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TWENTIETH CENTURY APPROACHES TO THE MATTHEAN COMMUNITY

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While extended research into the Matthean Community is a relatively recent phenomenon in NT scholarship, most twentieth-century scholars working on the Gospel of Matthew have had either an explicit or implicit understanding of the Matthean Community against which they interpret the Gospel. This might be characterized as their understanding of the historical matrix out of which the Gospel arose, and their interest in this matrix grows out of the importance attached to reading the Gospel against its historical background. This article will examine the various ways this historical matrix has been understood.

Matthew as Rabbi, The Matthean Community as a School

One of the earliest approaches to the Matthean community is based on the possibility that the evangelist is a trained Rabbi. In 1928 von Dobschütz published his seminal article, "Matthäus als Rabbi und Katechet" [Matthew as Rabbi and Catechist].[1] In it he looks at such characteristics of Matthew as his use of stereotyped phraseology and his love of numbers and suggests that this was evidence of two complementary things about Matthew. First, it indicates that "our first evangelist is plainly a Jewish Christian who has undergone a rabbinic schooling. He is a converted Jewish rabbi."[2] Second, it indicates that "the Jewish rabbi had become a Christian teacher and now used his catechetical skills in the service of the gospel."[3] While the evangelist might be a converted Jewish

[1]E. von Dubschütz, "Matthaüs als Rabbi und Katechet," *ZNW* 27 (1928): 338-348. This has been translated into English as "Matthew as Rabbi and Catechist," in *The Interpretation of Matthew*, ed. Graham Stanton (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983), 19-29.

[2]Von Dobschütz, 24.

[3]Ibid., 26.

rabbi, the Gospel is not to be characterized as Jewish Christian.[4] Thus, as von Dobschütz pictures it, the Matthean community is best understood as focused around a Rabbi and his disciples.

Krister Stendahl, on the other hand, develops evidence for understanding the Matthean community in terms of a school. In his monograph, *The School of St. Matthew*,[5] Stendahl looks at the assumption of form critics like Dibelius: "Im Anfang war die Predigt" [In the beginning was the sermon]. When the materials of the Gospels are examined they do not appear to be records of early Christian sermons (for example, how did the passion narrative derive from early Christian sermons?). Not only this, those examples of early Christian sermons that do survive, while they freely refer to the words of Jesus, do not make reference to the actions of Jesus, about which the Gospels have a great deal to say. The only places where such materials are used are sermons such as Justin's *First Apology* and the *Epideixis* of Irenaeus, both works of a more scholarly nature.[6]

Stendahl discards as inadequate both liturgical and catechetical backgrounds for the Gospel, he makes another suggestion—that the Gospel is the product of a school:

> It is at this point that the school may be invoked as a more natural *Sitz im Leben*. The systematizing work, the adaptation towards casuistry instead of broad statements of principles, the reflection of the position of the church leaders and their duties, and many other features, all point to a milieu of study and instruction.[7]

The prohibition of calling anyone Rabbi or teacher (Matt 23:8-10) indicates that there were some who could have taken the title, but were not permitted to do so.

The suggestion of a school for the milieu of Matthew may have parallels in the NT. For example, Luke 1:2 speaks of the "servants of the word" (ὑπηρέται . . . τοῦ λόγου). Stendahl identifies these men with one of the

[4]"Certainly this Gospel with its universalist conclusion, 28:18ff, is not Jewish-Christian in the strict sense of the word, but the author is using a Jewish-Christian source from which he takes the sayings in 10:5f (which are clearly more narrow than Jesus' own attitude)" (ibid., 25).

[5]Stendahl's *The School of St. Matthew* first appeared in 1954. The 1968 American edition (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1968) has a preface in which he reacted to work on the Gospel of Matthew which had appeared after the first publication of this work.

[6]Cf. the similar observations made by Harald Riesenfeld, *The Gospel Tradition and Its Beginnings: A Study in the Limits of "Formgeschichte"* (London: Mowbray, 1957), passim, esp. 10-24. While Riesenfeld does not deal specifically with the Gospel of Matthew, his general observations that the Synoptic Gospels are the products of schools of Christian disciples fits into the approach to the Matthean community reviewed in this section.

[7]Stendahl, 29.

functionaries of the synagogue whose job it was to look after the holy scrolls, as well as to give catechetical instruction. "The synagogue was an undefined combination of a house of worship and a school."[8] Thus the practice and function of the Christian servants of the word found a model to draw from in the synagogue. Jesus is consistently called "Rabbi," and thus there may be an unbroken line between Jesus, the twelve, and these schools which are associated with Matthew and John. The school of Matthew is a school for teachers and church leaders. Thus the Gospel assumes the form of a manual for teaching and administration within the church.

Matthew as Liturgist

The two names most often associated with the hypothesis that the first evangelist was a liturgist are G. D. Kilpatrick and M. D. Goulder.

Kilpatrick begins his book, *The Origins of the Gospel according to Matthew*,[9] by carefully analyzing how the evangelist uses his sources. This is important for Kilpatrick, as it enables him to think about the motives for the composition of the Gospel. As he understands it, the Matthean community had been using Mark, Q, and M in their liturgy for some twenty years. The evangelist was a scribe, probably assigned to the task by his community, who reworked the material in such a way as to be more serviceable to the liturgical needs of the community. As evidence for his thesis Kilpatrick points to the later practice of the early church where Scripture was read together with an exposition. He suggests that early Christians probably followed the same pattern and read the early Gospels, along with the more traditional writings which are known today as the OT. He also points to several characteristics of the Gospel which show its liturgical nature—the tendency to abbreviate, the addition of details to make the point of a story clearer to a listener, the use of antitheses and parallels, the repetition of formulae and the improving of Mark's style, all of these balanced by a very conservative treatment of the materials.

Of particular interest are Kilpatrick's comments on the community of the Gospel and its history. He carefully investigates its relationship to Judaism.

> It would be natural in sermons and reading to expound and understand much of the material in the light of the experience of the community. This interpretation would in turn have its effect on the text, an effect which literary criticism, combined with our knowledge of contemporary conditions, should enable us to trace.

[8]Ibid., 33.

[9]G. D. Kilpatrick, *The Origins of the Gospel according to Matthew* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1946).

> Outstanding among these conditions is the Jewish character of the church in which the book was produced.[10]

He several times alludes to the Jewish character of the community, and goes so far as to call them Jewish Christians.[11]

The Jewish *Sitz im Leben* of the Gospel is not, however, that of the Palestine of Jesus. It is more akin to the sort of Judaism of the Talmud—the Judaism that survived the destruction of the temple, the Judaism redefining itself and excluding from within itself such groups as Christians. For Kilpatrick, the Gospel was written by a group which has been separated from the synagogue, presumably by the *Birkath ha-Minim*. This would be yet another indication of the late date of the Gospel. Kilpatrick emphasizes that the Sabbath was still observed by the Matthean community. Although the Gospel has a Semitic background, it is a Hebrew rather than an Aramaic background. In fact, the community was Greek speaking (after all, the Gospel was written in Greek), not Aramaic. There are differences with Judaism—particularly in the Gospel's Christology. There are also differences with Paul in the understanding of the law. As regards the Gentiles, in the Gospel the mission to the Gentiles is accepted without reservation as is the fact of Gentile Christianity.

The community was in all likelihood a city church. This is shown by such features of the Gospel as the substantially greater use that Matthew makes of the term πόλις (Mark uses it 8 times, Matthew 26), and the language—Greek—which was primarily a language of the towns, while local dialects were used in the villages. Not only this, the church appears to be well-to-do. There is a deemphasis of concern for poverty, and the currency denominations that are used, even in the parables, are consistently higher than in Mark or Luke. For example, Mark 6:8 prohibits the missionaries from carrying bronze; Matt 10:9 prohibits them from carrying bronze, silver, or gold.

With regard to church organization, Kilpatrick points out that the Twelve are figures of the past, although there is a unique stress on the importance of Peter. Terms for church officers mentioned in the pastoral epistles and elsewhere—the elders, deacons, and bishops—are never applied to any member of the Matthean community; elder is a title consistently applied to the leaders of the Jews. There do appear to be individuals designated scribes and wise men, but they appear to have rejected the title "Rabbi." Church discipline has a twofold function. It is to maintain moral standards and to guard against the false doctrines of the false prophets.

[10]Kilpatrick, 101.

[11]Ibid., 120.

The community is still undergoing persecution from both Jews and Gentiles. It also appears to be independent of Paulinism. There is an intimate knowledge of Syria but an apparent lack of such information about Palestine itself. The evangelist's preference for ὕδωρ over θάλασσα in his own composition may indicate that the town in which he lives has a position on the sea-coast.

As to the place of writing, while Antioch fulfills many of these characteristics, the apparent independence from Paulinism argues against it. Kilpatrick favors one of the port cities on the Phoenician coast—Tyre or Sidon.

In his book *Midrash and Lection in Matthew*,[12] M. D. Goulder advances the two theses that the only source used by Matthew was Mark, and that aside from a very few instances where he draws upon oral traditions, all the additions to Matthew can be explained by the process of Midrash. Not only this, the structural arrangement of the book points to the fact that the book was used as a lectionary.

Goulder develops his theses in two parts. He begins by highlighting the scribal characteristics of the Gospels—the way in which Mark's hostile references to the scribes are attenuated, the thoroughgoing adherence to the Torah, the reflection of midrashic methods such as doublets, explanatory changes, modifications, added antitheses, and the like, as well as the use of Scripture. He also discusses Matthew's poetic style and imagery. While Goulder does not join von Dobschütz in describing Matthew as a Rabbi, he does consider him to be "a scribe, a provincial schoolmaster."[13] The individual sections of the Gospel are tied to the Jewish year to form a lectionary. The last half of Goulder's book is largely devoted to taking each of these sections and highlighting their applicability to the occasion to which the lectionary linked them.

The Matthean Community in Dialogue/Controversy with Judaism/Jewish Christianity

By far the most frequently invoked historical background for the interpretation of the Gospel of Matthew is the young Christian community's relationship with Judaism and with Jewish ideas. Because of the number of writers who use this type of reconstruction, it will only be possible to choose representative examples to illustrate some of the important methodologies and positions.

Günther Bornkamm's 1956 article, translated under the title of "End

[12]M. D. Goulder, *Midrash and Lection in Matthew* (London: SPCK, 1974).

[13]Goulder, 5.

Expectation and Church in Matthew,"[14] has been widely recognized as marking a significant shift in Matthean studies towards *Redactionsgeschichte*. The theology of the evangelist and his community now take center stage. Though brief, the article takes some care in delimiting the Matthean community. This community is still within Judaism.[15] In it,

> The ceremonial law is not questioned in principle; private sacrifice (5.23f.), Temple tax (17.24ff.), command concerning the Sabbath (24.20), giving alms, prayer and fasting (6.1ff.), and according to 23.16ff. and 23ff., swearing and tithing, are assumed to be valid, in so far as they are not hypocritically misused, and "the weightier matters of the law" are not neglected because of them.[16]

Bornkamm's article raises some key issues that have dominated much subsequent research on the Gospel. His view that the community was still within Judaism is one that he appears to abandon in later articles,[17] but the law-observant characteristic of the community, as he understands it, is the same that many subsequent writers have noted.

Several writers use the relationship between the Matthean community and formative Judaism as the basis of their understanding of the Gospel. One of the earliest writers to do so at length was W. D. Davies. In his monograph, *The Setting of the Sermon on the Mount*,[18] Davies carefully surveys late first-century Judaism[19] for the likely partners of a debate between the Christian Matthean community and the local Jewish community. He points out that there is nothing within Matthew that might indicate that the community of Matthew had any contact with Jewish (or other) Gnosticism. There is also little that can connect it with sectarian Judaism such as the Dead Sea sect. In fact, the Sermon

[14]In Günther Bornkamm, Gerhard Barth, and Heinz Joachim Held, *Tradition and Interpretation in Matthew* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1963), 16-51.

[15]Bornkamm, et al, 22. See also pp. 20, 21, 24, 39-40.

[16]Ibid., 31-32. In a footnote on p. 31, dealing with evidence showing that the Sabbath commandment had not lost its validity, he also comments about the way Matthew also preserves the distinction between clean and unclean foods.

[17]In an article entitled "The Authority to 'Bind' and 'Loose' in the Church in Matthew's Gospel: The Problem of Sources in Matthew's Gospel," first published in *Jesus and Man's Hope*, ed. D. G. Miller (Pittsburgh: Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, 1970), 1:37-50, and republished in *The Interpretation of Matthew*, ed. G. Stanton (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983), 85-97, Bornkamm says: "Matthew and his congregation presuppose Hellenistic Christianity which had already outgrown its Jewish origin, but they oppose the enthusiasm that wants to cut itself off completely from Judaism, and set forth the Church in terms of discipleship and obedience" (*Interpretation of Matthew*, 95).

[18]W. D. Davies, *The Setting of the Sermon on the Mount* (Cambridge: University Press, 1977 [first published in 1964]).

[19]Davies accepts a date after A.D. 70 and a Syrian provenance for Matthew.

on the Mount and the whole Gospel have much more to do with what was happening at Jamnia, as Judaism restructured itself in the wake of the destruction of the temple in A.D. 70. As part of this process of redefinition, Judaism was excluding dissident elements from within its midst. Particularly important was the twelfth benediction, the *Birkath ha-Minim*, which effectively excluded Christians. Davies sums up his position by saying: "It is our suggestion that one fruitful way of dealing with the *SM* [Sermon on the Mount] is to regard it as the Christian answer to Jamnia."[20]

Several more recent studies on the Matthean community utilize the insights and methodology of sociology and the relationship between the Matthean community and formative Judaism as their starting point. J. Andrew Overman's monograph, *Matthew's Gospel and Formative Judaism: The Social World of the Matthean Community*,[21] is one such example. For Overman, the Matthean community was almost entirely composed of persons of Jewish descent. It found itself a small sect within a larger culture, dominated by formative Judaism. Formative Judaism was redefining itself, focusing on the teaching institution of the rabbinate, substituting the study of law for the cultic services of the temple, eliminating dissenting groups from its synagogue assemblies by means of the so-called "blessing on the heretics," and legitimizing all this by claiming to be part of a religious tradition which goes back to the "fathers" and is embodied in the oral law.

In many ways Overman considers the response of the Matthean community to be similar to that of other near-contemporary sectarian groups within Judaism. Groups such as the Qumran community, and those represented by such writings as *1 Enoch, Psalms of Solomon, 2 Baruch,* and *4 Ezra* were hostile to the dominant religious leadership, whom they characterized as "lawless." At the same time, they saw themselves as the righteous remnant, the true embodiment of Israel. This same pattern can be detected in the Gospel of Matthew. The Matthean community was defining itself over and against formative Judaism, the dominant religious culture in which it found itself. It considered the Jewish leadership (the Pharisees in particular) as lawless. The righteous were to be found within Christianity. Like other sectarian groups of the time, the Matthean community defined the issues of religious conflict in terms of law. They legitimized themselves by their own teaching ministry; by their system of

[20]Davies, 315. Cf. the similar views of Thompson and LaVerdiere: W. G. Thompson, *Matthew's Advice to a Divided Community: Mt. 17,22-18,35* (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1970), 258-264; and E. A. LaVerdiere and W. G. Thompson, "New Testament Communities in Transition: A Study of Matthew and Luke," *TS* 37 (1976): 567-597.

[21]J. Andrew Overman, *Matthew's Gospel and Formative Judaism: The Social World of the Matthean Community* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990).

the interpretation of law, over which they still continued to have full authority;[22] and by their appeals to the higher religious authority of the holy writings of Judaism. The community had an inward-looking stance. They avoided civil and religious involvement as far as possible. They saw their main function as that of teaching.

This general approach has been questioned by Anthony J. Saldarini,[23] who also bases his investigation on a sociological methodology. Saldarini questions whether at the time of writing the Gospel there was, in fact, a "clearly defined Christian church to which Matthew's group could move, [or] that there was a clearly defined Judaism from which Matthew's group could be expelled, [or] that there was a general institutional Jewish authority capable of expelling Matthew. . . ."[24] Saldarini places the Matthean "group" within Judaism, which directs its polemics at those who were closest to it.

There are many other influential versions of the viewpoint that the Gospel of Matthew should be understood in relationship to the debate between Christianity and formative Judaism. Some would place these debates before the final separation between church and synagogue;[25] others would place the Gospel at the point of departure from Judaism;[26] yet others after the separation has taken place.[27]

The Matthean Community in a Gentile Environment

While the majority of Matthean scholars have understood the Gospel in its relationship to the thought world of Judaism, some influential scholars have

[22]Overman considers that the community observed the Sabbath laws and the purity laws, 80-84.

[23]*Matthew's Christian-Jewish Community* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994). His positions are concisely summarized in his article, "Boundaries and Polemics in the Gospel of Matthew," *Biblical Interpretation* 3 (1995): 241-265.

[24]Saldarini, "Boundaries and Polemics," 241.

[25]E.g., Reinhart Hummel, *Die Auseinandersetzung zwischen Kirche und Judentum im Matthäusevangelium* (Munich: Kaiser, 1966), 33. Hummel detects three partners in the debate—the Matthean community, Pharisaic Judaism, and antinomians, 66-75.

[26]E.g., R. C. Douglas's article, "On the Way Out: Matthew's Anti-Pharisaic Polemic," *Studia Biblica et Theologica* 11 (1981): 151-176.

[27]E.g., Douglas R. A. Hare, *The Theme of Jewish Persecution of Christians in the Gospel According to St Matthew* (Cambridge: University Press, 1967), 125-129; Stephenson H. Brooks, *Matthew's Community: The Evidence of His Special Sayings Material*, JSNTSup 16 (Sheffield: JSOT, 1987); Kun-Chun Wong, *Interkulturelle Theologie und multikulturelle Gemeinde im Matthäusevangelium* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1992); Graham N. Stanton, *A Gospel for a New People: Studies in Matthew* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1992), 113-185. Stanton further questions whether the Matthean community kept Sabbath; if they did, "in the light of Matt 12.1-14 it is impossible to accept that it kept the Sabbath strictly" (205).

pointed to the Hellenistic world as the historical matrix out of which the Gospel grew. For example, in his published dissertation,[28] Georg Strecker admits that some elements of the Gospel of Matthew presuppose knowledge about Judaism (e.g., the washing of hands in Matt 15:1ff. is not explained in Matthew, but is in Mark 7:3f.); and that Matthew's predilection for the phrase Kingdom of Heaven over Kingdom of God reflects Hebrew usage. But, he says, these elements probably belong to the church tradition, not to the hand of the redactor.[29] Where the influence of the redactor is found, there one also finds unrabbinic and un-Jewish features. For example, the understanding of the parallelism of Zech 9:9 found in Matt 21:5 in the pericope dealing with the entrance into Jerusalem is "unrabbinisch und unjüdisch."[30] The Gospel writer also prefers to use the Septuagint, which shows that he lives in a Hellenistic environment. The church has moved beyond the boundaries of the synagogue.[31]

Strecker finds three characteristics of the Matthean redaction. First, there is a historicizing of the traditional material. It is this that explains the statements about the exclusivity of the mission to Israel, when other places in the Gospel clearly point to the fact that the Matthean vision of mission encompasses the whole world and all nations. "The exclusiveness of the mission to Israel, apparent in this logion [Matt 15:24], finds no explanation in the situation of the redactor, but rather corresponds to his historical reflection."[32] Matthew divides history into three: the time of preparation, the time of Jesus, and the time of the church (the time of world mission).[33] Second, within the Gospel of Matthew there is an "ethicization" of the traditional material. For example, the rigorous prohibition against divorce was mitigated with an exception clause, "producing a practicable law [which] has taken account of the needs of the community in his time."[34] Third, there is an institutionalization, or ecclesiasticalization of the traditional materials. This is evidenced by the existence of church

[28]*Der Weg der Gerechtigkeit: Untersuchung zur Theologie des Matthäus* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1971). His work presupposes the two-source solution to the problem of synoptic relationships (11). He also points out that the writer of the Gospel does not work alone, apart from the tradition. There is a unity between the writer and his community (14, 34).

[29]Ibid., 18.

[30]Ibid.

[31]Ibid., 19-35.

[32]Georg Strecker, "The Concept of History in Matthew," *JAAR* 35 (1975): 222. This article is also reproduced in *The Interpretation of Matthew* ed. Graham Stanton (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983), 67-84. References to the article are given to the version published in *JAAR*.

[33]Strecker, "Concept of History," 223; cf. *Der Weg der Gerechtigkeit*, 188.

[34]Strecker, "Concept of History," 224.

officials—prophets, wise men, scribes (who were especially esteemed), by the disciplinary practice reflected in Matt 18, and by the presentation of the sacraments. The church guarantees the continuity between the past time of Jesus, through the present, to the final goal of history.

Georg Strecker is not alone in his advocacy of a strongly Gentile background for the Gospel of Matthew,[35] but it should, perhaps, be noted that this is a minority viewpoint.[36]

The Matthean Community as Prophets and Wandering Charismatics

Until the appearance of the works of Brooks, Overman, and Saldarini, perhaps the clearest and best known reconstruction of the Matthean community was that of Eduard Schweizer:[37]

> A community in which the sabbath is still strictly kept or at least was kept for a long time, where the question of the law plays such an important role, and in which the Pharisees constitute the main discussion partners, even though the group of Jesus' disciples has long since separated from 'their' (i.e. the Jewish) synagogues, must be living in an area in which Judaism is dominant. That suggests at once Palestine or neighbouring Syria.[38]

Because of the Greek language of both the OT citations and the Gospel, the fact that non-Jews form the majority of the community, the fall of the holy city playing no discernable role, and the place of Peter, Schweizer is

[35]See also Kenneth Willis Clark, "The Gentile Bias of Matthew," *JBL* 66 (1947): 165-172, republished as the lead article of *The Gentile Bias and Other Essays* (Leiden: Brill, 1980), 1-8; Poul Nepper-Christensen, *Das Matthäusevangelium ein judenchristliches Evangelium?* (Aarhus: Universitetsforlaget, 1958); Sjef van Tilborg, *The Jewish Leaders in Matthew* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1972), 171; John P. Meier, *The Vision of Matthew: Christ, Church, and Morality in the First Gospel* (New York: Paulist, 1979), 17-23.

[36]See the convenient table in W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint Matthew* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1988), 10-11; it lists the names (by year) of those who espouse a Jewish Christian author for the Gospel, as well as those that espouse a Gentile, Christian author. Six of the writers listed by Davies think the apostle Matthew wrote the Gospel, twenty-nine attribute the authorship of the Gospel to a Jewish Christian; and eleven posit a Gentile Christian.

[37]Schweizer's 1969 presidential address to the Society of New Testament Studies in Frankfurt/Main was published in *NTS* 16 (1969-70): 213-230, under the title, "Observance of the Law and Charismatic Activity in Matthew." This was followed by a very short note in *NTS* 20 (1973-74): 216, entitled "The 'Matthean' Church." His full-length monograph appeared in 1974, *Matthäus und seine Gemeinde*, SBS 71 (Stuttgart: KBW, 1974). His results are nicely gathered in his concluding chapter, "Die Kirche des Matthäus," which has been translated into English as "Matthew's Church," in *The Interpretation of Matthew*, ed. Graham Stanton (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983), 129-155.

[38]Schweizer, "Matthew's Church," 129.

confident that the community is actually to be placed in Syria.

For Schweizer the role of the charismatic prophets in chap. 7 and the missionary instructions of chap. 10 are particularly revealing:

> That the Matthean church indeed contained *prophets* is confirmed by 23:34 and 10:41. . . . But it is also apparent that these prophets *proclaim and act as charismatics*. The whole construction of chaps 5-11, which do not correspond with the Marcan outline, proves how important it is for the evangelist to show that Jesus' authority is continued in the preaching and mighty deeds of his disciples. Not only healings of sick persons and exorcisms, but even raising the dead are expressly promised to his disciples at 10:8, as they are reported of Jesus at 9:18-26. All these charismatic deeds should continue in the community as 'deeds of Christ' and serve to answer all questions of doubt.[39]

Within the Matthean community there are no special offices, although there are some that fulfill the function of scribes who apply the law of Jesus to new situations by binding and loosing.

Thus, the picture emerges of a group of itinerant charismatics who take the instructions of Jesus in Matt 10 very seriously, who accept a life of poverty, who value celibacy, and who wander about performing miraculous healings and casting out demons. For Schweizer, the existence of this sort of Christianity in Asia Minor can be traced right from the time of Paul, through the *Didache*, the *Gospel of Thomas*, the Pseudo-Clementine *Letter to Virgins*, and the *Apocalypse of Peter* (from Nag Hammadi).

Jack Dean Kingsbury has examined Schweizer's arguments in his article.[40] He establishes that the verb ἀκολουθεῖν can be used in both a literal and metaphoric manner, the metaphor being that of discipleship. But as it is not used exclusively as a metaphor, the presence of the term is not sufficient to indicate that discipleship is under consideration—the additional factors of cost and personal commitment must also be present. He, then, uses these results to critically examine the views of Eduard Schweizer. Kingsbury is much more reluctant than Schweizer to draw a straight line between the wandering preachers, who are glimpsed in several places in the Gospel, and the Matthean community:

> In the final analysis, if Mark and Luke serve as the basis for comparison, what is most striking about Matthew's redaction of the traditional view of Jesus as an itinerant is his noticeable tendency to temper it.[41]

[39]Ibid., 131.

[40]"The Verb *Akolouthein* as an Index of Matthew's View of his Community," *JBL* 97 (1978): 56-73.

[41]Kingsbury, "The Verb *Akolouthein*," 65. See also the remarks of É. Cothenet in *L'Évangile selon Matthieu*, ed. M. Didier (Gembloux: Duculot, 1972), 306.

Matthew is lacking a counterpart of Mark 1:35-38 which depicts Jesus as restlessly moving from place to place. Rather, Matthew is the only Gospel to record that Jesus actually settled at Capernaum. With a few brief exceptions, in Matthew the whole ministry of Jesus is confined to Galilee.

All in all, Kingsbury is convinced that the Matthean community was a comparatively well-off city church. He points to such things as Matthew's penchant for the word πόλις,"his educated Greek (Aramaic was the language of the countryside), and various small indications in Matthew's treatment of stories dealing with the poor. Furthermore, for Kingsbury, Schweizer's contention that the Matthean community carried on a charismatic ministry is rather unlikely in view of Matthew's treatments of Jesus' miracles where the miraculous is downplayed and the elements of faith, discipleship, and Christology are highlighted.

The Question of the Provenance of the Gospel

While others have made the suggestion that the Gospel of Matthew should be located in Syrian Antioch,[42] one of the more elaborate treatments of the implications of provenance for the Matthean community is by John P. Meier.[43] Meier first outlines his assumption that Matthew uses Mark and Q as sources and then gives his reasons for locating the Gospel of Matthew at Antioch between A.D. 80-90. He does this by first examining the alternate suggestions (Jerusalem, Alexandria, Caesarea Maritima, the Syrian countryside, Edessa, or Phoenicia) and finding them all unsatisfactory. On the other hand, Antioch appears to fit the data of Matthew admirably: it was predominantly Greek-speaking; it had a large Jewish population; it was dominated by the James party in its earliest days; it was the place where the Gentile mission started; it was where Peter was prominent; it had the resources to publish such an expensive work as the Gospel of Matthew; it was also the place where Ignatius lived and he was the first church father to use Matthew.

[42]E.g., Burnett Hillman Streeter, *The Four Gospels: A Study of Origins* (London: MacMillan, 1951), 500-504, 523-524; Benjamin W. Bacon, *Studies in Matthew* (New York: Holt, 1930), 22-23; William Farmer, "The Post-Sectarian Character of Matthew and Its Post-war Setting in Antioch of Syria," in *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 3 (1976): 235-247, see also his article, "Some Thoughts on the Provenance of Matthew," in *The Teacher's Yoke*, ed. E. J. Vardaman and J. L. Garrett, Jr. (Waco, TX: Baylor, 1964), 109-116; *Social History of the Matthean Community*, ed. David L. Balch (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991), passim.

[43]John Meier has written on the Matthean community in several places, but his fullest exposition is found in the book he coauthored with Raymond Brown, *Antioch and Rome* (London: Chapman, 1982). He also comments briefly on the Matthean community in his dissertation, published as *Law and History in Matthew's Gospel* (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1976), 22-24; and in his commentary on Matthew, *The Vision of Matthew: Christ, Church, and Morality in the First Gospel* (New York: Paulist, 1979), 12-15.

Once he establishes the Antiochene provenance of Matthew, Meier goes on to look at what he can discover about the first generation of Christians at Antioch. He looks at the evidence of both Acts and Galatians to reconstruct events. There is a clash over circumcision and table fellowship. The dispute is taken to Jerusalem for arbitration, and Paul wins his case over circumcision, but not over table fellowship. He clashes with both Peter and Barnabas who side with the Jerusalem viewpoint on table fellowship, and withdraws from Antioch, leaving the field to the sort of Christianity espoused by the Jerusalem church under the leadership of James. Both Peter and Barnabas acquiesce to Jerusalem.

Matthew, says Meier, represents the second generation of Christians at Antioch. By this time several influences have been at work molding the church. External factors included the removal of the influence of the Jerusalem church under James by the Jewish War, the failure of the Jewish mission and the success of the Gentile mission, the sharpening tensions between Jewish and Gentile communities at Antioch, and the fact that both the Christian church and the Jewish synagogue were in the process of self-definition. Internally, the Matthean community was faced with a crisis of authority subsequent to its separation from the synagogue, together with a crisis of morality. In a word, the Matthean church was in a process of transition, moving away from its Jewish roots.

In response to the double crisis of church identity and moral authority in the church, Matthew welded together the various traditions of Antiochene Christianity (Mark, Q, M) to form his Gospel. His view of salvation history divides time into three periods: the time of prophecy in the OT, the time of fulfillment in Jesus, and the time of the universal mission by the church. This enables him to keep such stringent Jewish Christian material as that which limits the mission to the Jews. During the ministry of Jesus, the gospel was proclaimed only to Israel, but since then the church has taken the place of Israel. Matthew also forges a close connection between the person of Jesus, the church he founds, and the morality that both teach. In Matthew authority is not that of the single bishop, as neither Antioch nor Rome had such about the year 85. Rather, Peter, as chief rabbi of the universal church, is able to make "halakic" decisions in the light of the teachings of Jesus. That may well be true of Peter, but at Antioch in the time of Matthew there are no local leader(s) who make such decisions; they are made by the whole local church. Indeed, Matthew appears to be very concerned about the nascent clericalism that is threatening his church. Thus Matthew remains somewhat ambivalent on the issue of ecclesiastical authority—he admires the role of Peter, but is wary of the external trappings that leaders attract.

Meier then goes on to discuss Ignatius as representative of the third Christian generation at Antioch.[44] In Ignatius the church has moved from the relatively loose structure of Matthew to a three-part hierarchy of bishops, elders (presbyters), and deacons. This movement presupposes another crisis to bring it about, and Meier thinks that the crisis was that of Gnosticism. This is a very stimulating and apparently plausible reconstruction of the place of Matthew in the flow of early Christian history. However, it is particularly vulnerable to doubts as to whether one can be as confident as Meier on the location of Matthew at Antioch. For example, in his monograph, *The Fall of Jerusalem and the Christian Church*,[45] S.G.F. Brandon argues strongly for an Alexandrian provenance for the Gospel. Before the fall of Jerusalem he considers there to be a "Jewish Christian axis" constituted by the churches of Jerusalem and Alexandria (225).

Nor is Brandon the only one to argue for a provenance other than Syrian Antioch. H. Dixon Slingerland, for example, argues that Matthew's provenance is to be sought in the Transjordan.[46] As his point of departure he takes Matt 19:1 where the phrase "Judea beyond the Jordan" is found. This phrase makes no sense unless it is written from the geographical perspective of somebody writing in the Transjordan. The same perspective is found at Matt 4:15. However Slingerland's argument is vulnerable in that both these instances are found in Mark's Gospel as well, and that Matt 4:15 is a quotation from the LXX.[47] Consequently, this phrase is not distinctive to Matthew.

Robert E. Osborne, on the other hand, argues that Edessa is the best place to which to assign the provenance of Matthew's Gospel.[48] This fits the character of the Gospel as Jewish Christian propaganda, and various other features of the Gospel, such as the reference to the star of the Magi, the phrase "to shine like the sun," the virgin birth, and the number six. Yet another suggestion comes from B. T. Viviano, who suggests Caesarea as the place of origin because it was a place of learning with a library, where Jerome saw a copy of the original Hebrew version of Matthew, and also the place which best fits the Gospel data pointing to a cosmopolitan

[44]Brown and Meier, *Antioch and Rome*, 73-81.

[45]John Meier, *The Fall of Jerusalem and the Christian Church* (London: SPCK, 1951).

[46]Dixon Slingerland, "The Transjordanian Origin of St. Matthew's Gospel," *JSNT* 3 (1979): 18-28.

[47]The geographical orientation of the LXX has been altered, but it is altered in conformity with the MT.

[48]Robert E. Osborne, "The Provenance of Matthew's Gospel," *SR* 3 (1973-74): 220-235.

Palestinian setting.[49] Bernard Orchard confidently places the writing of the Gospel of Matthew in Jerusalem before A.D. 44.[50] The possibility that Matthew may have come from Sepphoris was raised by Richard Batey at the ASOR symposium on Sepphoris held at the annual joint meeting of SBL, AAR, and ASOR, in Boston, December 1987.

A settled provenance for the Gospel would provide a very useful context against which to understand the Matthean community and the Gospel of Matthew. While most agree that Syrian Antioch is a good possibility, not everybody is convinced.[51] Thus most who are working on the Matthean community tend to rely less on this type of data than do Meier and Brandon.

Leading Issues That Have Emerged from Research on the Matthean Community

Twentieth-century research on the Matthean community reflects the rise and fall of different methodologies and "certainties" of wider Gospel research. To the earlier tools associated with *Redaktionsgeschichte* have been added those of sociology. In fact, one might say that sociology has emerged as the dominant methodology used in research into the Matthean community since 1990.[52]

Increasing diversity is a characteristic of NT scholarship, and scholarship on the Matthean community is no exception. Yet, despite the apparent diversity, there has emerged a remarkable unanimity on the key issues to be addressed in any search for the Matthean community, as well as a recognition of the key evidence on which the various positions on the community need to be argued. Prominent in this evidence are Matt 5:19-20, 21-48; 10:1-11:1; 12:1-14; 13:1-50, 51-52; 15:1-20, 21-28; 16:13-20; 18:1-35; 19:1-11; 20:1-16; 21:33-46; 22:1-14; 23:1-39; 28:16-20. These verses deal

[49]B. T. Viviano, "Where Was the Gospel According to Matthew Written?" *CBQ* 41 (1979): 533-546.

[50]Bernard Orchard, "Why Three Gospels?" *ITQ* 46 (1979): 240-243.

[51]Davies and Allison provide a concise summary of the various alternate suggestions, 138-139.

[52]Sociology is the explicit methodology of Overman, Saldarini, and Wong; it receives extensive treatment by Stanton (e.g. *Gospel*, 85-110). In addition to the works already cited, one might mention the following examples of those who extensively use sociological approaches: L. Michael White, "Crisis Management and Boundary Maintenance: the Social World of the Matthean Community," in *Social History of the Matthean Community*, ed. David Balch (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991), 211-242; E. J. Vledder and A. G. van Aarde, "The Social Stratification of the Matthean Community," *Neotestamentica* 28 (1994): 511-522; and William Richard Stegner, "Breaking Away: The Conflict with Formative Judaism," *Biblical Research* 40 (1995): 7-36.

with issues of the law, the mission to Israel/Gentiles, Sabbath, the parables of the kingdom, the mention of the scribes "learned in the kingdom of heaven," the issue of clean and unclean foods, the position of Peter, the instructions for church order, parables showing the rejection of Israel, and the woes against the Pharisees.

The issues that reappear include Matthew's interpretation of the law. Perhaps the majority opinion is that the Matthean community appears to retain the validity of the law. In particular, most agree that the Gospel originates in a Sabbath-keeping church. There is less agreement on which other aspects of the law are actively practiced, but references to the community's observance of the distinction between clean and unclean foods, its tithe paying, and the possibility of its members offering sacrifices and paying the temple tax are frequently made. These features are taken to indicate that the Matthean community is to be understood in some ways as Jewish Christian. This is perhaps not the place to argue the appropriateness of this "label" for the Matthean community,[53] but almost all writers agree on the importance of the relationship between the Matthean community and wider Judaism.

Whether the rising influence of postmodern methodologies will lead to a lessening of interest in the Matthean community remains to be seen. Such a trend is not evident yet. Indeed, interest in the Matthean community appears to be on the increase, especially from the perspective of how an understanding of that community might influence the interpretation of crucial elements of the Gospel of Matthew. Earlier research might not have brought unanimity; but it has at least shown where the crucial issues are to be found.

[53]In my article, "The Place of the Matthean Community in the Stream of Early Christian History," in *Ancient History in a Modern University*, ed. T. Hillard, R. Kearsley, C.E.V. Nixon and A. Nobbs (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 112-113, I reiterate my qualms about using the term Jewish Christian to describe such a group. These I first expressed in my unpublished dissertation, "The Problem of Synoptic Relationships in the Development and Testing of a Methodology for the Reconstruction of the Matthean Community," Ph.D. Dissertation, Andrews University 1988, 154-160. The term is used of groups with different characteristics, depending on whether one is writing on the Gospel of Matthew, the epistles of Paul, or the early church. A term which is so ill defined can be misleading.