew's, and a common concern with interpretive rivals.

My study of *Matthew* employed narratological analysis for two reasons. First, I wanted to analyse the content, or *logos*, of the gospel not as history but as literature. Second, I sought to determine what the style, or *lexis,* of the gospel—its epistemological exoskeleton, as it were—might tell us about the author's socio-historical setting and rhetorical goals. Implicit in this endeavor is the idea that the gospel was written by an individual with compositional creativity: *Matthew* is not (or not only) a textual record of oral history, or a theological document produced by a community through the pen of a scribal mouthpiece, but rather a work of creative literature whose author made use of, and "corrected," earlier written sources, and generated new elements and events for the biography of a heroic figure. Both the *lexis* and the *logos* of the text are the product of a writer's mind, and both are shaped by his epistemological framework. Through careful analysis of all three of these elements, I demonstrate that *Matthew* reveals the presence of an author deeply concerned with the existence, and the origins, of his own interpretive authority. As such, I reposition this gospel as a work of imaginative literature, and thereby suggest new interpretive avenues for other early "Christian" texts. If we examine *Matthew*, or another gospel,

in this manner, we may not learn much about the historical figure the texts purport to describe, but ascertain a great deal about the sort of historical person who authored that story.

I mentioned above Matthew's concern with the origin of his interpretative authority and want now to expand briefly on what I think he imagined its source to be. It seems to me that Matthew's text reveals a way of thinking about the world that includes consistent and determinable communication with gods and other non-obvious beings, and that any ability to field communications from the Judean god will depend on accepting Jesus's status as the prophesied messiah, *in Matthew's particular way*. Divinatory ability, as such, is both predicated upon and produced by understanding.

I have here gestured toward the possible motivations and effects of Matthew's choice to ethnicize and de-professionalise divinatory authority, which I will now address. Matthew's gospel has long been thought of as the "most Jewish gospel," written by and for first-century Judeans. After all, Irenaeus says so explicitly.[1] I argue here that the text would have been most appealing to gentiles, and *a certain kind of Judean*, one who fits within Matthew's category of "non-traditional" interpreters. While it is not the goal of my project to posit the audience of this gospel, a few intriguing possibilities emerge from my reading of the text. Matthew's rejection of traditionally authorized interpreters of the Judean writings in favour of inexpert characters such as the disciples, conceived specifically as *students*, suggests that he expected his book to appeal to persons who might somehow identify with them. It is possible that Matthew found himself in competition with other interpretative experts fighting for a limited audience of Christ-followers, and as such he created a text that would both explicate Jesus's teachings and provide Matthew's

[1] *Haer.* 3.1.1

bona fides as a teacher. Matthew becomes, for this group, a sort of stand-in for Jesus. Or, conversely, Jesus in the gospel takes on the role of precisely the type of teacher and explicator whom Matthew the author embodies.

Matthew's privileging of such non-Judean interpreters as the magi and the Roman centurion may suggest something else about potential audiences for this gospel. From the assumption that Matthew is the "Jewish gospel," scholars have typically argued—following Irenaeus, no less—that it was first intended for a Judean audience, to persuade its members that Jesus was the messiah. I have argued that *Matthew*'s "Judean" character—conceived essentially, as a matter of identity—cannot be known with any certainty. What *can* be known is that this author made use of texts from that cultural and ethnic space, in an effort to supplant the traditional interpreters of those texts as he portrayed them. I here suggest that we take this supposition one step further, and propose that Matthew wrote, at a minimum, for not an exclusively Judean audience but a broader one that included gentiles, and for neither group is there a requirement for familiarity with the Judean writings. Matthew's text uses the Judean prophecies to argue Jesus is the messiah, but he also, through his narrative, tells his reader that one can receive "true" knowledge about Jesus through other divinatory methods, such as dreams, astral signs, and (super)natural phenomena. Matthew creates an eco-system in which those familiar with such divinatory methods are placed on, if not wholly equal, then complementary footing with specialized literary experts.

Underlying this whole project is the possibility that while the Gospel of Matthew is a book about Jesus, it is *also* a book about Matthew. The author pervades his text, and I propose that this is no accident, but was rather something the author fully intended. Matthew wrote about a religious figure around whom there was, as yet, no "Christian" institutional structure, and he appears to reject those structures available for authorization of Judean experts. As such no

systematic method to authorize teachers and experts exists for Matthew. He is one of many freelance religious experts in a crowded marketplace, competing for authorization and, presumably, acolytes. His book, that text that we now call the Gospel According to Matthew, is his own particular stamp of authority, telling all who read and hear the text that he, this anonymous author, although perhaps one known to them, is the definitive expert in the Judean writings, and ultimate interpreter of Jesus's life.

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8 Appendices

8.1 Literary Divinations

Verses	Description	Source	Interpreter	Interlocutor
1:2-17	Genealogy	Matthew	Matthew	Reader
1:18-25	Joseph's 1st Dream	Matthew	Matthew	Reader
2:3-6	Herod was Frightened	Matthew	Chief Priests and Scribes	Herod
2:15b	Out of Egypt	Matthew	Matthew	Reader
2:16-18	Massacre of the Innocents	Matthew	Matthew	Reader
2:23b	Called a Nazorean	Matthew	Matthew	Reader
3:3	Prepare ye the way	Mark	Matthew	Reader
4:12-16	Retreat to Galilee	Matthew	Matthew	Reader
8:17	He took our infirmities	Matthew	Matthew	Reader
12:17-21	he will proclaim justice to gentiles	Matthew	Matthew	Reader
13:10-17	Purpose of parables	Mark w/ major redactions	Jesus	Disciples
13:34-35	Use of parables	Mark w/ major redactions	Matthew	Reader
21:4-5	Two donkeys	Matthew	Matthew	Reader
21:33-46	Parable of the wicked tenants	Mark	Jesus	Chief Priests and Scribes
26:31-35	Peter's Denial foretold	Mark	Jesus	Disciples
26:47-56	Arrest in the garden	Mark w/redactions	Jesus	Crowds
27:3-10	Judas's Suicide	Matthew	Matthew	Reader

8.2 Prophetic Fulfilment Citations

Verse	Description	Luz,[1] Soares Prabhu[2]	Davies and Allison[3]	Stendahl[4]
1:22	Isaiah 7:14	X	X	X
2:5	Bethlehem		X	X
2:15	Out of Egypt	X	X	X
2:17	Massacre	X	X	X
2:23	Nazorean	X	X	X
3:3	Voice in the Wilderness			
4:14	Zebulon and Naphtali	X	X	X
8:17	Infirmities and Diseases	X	X	X
12:17-21	Healing (x2)	X	X	X
13:14	Listen Without Understanding			
13:35	Parables	X	X	X
21:4	Donkey	X	X	X
26:54	Arrest 1		X	
26:56	Arrest 2		X	
27:9	30 Pieces of Silver	X	X	X

[1] Luz, *Matthew 1-7*, 125.
[2] Soares Prabhu, *The Formula Quotations in the Infancy Narrative of Matthew*, 24–41.
[3] Allison and Davies, *Matthew*, 15.
[4] Stendahl, *The School of St. Matthew*, 98–126.

8.3 Behold

Verse	Source	Description	Signal of Supernatural Intervention?
1.2	Matthew	Joseph's 1st dream	yes
1.23	Judean writings	Isaiah 7:14	yes
2.1	Matthew	intro wise men	yes
2.9	Matthew	star	yes
2.13	Matthew	Joseph's 2nd dream	yes
2.19	Matthew	Joseph's 3rd dream	yes
3.16	Matthew	baptism spirit descent	yes
3.17	Matthew	baptism voice from heaven	yes
4.11	Matthew	angels ministering post temptation	yes
7.4	Q	parable (judging others)	no
8.2	Matthew (Luke agreement)	cleansing a leper	yes
8.24	Matthew	storm on the water	yes
8.29	Matthew	Gadarene demoniacs	yes
8.32	Matthew	Gadarene demoniacs	yes
8.34	Matthew	Gadarene demoniacs	yes
9.2	Matthew (Luke agreement)	healing a paralytic	yes
9.3	Matthew	healing a paralytic	no
9.1	Matthew	calling of Matthew	no
9.18	Matthew (Luke agreement)	raising the ruler's daughter	yes
9.2	Matthew	healing the bleeding woman	yes
9.32	Matthew	healing the mute man	yes
10.16	Q	prophecy of persecution	yes
11.8	Q	speaking about John	no
11.1	Judean writings (via Q)	prophecy about John	yes
11.19	Q	Son of Man	no
12.2	Mark	plucking grain on the sabbath	no
12.1	Matthew	man with withered hand	yes
12.18	Judean writings	Isaiah 42:1-4	yes
12.41	Q	prophecy (greater than Jonah)	yes
12.42	Q	prophecy (greater than Solomon)	yes

12.46	Matthew	mother and brothers	no
12.47*	Mark	mother and brothers	no
12.49	Mark	mother and brothers	no
13.3	Mark	parable (the sower)	no
15.22	Matthew	Canaanite woman	yes
17.3	Matthew (Luke agreement)	transfiguration	yes
17.5	Matthew	transfiguration	yes
19.16	Matthew	rich young man	no
19.27	Mark	rich young man	no
20.18	Mark	prophecy (death of Jesus)	yes
20.3	Matthew	healing the blind men	yes
21.5	Judean writings	Isaiah 62:11 + Zechariah 9:9	yes
22.4	Matthew	parable (wedding feast)	no
23.34	Matthew	prophecy (woes)	yes
23.38	Q	prophecy (woes)	yes
24.23	Mark	prophecy (abomination of desolation)	yes
24.25	Mark	prophecy (abomination of desolation)	yes
24.26	Q	prophecy (abomination of desolation)	yes
25.6	Matthew	parable (bridegroom)	no
26.45	Mark	Gethsemane betrayal	yes
26.46	Mark	Gethsemane betrayal	yes
26.47	Matthew (Luke agreement)	betrayal by Judas	yes
26.51	Matthew	betrayal by Judas	no
27.51	Matthew	curtain of the temple torn in two	yes
28.2	Matthew	resurrection	yes
28.7	Matthew	resurrection	yes
28.9	Matthew	resurrection	yes
28.11	Matthew	resurrection	yes
28.2	Matthew	great commission	yes

8.4 Prophecy (non-literary)

Verses	Description	Source	Prophet	Interlocutor
3:1-2, 4-12	Mission of John the baptizer	Mark	John the baptizer	Crowds; Pharisees and Sadducees
4:17	Proclamation of the Kingdom	Mark	Jesus	Unclear
4:18-22	Fisher of Men	Mark	Jesus	Disciples
5:17-20	Jesus and the Law	Q w/redact	Jesus	Crowd
9:14-17	Question about fasting	Mark	Jesus	John's Disciples
10:34-39	A sword rather than peace	Q	Jesus	Disciples
10:40-42	Rewards	Mark + Q w/redact	Jesus	Disciples
11:28-30	Come to me	Matthew	Jesus	Crowd
12:38-42	Demand for a sign	Q w/redact	Jesus	Pharisees and Scribes
12:43-45	Return of unclean spirit	Q	Jesus	Pharisees and Scribes
16:13-20	Confession of messiahship	Mark w/ major redactions	Jesus	Disciples
16:21-23	Prediction of death and resurrection	Mark	Jesus	Disciples
16:24-28	Demands of discipleship	Mark	Jesus	Disciples
17:9-13	Question about Elijah	Mark w/ major redactions	Jesus	Peter, James, John
17:22-23	Prediction of death	Mark	Jesus	Disciples
20:17-19	Prediction of death	Mark	Jesus	Disciples
21:1-3	Find the donkeys	Mark	Jesus	Disciples
23:37-39	Lament over Jerusalem	Q	Jesus	Crowds
24:1-2	Temple destruction predicted	Mark	Jesus	Disciples
24:3-8	Signs of the Times	Mark	Jesus	Disciples
24:9-14	Remain loyal	Matthew	Jesus	Disciples
24:15-22	Sacking of Jerusalem	Mark	Jesus	Disciples
24:23-25	Signs and False Leaders	Mark	Jesus	Disciples
24:26-28	Day of the Son of Man	Q	Jesus	Disciples
24:29-31	Heavenly signs attend the Son of Man	Mark	Jesus	Disciples
24:32-36	Lesson of the fig tree	Mark	Jesus	Disciples
24:37-44	The unknown day and hour	Q + Mark	Jesus	Disciples
24:45-51	Parable of the unfaithful servant	Q	Jesus	Disciples

26:1-5	Plot to kill JC	Mark w/redactions	Jesus	Disciples
26:6-13	Anointing at Bethany	Mark w/redactions	Jesus	Disciples
26:17-25	Passover	Mark	Jesus	Disciples
26:26-30	Lord's Supper	Mark	Jesus	Disciples
26:57-68	Trial before Caiaphas	Mark w/redactions	Jesus	High Priests
26:69-75	Peter's denial	Mark w/redactions	Jesus	Peter/Disciples