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ANTI-JUDAISM IN THE GOSPEL OF ST. MATTHEW

by

Linda Joanne Lubin

THESIS

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the Master of Arts Degree  
Wilfrid Laurier University  
1981

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## CHAPTER ONE

### Introduction to Anti-Judaism in the Gospel of St. Matthew

The book of St. Matthew has long been regarded as one of the most interesting and perhaps illuminating gospels of the New Testament. Its place at the head of the canon symbolizes the regard in which it was held by the ancient Church./1/ The Church attempted to give special authority to the most important of its gospels by ascribing it to a disciple and eyewitness./2/ Hence, it has come down to us as the primary synoptic gospel.

My particular interest in St. Matthew centres on a major issue in Matthean studies: is Matthew a Jewish-Christian or a Gentile-Christian gospel?/3/ Of all the gospels, Matthew has been called the most conservatively Jewish/4/ and yet, other New Testament scholars point out its gentile bias./5/

The purpose of this paper then, is to investigate the authorship and text of St. Matthew in an effort to establish the religious bias of its writer. From this point on, the anonymous author(s) of this gospel will be referred to as Matthew.

#### Scholarly opinions:

Anyone who has studied the Gospel of Matthew in depth will invariably express an opinion concerning the religious bias contained in the book. Its "Jewishness" is obvious; but one can not overlook the harsh polemics against the Pharisees and other Jewish authorities. There is generally

much disagreement among scholars with regard to this question. The following authors offer a variety of opinions:

Gregory Baum, O.S.A., in his early writings passionately opposed any suggestion that Matthew was possibly anti-Semitic. He wrote, "to credit Matthew with a discriminating attitude against the Jewish people is a grave misrepresentation."/6/ He explained that Matthew was a Jewish writer concerned about the schism forming among the Jewish people for whom he wrote.

It is important to note that since the publication of Baum's book, The Jews and the Gospel, subsequently published under the title, Is the New Testament Anti-Semitic?, he has reversed his stand on the question of anti-Judaism in the gospels. His previous argument was that anti-Jewish trends in Christianity were peripheral and accidental, not grounded in the New Testament itself but due to later developments and that his duty as a Christian theologian was to defend the New Testament from the accusation of prejudice and falsification. However, in an introduction to Rosemary Ruether's book, Faith and Fratricide, he re-thinks his point of view: "Since then, especially under the influence of Rosemary Ruether's writings, I have had to change my mind. I had to admit in the course of my study that many Biblical passages reflected a conflict between Church and Synagogue in the first century."/7/

Peter Ellis agreed with Baum's earlier writings when he wrote: "Matthew is not anti-Semitic. He himself was a Jew. His community was predominantly Jewish."/8/ Ellis perceived the Matthean author to be a Jew writing for a Jewish audience.

Ernst Von Dobschutz suggested that the Matthean author was a converted rabbi who carried his intellectual and spiritual gifts into the service of the gospel./9/ He concluded that Matthew was probably trained in the school of Jochanan ben Zakkai,/10/ the famous rabbi of the first century A.D.

Both Ellis and von Dobschutz failed to notice Matthew's subtle yet persistent undercurrent of anti-Judaic nuances. Some other scholars, however, did not overlook this feature of Matthew.

Guenther Bornkamm saw Matthew as having a Jewish-Christian character. His careful analysis of the theology of Matthew leads to the conclusion that Matthew and the church for which he wrote had not yet left Judaism but were in the process of separating because of the bitter attacks directed against them by the leaders of the synagogue./11/

N.A. Dahl holds that the breach between the church and synagogue is somewhat further along than the stage suggested by Bornkamm, that in fact the separating of the followers of Jesus from the Jews is complete. He agrees that the author

and many members of his church were of Jewish origin, but affirms that they were not particularistic in their outlook. They had come to believe in the church universal. Dahl thus pictures the author and many of his readers as liberalized Jewish-Christians who now saw that "The people of God of the New Covenant is the Church from all nations."/12/

Kenneth W. Clark's view carries this notion much further. He concludes that a gentile bias is the primary thesis in Matthew and that such a message would be natural only from the viewpoint of a gentile author./13/ Matthew, according to Clark, was strongly partisan, favouring the gentile and renouncing the Jew. He was a Gentile-Christian who believed that the Christian gospel, originally delivered to the Jews, had been rejected by them and that God had now turned his back on Judaism and chosen the largely gentile Christianity./14/

An interesting point of view is offered by Samuel Sandmel, a Jewish scholar who has studied the New Testament in an effort to understand the Christian perception of Judaism. The Gospel of Matthew in his opinion was composed not by a Jewish-Christian, but by a Gentile out of the awareness that law and regulation are inescapably necessary for religious discipline in a growing and developing entity./15/ Sandmel appears to be getting a firmer grasp on the realism of the Gospel of Matthew.



Gerald O'Collins, S.J., in his paper, "Anti-Semitism in the Gospel," saw the guilt of the Jewish side as being heavily stressed in material special to Matthew. He felt that the passage 27:25 has done more than any other sentence in the New Testament to feed the fires of anti-Semitism./16/ This is a particularly important point and it will be dealt with extensively in chapter 7 of this study.

Sjef van Tilborg also comes close to the crux of the anti-Judaic issue in Matthew. Tilborg saw the central theme in the Gospel of Matthew to be the ardent stand that Jesus is reputed to have taken against the leaders of the Jewish people. Matthew pictured Jesus as being in opposition to the Jewish authority./17/ This is a significant theme in Matthean studies and carries considerable anti-Judaic implications with it. This will be amplified later.

Douglas Hare/18/ views this issue from an interesting perspective. He sees the anti-Jewish nuances in Matthew as being the direct result of Jewish persecution of Christians (Christian missionaries in particular) following the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. He carries this further by suggesting that although Matthew directed his verbal abuse against the Pharisees and religious authorities, his grievance was with the entire Jewish community. This point of view is relevant when an overall perspective of the anti-Judaic implications in Matthew is studied, it appears that the Matthean author's conflict is with all of Judaism, not just with specific groups.

Jack Dean Kingsbury deals specifically with the so-called Parables of the Kingdom in chapter thirteen of St. Matthew. He sees Jesus as turning against the Jews because they have rejected him as the Messiah and inaugurator of God's eschatological Kingdom (chapters 11-12)./19/ This turning point in the Gospel of Matthew will be discussed in detail in chapter 4 of this study.

Among the handful of scholars mentioned here, unanimity in regard to the religious bias of the Matthean author, cannot be reached. Tradition holds that the Gospel of Matthew is a Jewish book written by a Jew. Perhaps this accepted opinion has served as a barrier to various scholars of the Gospel of Matthew. It is curious that the many fairly obvious anti-Judaic statements and implications included in Matthew have seemingly been overlooked by many. It is true that certain elements of the Gospel appear pro-Jewish while others are obviously pro-Christian. It is at this point I would like to state my opinion and the theme of this study.

#### Anti-Judaism in St. Matthew:

Based on an impressive list of what I feel are clearly anti-Judaic biases in St. Matthew, my opinion is that the author of this gospel wrote with an anti-Judaic bias. His community was composed primarily of Gentile-Christians and converted Jewish Christians and so, as any good author does, Matthew wrote for his listening and reading audience.

I do not wish to imply that Matthew had no positive contact with Judaism; in fact, the early part of his gospel has a definite "Jewish-feeling" about it. Furthermore, his frequent use of Old Testament quotations and rabbinic manner of teaching suggest that he had experienced Judaic education and was knowledgeable about the Judaic religious tradition. Krister Stendahl agrees closely with this conviction in his book, The School of St. Matthew and its Use of the Old Testament where he writes, "In Matthew the 'scribes and Pharisees' are not actual opponents of Jesus. They are the representatives of the synagogue 'across the street' in Matthew's community. The line between church and synagogue is drawn definitely. And Christianity is in all respects superior to Judaism. Its righteousness is better than that of the synagogue's."/20/

Matthew's anti-Judaic tendencies may not necessarily reflect his personal point of view; more likely they represent the confrontation between the synagogue and the early Church in the decades following the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple in A.D. 70.

By recording the words and actions attributed to Jesus a half century earlier, Matthew is attempting to express the religious climate of the developing Christian community in conflict with its Jewish heritage. Consequently this gospel pictures the historic Jesus as being anti-Judaic when in fact, it was the bias of the unknown Matthean author

representing the climate of his religious environment. Unwittingly, Matthew sowed the seeds of anti-Judaism.

Anti-Judaic overtones can be found in a number of the texts of Matthew more than in any other gospel. It is my contention that this viewpoint is the result of the religious tensions and conflicts during the time of the Matthean writer. His writing reflects the religious problems and concerns of his day.

Rosemary Ruether has done a comprehensive study of the problems that arose between Judaism and its offspring, Christianity, in the years after the death of Christ. In her book, Faith and Fratricide: The Theological Roots of Anti-Semitism she deals extensively with the conflict between the synagogue and the church during the decades following the destruction of Jerusalem. A marked tension existed between the Church and the priestly authorities of the temple; the Church was also in conflict with the rival teachers of the Law, the rabbinic schools which formed the teaching class of the synagogues, and with the Pharisees, the perceptive rabbinic leaders. The Church also competed with the Essenes and Pharisees in the claim to represent the true Torah, the authentic interpretation of the teachings of Moses./21/

According to Ruether, following the death of Jesus, his followers began to search the Scriptures to affirm their faith that this redemptive event was indeed the real meaning

of the ancient prophecies./22/ In many places they found confirmation of this faith. Of particular importance were the prophecies of Isaiah which told of a rejected prophet whose suffering and death would atone for Israel. Further evidence was found in Psalms 22, 18, 69 and 110 where reference is made to a king, "God's Anointed," who was to rule upon the Holy Mount as king over the entire earth. The followers of Jesus interpreted the king's apparently literal restoration from Sheol as a type of Jesus' resurrection from the dead. Daniel 7 told of a glorious figure, like the Son of Man, who was to appear with God at Judgement. In Hosea 6:2 they read that God would revive his stricken people after two days and on the third day, raise them up. Zechariah 12:10 said that on the day of God's victory the people of Jerusalem would look upon him whom they had pierced. Jesus indeed was the messianic prophet according to the Scriptures; who then were the enemies of Christ alluded to in the Psalms? It must have been the official religious leadership, the priests, the scribes and the Pharisees who did not believe or understand the Scriptures and who allowed the Christ to be killed.

It is this kind of thinking, Ruether concludes, that placed the blame of Christ's death on the Judaic authorities. And it is likely that Matthew was a part of this thinking.

Jesus was considered to be the Prophet-King-Son of Man of whom it was written that he must suffer and be rejected by the official leadership of Israel and be killed and rise on the third day to remain in heaven at God's right hand until God chose to reveal his secret plainly to all at the time of His Advent./23/ It follows that the early Church then, began to believe its understanding of the Scriptures to be the only true interpretation, especially as opposed to that of the priests of the Temple and the teachers in the schools who never understood the Scriptures because they did not recognize the Messiah. Thus the schism between Church and synagogue widened; and 'Matthew's' writing was a product of this environment.

Matthew may have written his gospel with respect to the developments going on at Jamnia. The latter was the Palestinian sea-coast town which arose as a centre of Jewish scholarly and cultural developments after the destruction of Jerusalem. The Church for which Matthew writes is closely related to the synagogue "across the street" in any gentile city with a strong Jewish element in its population. Matthew's relationship, however, seems not to have been with Jamnia directly, but rather with the synagogue and Jewish community as it responded to what was happening there./24/

General Introduction to St. Matthew:

Before engaging in detailed proof of my hypothesis, I feel it would be useful to briefly outline the general background of the Gospel of Matthew.

## a) Date:

It is generally accepted that Matthew was written about A.D. 85. There are indications that it was written in the period after the fall of Jerusalem when Christians were being forced to dissociate themselves from Judaism and become completely independent of the synagogue. The author writes after the destruction of Jerusalem (22:7), using Mark's gospel as a source and gives no indication of having been an eyewitness to the events in his gospel./25/ Scholars have also pointed to the developed idea of the Church in Matthew/26/ as well as a marked eschatological concern. A date then, between A.D. 80-90 is most probable.

## b) Authorship:

The question of authorship of St. Matthew has caused considerable debate as we have observed. Traditionally, the authorship has been ascribed to an anonymous Jew. P.F. Ellis states: "Modern scholars are inclined to believe that Matthew, like Paul before him, was a converted rabbi or, if not a converted rabbi, at least a highly educated Jewish-Christian who had at his command considerable knowledge of rabbinic lore and teaching expertise."/27/ E.P. Blair comes closer in my opinion to understanding the historic author: "The dominant view today is that both writer and readers were Jewish-Christians."/28/ Blair based this theory on such data as, the presence in the book of a genealogy tracing Jesus's descent from Abraham, the strong

interest in the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy, the appearance of Semitic words and idioms, the lack of explanation of elements of Jewish piety (gift at the altar, fasting, prayer, Sabbath observance, almsgiving), the limitation of the mission of Jesus to Israel, the apocalyptic eschatology, the Jewish avoidance of the divine name in the phrase "the kingdom of heaven," and the high regard for the Law and its scribal interpretations./29/

Sandmel agreed with Ellis when he wrote: "Scholarship seems almost unanimous in declaring that Matthew was a Jew who became a Christian and that his Gospel represented Jewish Christianity."/30/

K.W. Clark's thesis questions Jewish authorship. He explains that the often repeated argument for Jewish authorship seems more traditional than rational, and may profitably be reviewed especially in the light of the possibility that no part of it rules out a gentile authorship./31/ Clark felt there was a real difficulty in ascribing authorship to a Jew. Many Jews in Syria had been Hellenized, but a Jewish-Christian of about A.D. 90 would hardly be found writing a gospel whose theme was the definite and final rejection of Israel by her God.

#### c) Sources of Matthew:

There are three main sources from which Matthew gathered his material: the Gospel of Mark, the Q source (i.e.; the material Matthew has in common with Luke, but not with Mark,



and which scholars usually attribute to a collection of sayings known as the Q or 'Quelle' source),/32/ and a separate source or sources of material peculiar to Matthew./33/ This source, referred to as M, appears to have been either unknown or neglected by the other evangelists/34/ because it is only found in the Gospel of Matthew. The M material is usually restricted to the infancy narrative, part of the Sermon on the Mount, a number of parables, and some pericopes in Matthew's passion and resurrection narrative./35/

The M or special Matthew material is important because if it derives from Matthew himself or from a source peculiar to him (as is suspected), it serves in a special way as a key to his theological thinking./36/ Much of the Jewish emphasis in the M material appears to me to have an anti-Judaic flavour and would consequently reflect the thinking of a Christian Community from which the Gospel of St. Matthew may have emerged.

In total there are 167/37/ verses throughout the text of Matthew that do not appear to have parallels in the other synoptic gospels. Among these verses many impart an anti-Judaic attitude and sharpen the contrast between pro-Christian and Judaic elements in Matthew. At many places in this study specific examples of anti-Judaic writing arising from the special M material will be cited and discussed.

## d) Origin:

The place of origin of the Gospel of Matthew is uncertain. E.P. Blair suggests a variety of places including Antioch, Tyre, Sidon, Alexandria or perhaps even somewhere in Palestine, where various scholars feel the first gospel may have originated./38/ He concludes that the only agreement that has been reached is that the Gospel came from some territory beyond or near the eastern end of the Mediterranean./39/ Davies agreed that the most likely place of origin was Syria where Christianity met with Judaism and Hellenism./40/

Keeping in mind the religious climate of the period during which St. Matthew was written, I would like to investigate specific examples of anti-Judaic writings in the Matthean text.

## Endnotes

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24. Perrin, Norman, p.171
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27. Ellis, P.F., p.3
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29. Ibid
30. Sandmel. S., p.165
31. Clark, K.W., p.165
32. Ellis, P.F., p.7
33. Perrin, N., p.190
34. Davies, W.D., p.209
35. Ellis, P.F., p.37
36. Ibid, p.36
37. M material is found in: 1:18-25; 2:1-23; 5:17,19-20,27-28,33-37; 6:1-8,16-18; 7:6; 11:28-30; 13:24-30,36-52; 17:24-27; 18:23-25; 20:1-16; 21:28-30; 25:1-12,31-46; 27:3-10,62-66 and 28:11-15,16-20
38. Blair, E.P., pp.33-34
39. Davies, W.D., p.211

40. Ibid

## CHAPTER TWO

## Jesus' Debate with the Pharisees

Gregory Baum refers to St. Matthew as being the "most ardently anti-Pharisaic and anti-clerical of the synoptic gospels,"/1/ an observation that cannot be easily disputed. On several occasions and particularly in chapter 23, Jesus is portrayed as being bitterly opposed to the Pharisees and their role in Judaism. Jesus' harsh condemnations against Pharisaism have left Christians, down through the centuries, believing that the Pharisees were indeed pious hypocrites who corrupted Judaism. This is a most inaccurate picture of one of Judaism's major influences. In fact, the Pharisees of Jesus' day were the Fathers of modern Judaism.

Briefly stated, the Pharisees were men of the Torah who believed in the interpretation of the word of God in detail. Their outstanding contribution involved the interpretation of the Oral Torah as well as the written. They believed in the resurrection of the dead and in the existence of angels and spirits. In Jesus' day the Pharisees were the popular religious leaders, devoted to studying and interpreting the Torah and obeying it in such ways as synagogue attendance, prayer, almsgiving and punctilious payment of tithes. Since it was difficult to understand how Torah written centuries earlier applied to all circumstances, the Pharisees developed an oral interpretation of the Torah as it

pertained to the obedience of God's will in daily life. Fundamentally, the Pharisee understood the Torah as revealing the will and purpose of God for men in the world, by obedience to which they achieved the blessing of God./2/ Within Judaism, the Pharisees were what we today call 'liberals'--men anxious to make religion living, vital and contemporary./3/

Historically, the Pharisees were not in direct opposition to Jesus. From the point of view of the history of religion, Jesus himself was much closer to the Pharisees than to any other sect of the time./4/ It is likely however, that the Pharisees considered Jesus to be a threat to their religious heritage because he dismissed the Oral Tradition. He claimed freedom in interpreting the divine will of God and furthermore, he claimed to be a direct spokesman of God. This would inevitably cause friction between Jesus and the religious authorities. Were they perhaps family members of a similar hermeneutic?

Matthew's polemic against the Pharisees is very pronounced and seemingly has much of its origin as the result of Pharisaic influence in a Christian community following the tragic destruction of Jerusalem. Of the three main movements within Judaism (Pharisees, Sadducees and Zealots) only the Pharisees survived the Jewish war of 70 A.D. with sufficient strength to begin rebuilding Judaism without the Temple. The Temple was gone, but synagogues

could be founded and built. More importantly, that other pillar of Judaism, the Torah, remained and this was their particular preserve. The Pharisees set up a new centre at Jamnia in the remote north-west corner of the ancient territory of Judah, and there they began to settle the canon and text of the scriptures, the interpretation of the Torah, and in general to systemize matters of belief and practice./5/

At Jamnia, under the leadership of Rabban Johanan ben Zakkai in the years immediately following the destruction of Jerusalem the work of conservation and adaptation was accomplished with such wisdom that Judaism was not only preserved, but entered upon a period of progress which may well count among the most notable of its history./6/

Rosemary Ruether feels that the real clash between Christianity and the Pharisaic teachers was not over spiritualizing interpretations of the Temple or the Torah or even the belief that Jesus was the Messiah. Rather the crux of the conflict lays in the fact that the Church formulated its messianic interpretation into a new outlook of salvation. For Christianity, salvation was no longer found in any observances, ritual or ethical, founded on the Torah of Moses which represented the covenant of the past. Salvation was now found solely through faith in the messianic exegesis of the church about the salvic role of Jesus as Prophet-King-Son of Man, predicted by the prophets./7/



Only believers in this new understanding of salvation were God's true people and those basing their beliefs on tradition were outside the true covenant. It was this radical incompatibility between the two interpretations that caused the fierce polemic between the Church and the Pharisees./8/

Because the Pharisees of Matthew's day ignored this new understanding of salvation, in Christian eyes they knew nothing about the real meaning of the scriptures. They were incapable of recognizing Jesus as a saviour and thus they became the hypocrites and blind guides to those who wrote the synoptic gospels.

It is during this period of revitalization of rabbinic Judaism that Matthew writes his gospel. His concern with developments at Jamnia and their consequent influence on the Jewish population, stand in opposition to his vision of the Christian Church. So the diatribe against the 'scribes and Pharisees,' especially in Matthew 23 does not reflect a conflict between Jesus and the scribes and Pharisees of his day, but a tension existing fifty years later between Matthew and the descendants of the Pharisees spreading their influence from Jamnia./9/ The proceedings at Jamnia had a direct impact on the developing Christianity so it is understandable why Matthew would deliberately exaggerate the conflict between Jesus and the religious authorities. The Judaism that was in opposition to Matthew and the early

Church, was written into his gospel as Pharisaism in opposition to Jesus.

#### The Pharisees in Matthew

The first distinct mention of the Pharisees in direct contact with Jesus is in chapter 9. In verse 11 Jesus had just called Matthew, the tax collector (referred to as Levi in Mark 2:14 and Luke 5:27 and not to be confused with the author of the first gospel) to be a disciple and was presumably at Matthew's home in company with other tax collectors and additional persons looked upon as unsavoury in reputation.

And when the Pharisees saw this,  
they said to his disciples,  
'Why does your teacher eat  
with tax collectors and sinners?'

In Matthew this query begins a long series of questions and hostile exchanges between the Pharisees and Jesus.

In verse 34 of the same chapter the Pharisees continue their verbal attack. Much to the amazement of the gathered crowds, Jesus healed a dumb, demon-possessed man, 9:32-33. The Pharisees, seeing this, announced, "He cast out the demons by the ruler (prince) of demons" (9:34)--no doubt meant as a blow to the authority by which Jesus healed unfortunates. This verse has no parallel in the synoptic gospels but an almost identical incident recorded later in Matthew (12:22-24) is mentioned in Mark and Luke.

In Matthew's second account of this story a man, who was

blind as well as dumb and demon-possessed, was healed. Again the multitudes were exclaiming their astonishment when the Pharisees said: "This man casts out demons only by Beelzebub the ruler of the demons." The similarities between 9:32-34 and 12:22-24 are so obvious that it is possible to surmise they may have been the same event with some embellishment added to the second account.

Mark does not record the entire event of the healing by Jesus--only the comment: "He is possessed by Beelzebub, and by the prince of demons he casts out the demons" (3:22b). Interestingly, however, Mark does not clearly indicate the antecedent of "He"--perhaps it is Jesus himself--and furthermore, records the comment as having been made by "the scribes" (22a). This entire verse appears out of place in Mark. Incidentally, the Pharisees are not even mentioned in this account.

Luke on the other hand records the event in a manner somewhat analogous to Matthew:

Now he was casting out  
 a demon that was dumb;  
 when the demon had gone  
 out, the dumb man spoke,  
 and the people marveled.  
 But some of them said, 'He  
 casts out demons by Beelzebub  
 the prince of demons'; (11:14-15)

Once again, the Pharisees are not mentioned. Whereas in Mark the scribes from Jerusalem criticize Jesus, in Luke it is done by some of the people who witnessed the healing.

The inference here is that those who doubted Jesus' godly authority were not people of particular importance but only a few of the gathered crowd.

Why then does Matthew in both his accounts clearly set the Pharisees as authors of the ungracious accusation? Does it not appear that they were chosen to emphasize negative qualities of Pharisaism that Matthew wanted to convey?

Following verse 24 Matthew used the Pharisees' comment as a springboard to launch Jesus into a narration about the problems of a house divided against itself and more specifically, about the evils of the Pharisees (12:25-37). Matthew worded 12:25a to indicate that whether or not Jesus heard the Pharisees' criticism, he knew what they were thinking and spoke directly to them. In the following monologue Jesus spoke about the weakness and ultimate destruction of a house divided against itself. Was he talking about Judaism divided against Christianity? Jesus also spoke clearly to the Pharisaic accusation pointing out that sins against the Son of Man are forgivable but those who speak against the Holy Spirit as the Pharisees have done "will not be forgiven; either in this age or in the age to come" (12:32b). His lecture crescendos to a passionate and bitter curse:

You brood of vipers! how can you  
 speak good when you are evil?  
 For out of the abundance of the  
 heart the mouth speaks. (12:34)

I tell you on the day of judgement...  
 ...by your own words you will  
 be condemned. (12:36a,37b)

Luke's account of this section contains some similarity to Matthew 12:25-37 but with a few striking differences. Jesus is not portrayed as speaking to the Pharisees as he does in Matthew, but to the crowd. It follows then that the curses Jesus directed toward the Pharisees in Matthew are not included in Luke. Furthermore, Luke does not present this section as one unit; it is found in three places in the Lucan text--11:17-23, 12:10 and 6:43-45.

Mark's version (3:23-30) contains even less of the material presented in Matthew. He sets the tone by having Jesus call the people or scribes to himself and speaks to them in parables.

Matthew's version is obviously and clearly directed at the Pharisees. It would appear that he used material from, or common to Luke, added to it, consolidated it and included his peculiar Pharisaic polemic. Neither Mark nor Luke felt the need to adopt his approach and yet for Matthew it becomes an important ingredient in his documentation of the life of Christ especially in this chapter and in various sections following.

Chapter 12 contains three other incidents where the Pharisees either question or voice their opposition to Jesus. The chapter begins with Jesus and his disciples

making their way through a grainfield on the sabbath eating ears of grain as they go.

But when the Pharisees  
saw it, they said to him.  
'Look, your disciples are  
doing what is not lawful  
to do on the sabbath.' (12:2)

The Pharisees were of course experts on the Torah as that was their special precinct within Judaism. But Jesus makes them appear ignorant of their own law and tradition by counterattacking their statement on sabbath law.

Have you not read what  
David did, when he was  
hungry, and those who were  
with him? (12:3)

Or, have you not read in  
the law how on the sabbath  
the priests in the temple  
profane the sabbath, and  
are guiltless? (12:5)

The implication is clear. Their law was corrupt and no longer relevant, so a new and greater law with a dynamic and omniscient leader was superseding the old law and the temple.

I tell you, something  
greater than the temple  
is here. (12:6)

For the Son of man is  
lord of the sabbath. (12:8)

The Pharisees are pictured as being foolish and outdated. How dare they ask such a silly question of the Son of Man?

The controversy over sabbath law was not yet settled however. Immediately following the confrontation in the grainfield, Jesus went into a synagogue where he met a man with a withered hand. Matthew reports that in a deliberate attempt to incriminate him, the Pharisees enquired of Jesus, "Is it lawful to heal at this time on the grounds of the logic in human nature?"

He said to them, 'What man of you, if he has one sheep and it falls into a pit on the sabbath, will not lay hold of it and lift it out? Of how much more value is a man than a sheep!. So it is lawful to do good on the sabbath. (12:11-12)

This answer and the ensuing cure of the man with the withered hand did not please the Pharisees.

But the Pharisees went out and took counsel against him, how to destroy him. (12:14)

This is a crucial verse. It pictures the Pharisees as plotting, accusing and petty men obsessed with the idea of controlling and ridding themselves of Jesus. More important however, this verse sets the stage for the death of Christ. When the actual trial, conviction and crucifixion take place, one remembers that it was the Pharisees who first sought his death. It is easy to understand why they, along with the whole of Judaism, begin to look responsible for Jesus' death in the light of verses such as 12:14.

Again Jesus is approached by the Pharisees, this time accompanied by scribes.

Then some of the scribes and Pharisees said to him, 'Teacher, we wish to see a sign from you.' (12:38)

How was this question intended? Was it a sincere request by believing people wishing to be reassured of Christ's power? Was it born of simple curiosity or was it a clever trick to manipulate Jesus into exposing himself in a vulnerable situation? Considering the reputation the Pharisees have gained thus far in the Matthean gospel, one easily assumes that it is not an innocent question. Furthermore, this enquiry is found only in Matthew even though Luke's account (11:29-32) closely parallels Matthew 12:38-42. Luke begins his corresponding passage with "When the crowds were increasing, he began to say..." It would seem that Matthew intended this question as an opportunity to have Jesus again lecture to the Pharisees thereby accentuating his new and better law.

Throughout chapter 12, with careful wording, Matthew paints a rather sordid picture of Pharisaism in Jesus' time. The Pharisees accuse Christ of consorting with the devil and of breaking sacred sabbath laws. They even make plans to bring about his death: Jesus on the other hand has easily made them appear foolish and misguided--he even knows what they are thinking! Mark and Luke mention the Pharisees in their record of the debate concerning the sabbath, but they do not go to the extent that Matthew does in portraying the Pharisees in a less than complimentary light. This is not the end however. The Matthean gospel proceeds and the anti-Pharisaic undercurrent gains momentum until it surfaces as a full-blown verbal assault in chapter 23.



Chapter 15 begins with the Pharisees once again questioning Jesus about a fine point in the law. Verse 1 states that they came with the scribes from Jerusalem to Jesus and asked:

Why do your disciples  
transgress the tradition  
of the elders? For they  
do not wash their hands  
when they eat. (15:2)

In the following eighteen verses Jesus dramatically asserts his authority. He reverses the situation by responding with a similar question that points out the hypocritical nature of the Pharisees and even applies to them a quote from Isaiah 29:13. During his dissertation about what defiles a man, the disciples inform Jesus, "Do you know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this saying?" (15:12) At this point Matthew records Jesus as making some disturbing anti-Pharisaic remarks:

Every plant which my  
heavenly Father has not  
planted will be rooted  
up. Let them alone;  
they are blind guides.  
And if a blind man  
leads a blind man, both  
will fall into a pit. (15:13,14)

The implication is clear. The Pharisees cannot possibly belong in the heavenly realm of God's order because He did not choose them; they will be rooted up. Essentially the Pharisees are blind and useless--destined to destruction.

These are very strong words from a man deemed to be

ultimately gentle and loving. When Matthew attributed these bitter words to Jesus, had he forgotten Jesus' statement in 5:44?

But I say to you, love your  
enemies and pray for  
those who persecute you.

Mark records a parallel to Matthew 15:1-20 in chapter 7:1-23 but curiously only Matthew's version contains the condemnations of the Pharisees. Luke omits this entire section, but it is interesting to note that Luke does include a parable in 6:39 that bears a remarkable resemblance to Matthew 15:15:

He also told them a parable:  
'Can a blind man lead a  
blind man?' Will they not  
both fall into a pit?

From this example it seems probable that Matthew and Luke used the same source but Matthew employed his interpretation in association with the Pharisees--yet another blow to Pharisaism.

Chapter 16 again opens with the Pharisees querying Jesus:

And the Pharisees and  
Sadducees came and to  
test him they asked him  
to show them a sign  
from heaven. (16:1)

From this point Jesus branches into two themes both related by their reference to the Pharisees. Although they request a sign from heaven, Jesus says, the Pharisees could make no

use of it.

You know how to interpret  
the appearance of the sky,  
but you cannot interpret  
the signs of the times. (16:36)

The implication of course was that they are of shallow minds, only understanding what was clearly visible. The truly important but intangible things in life are lost to them. Only an evil and adulterous nation would seek for a sign. Because of this they received none.

Matthew indicates, that following this discourse, Jesus left the Pharisees and Sadducees and proceeded to another area. When he was informed that the disciples had forgotten to bring bread with them, he takes advantage of the opportunity to further reproach the Pharisees:

Take heed and beware of  
the leaven of the Pharisees  
and Sadducees. (16:6)

The disciples, thinking that Christ was indeed speaking about bread, were confused. Jesus explained that they were to avoid the dogma of the Jewish authority--that is, the Pharisees and Sadducees.

Then they understood that he  
did not tell them to beware

of the leaven of bread, but of  
the teaching of the Pharisees  
and Sadducees. (16:12)

This appears to me to be an indirect blow to all of Judaism. The Sadducees and especially the Pharisees represented the most important element of Judaism--the Mosaic law. If

Christ is counselling his disciples not to listen to the chief proponents of Judaism, he is in fact denying the righteousness and validity of Judaism. When Matthew, through Jesus, denounces the Pharisees and Sadducees, he is in fact denouncing the actual faith of Christ--paradoxical indeed. It seems unlikely, from the point of view of the history of Pharisaism, that Jesus had reason to believe, let alone say, the many anti-Pharisaic condemnations with which he is credited.

As the Gospel of Matthew proceeds so do the interrogations of Christ by the Pharisees and the condemnations of the Pharisees proclaimed by Jesus. In chapter 19 Matthew reports that the Pharisees came to Jesus and tested him by asking specific questions concerning marriage and divorce laws (19:3). Jesus responded by usurping the Law of Moses as he did in 5:31-33 by maintaining that divorce on any grounds other than that of unchastity was unlawful. The implication was that Moses, the great lawgiver, altered the original law for the sake of sinners like the Pharisees:

He said to them, 'For your hardness of heart Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so. (19:8)

Defying Moses' law for a more righteous law was vehemently contrary to the tradition of Judaism. As he has done in chapter 5 of Matthew, Jesus once again transgresses the Law

of Moses--the very essence of Judaism.

In chapter 21:33-43 Jesus presents the Parable of the Wicked Tenants. Throughout the parable there is no mention made of the Pharisees and yet Matthew climaxes the story with the Pharisees expressing an unusual point of view.

The parable (which will be discussed in detail in chapter 5) relates the story of a householder who leases his well equipped vineyard to tenants before he leaves the country. On numerous occasions his servants who have been sent to collect their masters' rent are horribly abused or killed. Even the landlord's son is brutally murdered. As the parable ends, Jesus makes it clear that the Kingdom of God will only be offered to "a nation producing the fruits of it" (21:43b).

Who is it that will lose the Kingdom of God? Is it the hostile tenants of the parable? To this point in the narration it is not clear. Now Matthew draws the Pharisees into focus. There has been no indication that the Pharisees were present throughout the parable and following discussion. Suddenly however, they are with Jesus making a rather incriminating discovery:

When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard his parables they perceived that he was speaking about them. (21:45)

Once again we have a troublesome situation in Matthew. In this instance the Pharisees are presented as admitting

that they have rejected the kingdom of God and by doing so they forfeit their right to be a part of it. Matthew, the master of implication, infers through the words of Jesus, that they are the wicked tenants who rejected their landlord (i.e., God).

I suggest that much of this parable's ending, notably verses 40-45, is not historical. Part of the section is peculiar only to Matthew further indicating that it is derived from the separate anti-Judaic "M" source or from Matthew himself. The Pharisees are made to look knowingly responsible for rejecting God on behalf of their faith--a theme found elsewhere in Matthew. However you analyse the situation, the Pharisees always seem to appear in an uncomplimentary light in Matthew.

Matthew ends this chapter as does Mark and Luke with the Pharisees trying to arrest Jesus but afraid to because he has such a large following. Matthew makes it clear that the Pharisees are conspiring against Christ.

Much of chapter 22 deals with the Pharisees once again attempting to incriminate Jesus by luring him into potentially controversial discussions. They ask him if it is lawful to pay taxes to Caesar (22:17); they also wanted to know which was the greatest commandment (22:36). As might be expected Jesus had brilliant answers to these questions. At this point he skillfully culminates the entire Pharisee-Christ seesaw of insult and verbal trickery

with a point blank question: "What do you think of the Christ? Whose son is he?" (22:42a) I doubt that these are authentic questions posed by Jesus. This section which includes Psalm 110:1 is also found in Mark 12:35-37a and Luke 20:41-44, but only Matthew structures this passage so that it becomes a dialogue between Jesus and the Pharisees. The striking difference between Matthew and the other Synoptists comes in the last verse of chapter 22.

And no one was able to answer him a word,  
nor from that day did any one dare to ask him  
any more questions. (22:46)

So it seems that Jesus finally silenced the Pharisees.

They are unable to compete with his knowledge, his understanding and his interpretation of the law. Throughout Matthew they appear foolish, shallow and hypocritical. Is this a realistic picture of the Pharisees in Jesus' day?

The climactic instances of the conflicts appear in chapter 23.

### Chapter 23

Chapter 23, more than any other chapter in the gospels, contributes to the anti-Judaic climate of Matthew. Mark 12:38-40 has a warning against the scribes but in Matthew it becomes a carefully organized series of condemnations of the scribes and Pharisees--probably directed to those at Jamnia. It is not their function he is against, but their practice./10/

In the first part of this chapter, Matthew casts Jesus

in the role of a prophet, speaking as the last and greatest of prophets./11/ With this authority Jesus first proceeds to warn against being like the Pharisees (23:1-12) and then declares seven woes against them (23:13-36). The final pericope of this chapter (23:36-39) prepares the way for what is to follow in chapter 24 when Jesus talks about the destruction of the Temple and about the coming of the Son of Man.

Jesus, speaking through Matthew, is not against the law of Moses (5:17-19) which the scribes and Pharisees teach from the "chair of Moses" but against those teachers who do not do what they teach (23:3), and who, even when they do what they teach, do not do it for the glory of God but for their own aggrandizement (23:4-7; 6:1-5). In 23:8-18 Matthew directs himself to Christian teachers telling them not to be like the Pharisees but only to teach what Jesus has taught them.

The seven woes of 23:13-36 recapitulate and reinforce almost every charge made by Matthew against the Pharisees. They are hypocrites (6:2,5,16; 23:3); they are blind guides (23:14); and they are a brood of vipers (23:34)./12/

Matthew utilizes every possible curse he can muster to portray the Pharisees as cold, unthinking, uncaring and insincere men. They preach but do not practise their own philosophy (23:3); they burden others but not themselves (23:4); they do good deeds only to be seen by others



(23:15); they seek positions of honour and prestige without humility (23:6,7); they value the gold of the temple more than the temple itself (23:17); they become obsessed with the insignificant but ignore what is truly important (23:23); they appear externally righteous but within their hearts they are not (23:25,28). Finally, Jesus adds salt to the wounds he has inflicted upon the Pharisees by accusing them of being responsible for the deaths of the prophets--not just some of the prophets-- but all who have been murdered in the past and in time to come.

Upon you may come all  
the righteous blood shed  
on earth. (23:35a)

The magnitude of this accusation is hard to believe. Was Matthew thinking of 27:25 to follow when he incorporated this serious charge into Jesus' diatribe against the Pharisees? Is the stage being set for their responsibility in Jesus' death?

Chapter 23 is perhaps one of the most damaging passages to Judeo-Christian relationships in the New Testament./13/ Mark and Luke contain some of this material but only in Matthew is it presented as a bitter harangue against the Pharisees. Sandmel sensed this acrimony in Matthew, especially in chapter 23. One senses in Matthew, he wrote, that his anger and hatred of Jews increases as he writes, especially against the Pharisees, until in chapter 23 it boils over into an unique, unparalleled specimen of invective./14/

It is probable that very few, if any, of the anti-Pharisaic condemnations in Matthew can be historically attributed to Jesus. Sandmel would agree. These bitter denunciations appearing in Matthew 23 reflect the Christian side of mutual animosities which had grown up between synagogue and church. Although "Pharisees" is the term used, declares Sandmel, Jews are meant. In my opinion, chapter 23 is not from Jesus; it is a partisan utterance from a period of extreme antagonism; least of all is it to be taken as a fair or accurate description either of Pharisaism or of Judaism./15/

Douglas Hare saw the intensified anti-Pharisaism in chapter 23 as reflecting Matthew's concern for the Christians, especially the Christian missionaries, who were persecuted by the Jews. Verse 34, according to Hare, predicts that the messengers of Jesus will suffer violent persecution at the hands of the scribes and Pharisees./16/ Hare finds further reference to Jewish persecution of Christians in other passages in Matthew: 10:16-33; 5:10-12, 22:6 as well as ambiguous references in 5:44, 7:6, 13:21, 24:9 and 25:43. Although his argument is justified and may certainly have influenced the historic compilation of Matthew to an extent, I do not feel it is acceptable as a total explanation for Matthew's extensive anti-Judaic writings. Persecution of Christians is but a small factor in understanding the emergence of the Church and of the re-interpreted Judaism called Christianity.

Matthew, Sandmel concluded, is a mixture of sublimity and astonishing animosity./17/ I could not agree more. Two-thirds of the book of Matthew is interspersed with clearly anti-Pharisaic statements and accusations. At the hand of Matthew the Pharisees are made to appear foolish, misinformed, contriving and hypocritical. Jesus by comparison is superior in thought, deed and action and always in control when confronted with their imputed pettiness. Matthew's particular interest in promoting Christianity over Judaism is clearly noticeable throughout his gospel. The Pharisees were the only major remnant of Judaic officialdom in Matthew's time, and so toward them his biases were directed. If the Pharisees were indeed of the character in which Matthew portrays them, would Mark and Luke not have recorded their nature similarly?

It appears to me that Matthew had a distinct purpose when he wrote of the Pharisees in such a derogatory manner. He was speaking to a religious and social environment that witnessed the clash between the developing Christian church and the expanding synagogue. The Council at Jamnia reinforced the synagogue's newly promoted importance in the community since the destruction of the Temple, and understandably, early Christian thinkers stood in opposition to this Judaic expansion. Since the propagators of this new, revitalized Judaism were the Pharisees, they naturally stood in the line of fire from Christian minds. Who else as

vital within Judaism could Matthew have attacked so ferociously for the greatest effect? In attacking the Pharisees he was attacking all the Judaism. By denouncing Judaism, Matthew felt he was promoting Christianity. It is with this in mind that modern thinkers must read the book of Matthew.

## Endnotes

1. Baum, Gregory, p.68
2. Perrin, Norman, p.170
3. Davies, W.D., p.33
4. Winter, Paul, "Sadducees and Pharisees," Jesus in His Time, ed. H.J. Schultz, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971), p.51
5. Perrin, Norman, p.170
6. Moore, George F., Judaism in the First Centuries of the Christian Era, Vol.1, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1950), pp.83-84
7. Ruether, Rosemary R., p.78
8. Ibid, p.79
9. Perrin, Norman, p.171
10. Ibid, p.188
11. Ellis, P.F., p.80
12. Ibid, p.81
13. Only Matthew 27:25 appears to this writer to have contributed more to the anti-Judaic feeling in the Christian era.
14. Sandmel, Samuel, Op.cit., p.66
15. See Sandmel, S., Judaism and Christian Beginnings, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), pp.158-162
16. Hare, Douglas, p.80
17. Sandmel, Samuel, A Jewish Understanding of the New Testament, p.68

## CHAPTER THREE

## The Sermon on the Mount

Traditionally the Sermon on the Mount has been viewed as placing Jesus in the role of the New Moses on the New Sinai introducing the New Law./1/ True, Jesus is supposedly delivering this sermon on a mountain; furthermore, his concern for the Law may be like that of Moses, but there are other considerations.

The Sermon on the Mount as recorded by Matthew is not considered to be historically accurate. First of all, in the Judaic tradition, the rabbi did not deliver a sermon but rather engaged in discussion. "Sermon" is a Christian term. More likely, Jesus discussed as well as spoke to the crowds. Secondly, the setting of the sermon on a mountain was probably used symbolically. One must remember that Luke portrays his sermon on a plain. The symbolic use of the mountain may have been to give divine authority to Jesus's sermon. Thirdly, there is little evidence to suggest that the material contained in chapters 5 to 7 was actually recorded from a single event. W.D. Davies explained that this section (chs. 5-7) cannot be regarded as a sermon: at best it can only be a collection of sayings drawn from discourses uttered at diverse times and circumstances./2/

It is probable that Matthew, not Jesus, structured the Sermon on the Mount as we have it now. In his structuring

Matthew has included features that are anti-Judaic in nature.

W.D. Davies suggests that the Jewish discussion and activity at Jamnia had a very influencing impact upon the Matthean author and that the Sermon on the Mount was a kind of Christian, mishnaic counterpart to the formulation taking place there. Simply stated, the Sermon on the Mount was the Christian answer to Jamnia./3/

J. Jeremias also saw a Christian bias in the Sermon on the Mount. In fact, he understood the sermon to be in the form of an early Christian catechism./4/ Matthew's version of the sermon has some definite anti-Jewish overtones.

i) The Pharisees:

'Matthew' focuses his attack on the Pharisees through Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount in 5:11,12,20; and 6:1-2,5,16. The polemic is set against and in contrast with the teachings of the Pharisees of Matthew's time. The authoritative teaching of Jesus is presented as that which the Pharisees and Judaism have rejected. Of considerable interest is the fact that each passage of the sermon that attacks the Pharisees is peculiar only to Matthew. It could be safely assumed that these polemics against the Pharisees are derived from the special M material much of which is anti-Judaic in nature.

ii) Matthew's Audience (5:1-2):

'Matthew's audience for the Sermon on the Mount is a problem: was his audience "the crowds" or "his disciples"?

Seeing the crowds, he went up on the mountain, and when he sat down his disciples came to him. And he opened his mouth and taught them, saying:

The antecedent of "them" is unclear. When Jesus goes up the hill, is he leaving the crowds to be with the disciples or is he looking for a place from which to address the crowds?/5/

Ellis argues that this ambiguity is intentional on the part of Matthew. For his audience in the eighties, Matthew, like Luke, was preparing an indictment of the Pharisees. In 11:2-19 Matthew has Jesus accuse the Jews of rejecting the preaching and witness of both John the Baptist and himself. In the case of John, the reference is to John's discourse in 3:8-12. In the case of Jesus, the reference can only be to the Sermon on the Mount. They have rejected the sermon, as a result Ellis concluded that the condemnation of the Jews in 11:2-24 is the key to the intentional ambiguity of 5:1-2. In anticipation of chapter 11, therefore, Matthew has Jesus speak in the presence of the crowds but addressing himself to the disciples who are carefully distinguished from the crowds./6/ This is another example of a possible prejudice towards Judaism.

iii) Beatitudes (5:3-12):

Most scholars agree that the Beatitudes were spoken to, and meant for Jesus' disciples. Batdorf saw the Beatitudes



as Matthew's first full-length portrait of discipleship./7/  
 The disciples were the exclusive group to whom he spoke.  
 Matthew portrayed the disciples as being Jesus' exclusive  
 Christian followers. Some scholars have called this section  
 the "handbook for a Christian missionary."/8/

iv) Parables of Salt and Light (5:13-16):

Matthew expounds upon the notion of the exclusiveness of  
 Christianity by making special statements about  
 Christianity. He appears to be speaking directly to a  
 Christian audience. "You (Christians) are the salt of the  
 earth... You (Christians) are the light of the world..."  
 (vss. 13a,14a). The fact that these parables are not  
 included in Luke's sermon points to their probable origin in  
 the special M (anti-Jewish) material. Ellis agrees that the  
 parables in 5:13-16 emphasize the contrast between  
 Christians and the Pharisees and Jews./9/

Luke's Beatitudes are probably closer to Jesus in his  
 historic setting than those of Matthew. Matthew is  
 spiritual and fanciful and promises rewards that are  
 spiritual rather than concrete.

v) Jesus and the Law (5:17-48):

Matthew's well-known line, "Think not that I have come  
 to abolish the law and the prophets, I have come not to  
 abolish but to fulfill them..." (v. 17) is also probably  
 derived from the M source as it is not included in any other  
 gospel. Here, Matthew has Jesus set himself against the

traditional interpretation of the law of the time and proclaim a better interpretation. Matthew may in fact be saying that the Christian way of life (i.e., Jesus' interpretation of the Law) is superior to Jewish morality. In essence, Jesus is calling Judaism, just as Matthew is calling Christianity, to a more radical obedience of the Law. Matthew may have purposely devised this statement (vss. 17-20) to distinguish between Jews and Christians. Christian righteousness is better than Judaic righteousness and is necessary to enter the Kingdom of heaven.

Six times in the Sermon on the Mount Jesus introduced his moral teaching with the antithesis, "You have heard that it was said...but I say to you..." (vvs. 21-22, 27-28, 31-32, 33-34, 38-39 and 43-44), and every one of the six times, Jesus explained the meaning of God's law contrary to Pharisaic teaching./10/ In my opinion these statements are clearly anti-Judaic; Matthew was saying that Judaism as it is, is not good enough and that Christianity is a definite improvement over the old faith (i.e., Judaism).

Matthew introduced something quite new, and for its time, a significant landmark: church law. This he accomplished by portraying Jesus as a lawgiver who provided a new manual of regulations for believers. The new Law of Christ was not the same as the old Law of Moses; Jesus was a newer and greater lawgiver who laid down a better and more valid law which displaced and supplanted the Law of

Moses./11/ The new law demands a righteousness exceeding that of the scribes and Pharisees. Matthew is affirming the Law of Jesus, not the Law of Moses./12/

Matthew indicated his bias for the relatively new Christianity by having Jesus attack the Law which was essentially the same as attacking Judaism itself. It is likely that in reality Jesus did have some discussion with the traditional understanding of the Law as any liberal thinker might, but Matthew used this to launch a not-so-subtle attack upon Judaism.

vi) Chapter Six:

Although chapter six is for the most part a Markan chapter, it does reflect certain anti-Judaic nuances. Two passages, verses 1-4 and 16-18, compare dramatically in form and content and are exclusive to Matthew indicating once again their possible origin in the M source. These passages deal with religious rituals: where and how to give alms (vss. 1-4) and how to and how not to fast (vss. 16-18). It should be noted that verses 5 and 6 dealing with prayer have many similarities in form with the two just mentioned, but will not be included at this point owing to the difficulty of isolating these 2 verses from verses 9 to 15, The Lord's Prayer.

The message of these two passages is a warning, with a promised reward, for adhering to the writer's instructions. This form is peculiar to Matthew and represents three basic

themes: (1) the reward ethic; (2) the theme of secrecy; and (3) a warning--don't be like the hypocrites.

The promising of rewards is consistent with Matthew. In this example, reward is closely associated with secrecy. The stress is on impressing God not mortals (as the hypocrites do) because He sees you in secrecy and knows your true intentions.

There is a very clear warning here not to be like the hypocrites. Although the identity of the hypocrites is not specifically spelled out, Matthew was utilizing them to attack two rituals of Judaism. It is possible that the hypocrites are made to represent the Jewish authority regarding religious rituals in opposition to the developing Christian Church. The new Christian way once again is made to appear superior to Jewish morality.

vii) Chapter Seven:

Chapter 7 is a series of unconnected passages with various isolated thoughts. Jesus here emphasizes short ethical statements and issues, such as the Golden Rule (7:12). The Sermon ends, however, with a subtle anti-Judaic note: "And when Jesus finished these sayings, the crowds were astonished at his teaching, for he taught them as one who had authority, and not as the scribes" (7:28-29). The implication Matthew would have us see is that Jesus' teachings (as analagous to Christianity) were better than the teaching of the scribes (Judaism). Jesus' authority,

interpretation, and understanding was superior to that of the educated spokesmen of Judaism, the scribes. Furthermore, the crowds were surprised and impressed to discover the old Judaic interpretations surpassed by Jesus' teaching. Christianity persuaded many converts that day.

Throughout the Sermon on the Mount we can detect a certain undercurrent of superior righteousness. Jesus seems to be promoting a state of mind and faith that is better than Judaism--not just better, but ultimately the best. Time after time Jesus rebukes the time honoured, respected and revered Law of Moses, replacing it with a law of his own. He sets himself against the Law and demands an even greater law, a more perfect law.

You, therefore, must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect (5:48).

The new law demands a righteousness exceeding that of the scribes and Pharisees. Matthew is affirming the Law of Jesus, not the Law of Moses./13/

The new superiority of Christianity with its new and better law is a consistent theme throughout Matthew's version of the Sermon on the Mount. It is understandable then why one who was promoting Christianity so fervently as Matthew would find it difficult not to degrade the opposing faith, Judaism.

## Endnotes

1. Suggs, M. Jack, Wisdom, Christology and Law in St. Matthew's Gospel, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1970), p.109
2. Davies, W.D., The Setting of the Sermon on the Mount, (Cambridge: University Press, 1964), p.3
3. Ibid, p.315
4. Kissinger, Warren S., The Sermon on the Mount: A History of Interpretation and Bibliography, (Mutchen, N.J.: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1975), p.109
5. Ellis, P.F., p.35
6. Ibid
7. Batdorf, Irvine W., Interpreting the Beatitudes, (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1966), p.34
8. Sandmel, Samuel, A Jewish Understanding of the New Testament, (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1957), p.148
9. Ellis, P.F., p.36
10. Baum, Gregory, p.88
11. Sandmel, Samuel, op.cit., p.145
12. Ibid, pp.148-149
13. Ibid, p.145

## CHAPTER FOUR

## Matthew Chapter Thirteen

## a) The Turning Point:

Chapter 13 contains the great turning point in the Gospel of Matthew. The discourse is so structured that in the first half (13:1-35) Matthew has Jesus outside the house speaking to the multitudes who do not understand him and in the second half (13:36-52) Jesus is inside the house speaking to the disciples who do understand him./1/ Matthew depicts Jesus as coming to the Jews with a ministry of teaching, preaching and healing (4:17,23; 9:35; 11:1). In addition, Jesus empowers and dispatches his twelve disciples to undertake an identical mission (10:1-8). But in spite of such activity, the Jews on all sides reject Jesus as the Messiah and inaugurator of God's eschatological Kingdom (chs. 11-12). In reaction to this, Jesus himself turns against the Jews./2/ Facing the whole of the unbelieving Judaism in the crowds, Jesus vigorously assails them for being blind, deaf and without understanding in regard to the meaning of salvation/3/ and God's revelation to them. Furthermore, he lends substance to this charge by speaking to them, not openly as before, but in parables, enigmatic forms of speech that they are unable to understand. As Jesus explained to the disciples, "To you it has been given to know the secrets of the Kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given" (13:11).

The reverse of this is that Jesus addresses the disciples as the true people of God (13:10-17)./4/ In 13:36-52, Jesus dismisses the Jewish crowds and devotes the remainder of his parable discourse to his disciples, that is, the Church, who are the true relatives of Jesus, because they do the will of the heavenly Father.

The function of chapter 13 within the overall plan of Matthew's Gospel is to indicate the turning point in Jesus' (i.e., Matthew's) attitude towards the Jews. From chapter 13 on, Matthew has Jesus concentrating on the instruction of the disciples and the messianic Christian community./5/ Verses 34 and 35 immediately prior to the turning point in chapter 13 bring into focus the new ministry of Jesus brought before the New Israel as had been spoken by the prophets.

The turning point is indicated not only by the structure of the chapter but by Matthew's choice of terms. He consistently refers to the Jewish crowds in 13:1-35 as "them" (13:3,10,13,24,31,33 and 34); thus he depicts the Jews as a people that stand outside the circle of those to whom God imparts his revelation and promises his end-time Kingdom./6/ Matthew also introduces the term "parable" here, and in using it twelve times points out that the parables are incomprehensible to the Jews but comprehensible to the disciples.



Matthew has given the disciples a special role in understanding the secret sayings of Jesus that the Jews cannot comprehend. Historically, this impression is inaccurate because the parables were believed to have been designed by Jesus and his predecessors to be understood by everyone. However, Matthew utilized the parables as special sayings to distinguish between Judaism and the newly-advancing Christianity. He attributes to the disciples, or Church, the ability to comprehend Jesus' "revelatory riddles," but denies this ability to the Jews on the grounds that they have proved themselves to be obdurate in the face of God's revelation. The result is that Matthew is able to depict the disciples, or Church, as the true people of God, but the Jews as hardened and standing under God's judgement (13:10-13,16f)./7/

Matthew employs the parables of Jesus in order that Jesus, who lives in the midst of his Church, can address himself to the situation of the Church's own day. As Jesus utilized parables to meet the demands of his own situation, so Matthew adopted the parables of Jesus and utilized them in such a fashion that they would be able to meet the demands of Matthew's own age of the Church./8/

It is obvious that Matthew's concern is for Christianity, as the special people with understanding, and the Church. As a result of this deliberate emphasis on the part of Matthew, Judaism appears as a faith without understanding, discipline or knowledge.

b) Parables of the Kingdom:

Chapter 13 contains seven parables, many of which imply Matthew's concern for the Christian mission, and the rejection of Jesus by the Jews. These include some well-known parables: the Parable of the Seed (13:3-9), the Parable of the Weeds (13:24-30), the Parable of the Mustard Seed (13:31-32), the Parable of the Leaven (13:33), the Parable of the Hidden Treasure (13:44), the Parable of the Pearl (13:45-46) and the Parable of the Net (13:47-50).

The Parable of the Sower is an allegorical parable which Matthew, through Jesus, interpreted to give an ecclesiastical orientation (13:18-23). In the interpretation the seed is the word of God and those hearing it are the soil upon which the spreading of God's word depends. The listeners are admonished by Matthew to be "good soil" and bring forth fruit a hundredfold, sixty or thirtyfold by understanding the word of God.

The problem lies in the fact that Matthew has Jesus confess in verses 11-15 that the outsiders (i.e., the crowds) shall never be able to understand the parable. They do not have the ability to comprehend hence they have no chance to be good soil. This is not consistent with my understanding of the historic Jesus. It is generally accepted that Matthew, along with his fellow Synoptists, added this interpretive feature to the Parable of the Sower.

The intention for which Matthew employs the parable of the Sower is twofold. Inasmuch as the parable is addressed to the Jewish crowds, it is apologetic: through it Jesus declares that although the Word calling men into God's Kingdom has been liberally proclaimed to the Jews, they have not responded to it and hence have rejected God's Kingdom. To the extent that this parable is meant for the members of Matthew's Church, it is paraenetic: through it Jesus exhorts the Christians of Matthew's Church to "keep bringing forth fruit" pleasing to God, for in this way they testify that they have responded to the Word calling men into God's Kingdom and thus show themselves to be God's true people./9/

The Parable of the Weeds is similar to the Parable of the Sower in that an allegorical explanation is included with it (13:36-43). One striking difference, however, is that this parable is exclusive to Matthew and probably derives from the M source which is of particular importance to this study. One is struck by the fact that the interpretation contains an unique collection of Matthew's characteristic expressions. In view of this, I am drawn to the conclusion that it is the work of Matthew himself; and this is confirmed by the Gospel of Thomas which has kept the parable (57) but not the allegorizing interpretation./10/

The Parable of the Weeds may have been aimed at certain Jewish sects that tended to isolate themselves from society for the purpose of establishing a pure community. Matthew

is concerned with the fact that the true Israel must co-exist with unbelieving Israel (the Jews primarily) until the final separation at Judgement.

The Parable of the Mustard Seed and the Parable of the Leaven are similitudes dealing with the growth of the eschatological kingdom of God. From a small beginning great things may grow, perhaps even the new faith, Christianity.

The Parables of the Hidden Treasure and of the Pearl are once again found to be exclusive to Matthew's text. They are presented in Matthew as companion parables that Kingsbury suggests call the members of the Christian Church to be disciples who are unremittingly dedicated to the doing of God's will./11/ Matthew included these parables in his Gospel, for in them Jesus points out to the Christian disciple that he is in truth a son of the Kingdom when he commits himself without reserve to the doing of God's will./12/

The focus is that to own the hidden treasure or pearl (Christianity) is really worth giving up all that you have whether you stumble by it accidentally as with the hidden treasure or pay full price willingly as with the pearl. The decisive thing in the double parable is not what the two men give up, but their reason for their doing so: the overwhelming experience of the greatness of their discovery. So it is with the Kingdom of God./13/

The Parable of the Net is similar to the Parable of the Weeds in that they are both eschatological in nature and both are concerned with the final judgement when good must be separated from evil--either wheat from weeds or edible fish from inedible fish. Before separation, both good and evil co-exist but at the crucial moment, separation must occur.

Again Matthew appears to be making a statement about Christianity being faced with having to exist in the midst of evil until the final judgement when it will rule supreme. It is impossible to sort the good fish from the bad until the net is drawn in for the day and so Christianity must survive until the end when the bad (Judaism possibly) will be discarded. The unbelieving Jews will receive their just reward--rejection.

On completion of chapter 13, the disciples when asked, agree that they understand what Jesus has told them via the parables. This is to be expected as, presumably, they are the only ones possessed of the ability to comprehend Jesus' parables.

The final thought of chapter 13 leaves us with the impression that knowledge of, and being prepared for, the Kingdom of Heaven is a treasure proudly on display, whether it is newly acquired or in one's possession for a long time (13:52).

All the parables in chapter 13, with perhaps the exception of the Sower, are explicitly designated as parables about the Kingdom of Heaven. "Knowing and doing God's will" is the unifying thought behind chapter 13./13/ And since, in Matthew's opinion, only the Christians of his community are capable of doing this (the Jews have already denied Christ) the emphasis is on the coming of the Kingdom for the righteous, at which time those who have rejected Jesus and his teachings (the Jews) will be cast out.

## Endnotes

1. Ellis, P.F., p.60
2. Kingsbury, Jack D., The Parables of Jesus in Matthew 13, (Richmond, Virginia: John Knox Press, 1971), p.130
3. Ibid, p.16
4. Ibid, p.130
5. Ellis, P.f., p.60
6. Kingsbury, J.D., p.131
7. Ibid
8. Ibid, pp.134-135
9. Ibid, pp.36-37
10. Jeremias, Joachim, Rediscovering the Parables, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1966), p.66
11. Kingsbury, J.D., p.116
12. Jeremias, J., p.158
13. Kingsbury, J.D., p.131

## CHAPTER FIVE

## Parables of Matthew

Matthew incorporated many parables attributed to Jesus into the text of his gospel. They can be categorized into three groups according to their distinctiveness within Matthew. Several of these parables are remarkably similar to others throughout the synoptic gospels. Some have a format comparable to those in Mark or Luke but with obvious differences. Finally, with the exception of the parables of Chapter 13 just discussed, there remain only five parables that appear to be distinctively Matthean in origin.

Considering the purpose of this study, little will be said about the parables of Matthew from the first group--those that have similar parallels in Mark or Luke. To investigate them would necessitate the study of the anti-Judaic features, if any, of the other gospels. A mere mention of their presence should suffice at this time.

Parable of the Agreement with One's Accuser  
(Matthew 5:25-26/Luke 12:57-59)

Parable of the Two Houses  
(Matthew 7:24-27/Luke 6:47-49)

Parable of the Market Place  
(Matthew 11:16-19/Luke 7:31-35)

Parable of the Return of the Evil Spirit  
(Matthew 12:43-45/Luke 11:24-26)

Parable of the Lost Sheep  
(Matthew 18:12-14/Luke 15:37)



Parable of the Fig Tree  
 (Matthew 24:32-33/Mark 13:28-39/  
 Luke 21:29-31)

Parable of the Watchful Householder  
 (Matthew 24:42-44/Luke 12:39-40)

Parable of the Faithful and Wise Servant  
 (Matthew 24:45-51/Luke 12:42-46)

There are three parables in Matthew that have parallels in the other gospels but have striking differences in detail, emphasis, and in the manner in which they are presented. They are:

The Parable of the Wicked Tenants  
 (Matthew 21:33-46/Mark 12:1-12/  
 Luke 20:9-19)

The Parable of the Marriage Feast  
 (Matthew 22:1-14/Luke 14:16-24)

The Parable of the Talents  
 (Matthew 25:14-30/Luke 19:12-27)

In each of these parables, Matthew seems to have focused in on a particular point of view.

The Parable of the Marriage Feast (Matthew 22:1-14/Luke 14:16-24/ Thomas 64) provides a good example of what I feel is Matthew's personal bias becoming integrated with his writing. In Luke's version (which is probably closer to the original) a man prepares a great banquet and sends his servant to summon the invited guests. However, when the host is informed by his servant that the guests have each made excuses not to attend, the householder in anger, sends his servant out into the streets of the city to invite anyone--the "poor and maimed and blind and lame." When this

does not fill the banquet room, the host instructs his servant to invite people from the "highways and hedges" with the resolution that "none of those men who were invited shall taste my banquet."

The story line in Matthew's version is basically the same, but there are some obvious changes in detail due largely to the allegorical nature of Matthew's interpretation of this parable. Furthermore, Matthew includes an additional section at the end (vss. 11-14) which could possibly be interpreted as a separate parable./2/ This section is distinctly Matthean but unclear in its meaning since it does not necessarily relate to the parable of the Marriage Feast.

To examine Matthew's version of the Parable of the Marriage Feast it is interesting to first investigate the original form of the parable. Joachim Jeremias suggests that this parable found its source in a popular story of the time. Jesus, Jeremias explains, was using some well-known story material, namely, the story of the rich tax collector Bar Ma'jan and a poor scholar which appears in Aramaic in the Palestinian Talmud./3/ From this, two parables seem to have developed--the Parable of the Marriage Feast and the Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus (found only in Luke).

From the beginning of the Parable of the Marriage Feast, Matthew initiates changes in detail--embellishment if you wish. The "man" in Luke becomes a "king" in Matthew

(22:2a); in Luke he prepares a "great banquet" but in Matthew the king gave not merely a banquet but a "marriage feast for his son" (22:2b). The host in Luke's version sent one servant to summon the invited guests whereas in Matthew's account, the king sent many servants (22:3).

To this point one may not be overly concerned by the apparent exaggeration on Matthew's behalf. However, beginning with verse 4 Matthew's specific motive becomes more intense. In Luke's parable the servant is sent out once, meets with various excuses and returns to his master. In Matthew on the other hand, the servants return without the guests, as a result the king sends another group of servants with instructions to describe the lavish feast that is already prepared for the guests (22:4). The second group is met not only with excuses, but is humiliated by the guests' evident lack of concern ("they--the guests-- made light of it and went off..." 22:5), is "treated shamefully" and subsequently murdered. Small thanks for delivering the king's message!

It is at this point that Matthew includes a rather unsettling statement: "The king was angry, and he sent his troops and destroyed those murderers and burned their city" (22:7). The events outlined in this verse can only refer to the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. Matthew's direct inference here is that the invitation had been made to the Jews, they rejected it by killing Christ and refusing to

acknowledge Christianity and so they must suffer the most severe violation--the destruction of their sacred temple and the holy city.

Matthew, in my opinion, makes it clear in his interpretation of this parable that he is denouncing Judaism for its refusal to accept Christ and Christianity. Their rejection of God's will necessitates and justifies the destruction of Jerusalem. To Matthew it is clear then that "those invited are not worthy" (22:8) and that the invitation must be extended to the common people of the "thoroughfares and streets"--the Gentiles most probably.

The reference to murder and the destruction of the city is found only in Matthew's text so it would seem safe to assume that this particular detail may have originated in that M source. Christ could not possibly have known about the disaster to befall Jerusalem forty years following His death. Matthew, it appears, took advantage of this historic event and worked it into his anti-Judaic theme thereby attempting to give credence to his point of view. But he does not stop with this parable.

In certain respects, Matthew's version of the Parable of the Wicked Tenants (21:33-46/Mark 12:1-12/Luke 20:9-19/Thomas 65) has many similarities to his account of the Parable of the Marriage Feast. Again, Matthew uses allegory extensively whereas Mark and Luke are more reserved

in their use of it and Thomas is quite free from allegorical features altogether. Matthew's version also contains considerable exaggeration in detail and as well, includes an extended conclusion that the other accounts of this parable do not have.

Jeremias suggests that Matthew stressed the Christological point of the parable by making it into an exact outline of the story of redemption, from the covenant at Sinai, embracing the destruction of Jerusalem (21:41) and the founding of the Gentile Church (21:43), and the passing on to the last judgement (21:44)./4/ Although I feel that Jeremias' presentation of his case is a little strong, one cannot overlook the distinct Christology contained in the parable.

To investigate the Parable of the Wicked Tenants we shall begin with Thomas' version which appears to be written in the purest and probably the most original form: A man who owned a vineyard gave it to farmers to cultivate so that he would receive produce from it. When he sent his slave to collect from the farmers they beat and nearly killed the slave. A second slave was sent and also beaten. Finally the landowner sent his son believing that the farmers would respect him. However, the farmers, knowing that he was the heir to the property, seized and killed the landlord's son.

In comparison to Thomas, Mark and Luke contain more detail in their record of this parable, but it is Matthew

who really expands upon the original. Matthew establishes the allegorical nature of his parable (as does Mark) in the opening verse where he describes the organization of the vineyard. The hedge, wine-press and tower are all definite features found in Isaiah's Song of the Vineyard, 5:1-7. Matthew indicated that this was no ordinary vineyard.

As the story develops, a "householder" (simply called a "man" in Mark and Luke) planted his vineyard, leased it to tenants and went to another country. When harvest time approached he sent his servants to collect his produce. However, "the tenants took his servants and beat one, killed another, and stoned another" (21:35). These details are a considerable exaggeration and more violent than Mark or Luke whose accounts state that only one servant was sent, that he was beaten by the tenants, and sent away empty-handed.

Undaunted, the Matthean landowner then sent a larger group of servants who were again beaten, stoned or killed while the landowner in Mark and Luke continued to send just one servant at a time who is treated badly. Eventually, the heir is sent to claim his father's rent and is cast out of the vineyard and killed. According to Thomas the parable should end here, but apparently it does not.

Each of the synoptists at this point expands upon the parable by posing a question about how the landowner should handle the situation in the vineyard. It is unanimous that the tenants should be destroyed (Matthew suggests that the

"wretches" should suffer a "miserable death") and that the vineyard be given to other tenants. Following this, Matthew includes a quotation from Psalm 118:22-23:

The very stone which the builders rejected  
has become the head of the corner;  
this was the Lord's doing  
and it is marvelous in our eyes.

Mark also includes the quote and Luke records part of it, but it is Matthew alone who draws a conclusion from this quotation and its relationship to the section: "Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a nation producing the fruits of it" (21:43).

Matthew appears to be saying that just as the wicked tenants rejected and abused the servants and killed the heir to the land they use, the Jews rejected the prophets and killed Christ, the heir to the kingdom of God. Matthew's exaggerated detail and deliberate comparison can only be directed at the Judaic community that refused to accept Christianity and its founder, Christ himself. Because they have abused and rejected the heir, "He will put those wretches to a miserable death, and let out the vineyard to other tenants who will give him the fruits in their seasons" (21:41).

Throughout this parable as well as the Parable of the Marriage Feast there runs the unmistakable theme of rejection and replacement. The chosen ones (the wedding guests and the tenants) reject the invitation to be a part

of the kingdom (by abusing and killing the servants and heir) and so they are cast out and replaced (by other tenants and the people of the thoroughfares). The Jews have received the invitation but have spurned it and so now in return, they as well, are rejected.

As if to reinforce the anti-Judaic nuance Matthew has implanted into the Parable of the Wicked Tenants, he includes a statement following the parable that points blatantly towards the Jews: "When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard his parables, they perceived that he was speaking about them" (21:45). This verse seems to indicate that the Judaic community must be guilty of the charges Matthew makes if they can see themselves in his parables.

Once again Matthew has used special material known only to himself (21:43,44) to convey his anti-Judaic point of view.

The Parable of the Talents (Matthew 25:14-30/Luke 19:12-27) is the third parable of Matthew that has a similar story line to another synoptist but with obvious variations. As is not usually the case, Matthew's version reads as if it is the clearer and more precise of the two; that is, it does not confuse other issues with the basic story as does Luke's interpretation. That is not to say that Matthew does not embellish his account in any way. For example, it would be unlikely that any man would entrust a mere servant with 5



talents (25:15a)--the equivalent of 50,000 denarii--while he left on a journey yet Matthew felt it was an appropriate sum to use.

Luke includes his share of embellishment as well (Matthew's "man" becomes a "nobleman" in Luke) but he also appears to incorporate a separate theme throughout the original story line--the Parable about a Claimant to the Throne./5/ For this reason it is difficult to accurately compare the two versions of the Parable of the Talents.

There exists a third account of this parable in the Gospel of the Nazarenes, more often called the Gospel according to the Hebrews. In this version we also find the servant who multiplied the money entrusted to him as well as the servant who hid his money. But the third servant is described as having squandered the money given to him on harlots and female fluteplayers. As a result, he is thrown into prison while the first servant is commended and the second one rebuked for his lack of action.

Although there is a theme common to each of the three versions, the degrees of variation are such that it is difficult to compare Matthew with the other accounts in a constructive fashion. Furthermore, there does not appear to be any obvious anti-Judaic undercurrents within Matthew's narrative of the Parable of the Talents. Jeremias presents some interesting observations concerning this parable but considering the purpose of this study and the lack of

anti-Judaic references within it, I shall forgo further discussion of "The Talents" and focus attention on the parables that are unique to Matthew.

There are five parables that only Matthew incorporates into the text of his gospel. The other synoptists have either chosen to omit them, or more likely, Matthew included them from his special M source unknown to Mark or Luke. They are:

The Parable of the Unmerciful Servant  
(18:23-35)

The Parable of the Labourers in the Vineyard  
(20:1-16)

The Parable of the Two Sons  
(21:28-32)

The Parable of the Ten Maidens  
(25:1-13)

The Parable of the Last Judgement  
(25:31-46)

At first glance, the Parable of the Unmerciful Servant appears to be one of forgiveness and the impending last judgement. In an almost hortatory fashion, the audience to this parable is instructed to be forgiving--or else! To be forgiven by God and thus prepared for the final judgement, one must also forgive his fellow man.

But there is more to this parable than the simple theme of mercy. Within the Parable of the Unmerciful Servant Matthew makes three legal references that represent a

perversion of Jewish law. First, when the king realized that a certain servant could not pay the huge amount that he owed, the master ordered that the debtor along with his wife, children and possessions be sold (18:25). According to Jewish law however, a debtor could not be sold and the sale of his wife was strictly forbidden. Only a thief could be sold if conditions were such that he could not repay what he had stolen.

Secondly, when the servant had been forgiven of his debt by the king, he encountered a fellow servant who could not pay a much smaller debt. Mercilessly, he cast the second servant into prison (18:28-30). But within Jewish jurisdiction, imprisonment for debt or for any other reason was absolutely prohibited, in fact, unheard of.

Finally, a third corruption of Jewish legalities is made when the king in his anger, sent the unforgiving servant to the jailers--literally, the torturers (18:34). Punishment by torture was also forbidden by Jewish law. Hence Matthew transgresses Judaic legal authority three times in one parable.

Jeremias accounts for this corruption of Jewish law by stating: "The use, in legal proceedings, of non-Jewish practices that the Jews regarded as inhuman is meant to stress particularly the frightfulness of the punishments."/6/ It appears probable to me however, that Matthew had more than audience impact on his mind when he

chose to bastardize Jewish legalites in this parable. Considering the importance Judaism puts on the law--from the Law of Moses right down to the everyday municipal laws, it becomes more obvious that a disrespect for the precepts of Judaic law is a form of disrespect for Judaism itself. As in the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew through Jesus, contradicts the accepted Judaic law and establishes a new and more harsh law. The concept is simple: abide by the law, or suffer the consequences. Verse 35 emphasizes this clearly and completes the parable in an interpretive fashion that implies specific responsibility to everyone hearing the Parable of the Unmerciful Servant.

The story line in the Parable of the Labourers in the Vineyard takes place in two episodes. In part one a householder hires labourers at various times throughout the day (the earliest at 6:00 a.m. and the latest at 5:00 p.m.) to work in his vineyard. He agrees to pay the first hired employees "a denarius a day" (20:2b) and the rest "whatever is right" (20:46).

In scene two the householder, at the end of the day, instructs his steward to pay each labourer one denarius beginning with the latest hired. Those who worked twelve hours through the midday heat grumbled when they each received one denarius just as those who had worked fewer hours. They had expected to receive more when they realized

that the others were each receiving one denarius for less work.

The climax to this story is twofold. The employer makes his position clear in two respects. First, he kept his word: "Friend, I am doing you no wrong; did you not agree with me for a denarius?" (20:13) Secondly, he asserts his authority with the stinging remark: "Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or do you begrudge my generosity?" (20:15)

This appears to be a parable about generosity and about the elitist tendency of the first hired labourers. Jeremias wrote: "The parable is clearly addressed to those who resembled the grumblers, those who criticized the good news and took offence at it--Pharisees, for example."/7/ To suggest that this parable is written for the Pharisees may be an overstatement, but there is a definite focus on the unsophisticated selfishness of the first labourers. If Matthew intended his audience to draw a comparison between the selfish complainers of the vineyard and the Judaic opposition to the developing Christian Church, he did not make his position clear enough. If indeed there are anti-Judaic nuances in the Parable of the Labourers in the Vineyard, they are so subtle or have lost their impact on the audience of today.

The Parable of the Two Sons is short, concise and to the point. A man had two sons. He requested the first son to work in his vineyard but the son refused. Later, he changed his mind and went to the vineyard. The second son agreed to work in the vineyard but in fact did not. Jesus then posed the question: "Which of the two did the will of his father?" (21:31a). The unanimous agreement was in favour of the first son who repented and did as his father asked.

As if to emphasize the propriety of the first son, Jesus added: "Truly, I say to you, the tax collectors and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you" (21:31). The clearly stated point is that the lowest of sinners who hears the word of God and repents has a far better chance of gaining entrance to heaven than does the audience to whom Jesus is speaking.

But to whom is Jesus speaking? The passage directly preceding the Parable of the Two Sons indicates that Jesus was in the temple engaged in directive questioning by "the chief priests and elders of the people" (21:23b). Presumably then, Jesus was referring to prominent members of the Judaic hierarchy when he suggested that the harlots and tax collectors would enter the kingdom of God before they would. To the Judaic establishment this statement would register as a brutal verbal assault. To suggest that the most disreputable in society of that day had greater access to God's kingdom than the influential members of Judaism

would have been unthinkable. Matthew had again delivered another blow to Judaism.

The following verse that ends the parable has caused considerable debate concerning its authenticity. Scholars including Granskou and Beare feel that verse 32 is part of the original parable./8/ Jeremias on the other hand suggests that verse 32 does not fit in with the parable./9/ In my opinion, it appears in content and form to be an afterthought employed to reemphasize the major theme of the parable. The role of John the Baptist is not the central issue here, but rather, the mention of his mission only serves to further illustrate the importance of repentance among the sinners and the hopeless position of Judaism in respect to the kingdom of God.

Whether or not Matthew included verse 32 originally is inconsequential to this study. The point is that through this parable found only in Matthew, the Matthean author has seized the opportunity to inject his peculiar anti-Judaic venom once again.

In the final two parables that are distinct within the first synoptic gospel, the Matthean author focuses his attention in another specific direction. Both the Parable of the Ten Maidens and the Parable of the Last Judgement deal with the Parousia and preparation for the final judgement. It is most likely that neither of the parables

originated with Jesus, but rather, grew out of a need for the early Christian Church to substantiate itself in the face of Judaic and/or other non-Christian criticism. For this purpose Matthew incorporated these parables. They could easily be classified as M source material and are therefore probably not historical.

The Parable of the Ten Maidens, for example, appears to be speaking directly into the situation of the early Church. It deals with crucial Church issues during the first Christian century: the delay in the return of Christ, the divided religious community and the preparation for the eschatological end of time.

The traditional interpretation of this parable places Jesus in the role of the delayed bridegroom representing the Parousia, the maidens impersonate the waiting Christian community and the refusal of the five maidents is seen as the final judgement.

Considering the interpretation of this parable, it seems highly unlikely that Jesus imparted this message, if in fact he even spoke the parable at all. If, in actuality the parable is historic, its original meaning has long been lost due to the passage of time and the eternal changes in situation and audience. The important consideration here is that Matthew saw a need to include this parable into his text to emphasize and answer to the problems facing early Christianity. He has taken a decidedly pro-Christian stance.



In the Last Judgement we again have a passage that is most probably not historic. It is highly unlikely that Jesus would set himself in the role of king (25:34a) to judge humanity at the end of time. This once more is the work of the Matthean author stressing the importance and grandeur of Christ's final visit. Matthew's use of the term "brother" (25:40) is clearly a Christian usage and is characteristic of the Matthean author./10/ Furthermore, the entire christological implication of this passage clearly points out Matthew's pro-Christian view point.

Of the Matthean parables we have closely investigated in this chapter, many exhibit an unmistakable anti-Judaic and/or pro-Christian flavour about them. This is not to suggest that Matthew's only purpose in recording these parables as he did was to castigate Judaism. It is clear that a number of different themes are distinguishable among the Matthean parables. Volumes have been written by respected New Testament scholars describing and analyzing the messages contained therein.

This study on the other hand, has endeavoured to point out that inherent in many of Matthew's parables is a secondary juxtapositioned suggestion that Judaism was not the favoured faith of Matthew and his community. The specific examples illustrated in this chapter serve to emphasize this point and to further draw to attention the

bias of the Matthean author. Whether or not it was his deliberate intent to reflect an anti-Judaic antipathy in his writing is unknown. The fact remains, however, that a clear anti-Judaic bias is represented throughout many of the Matthean parables discussed here. The prepossession may be subtle or it may be blatant as in some examples, but nevertheless, the anti-Judaic bias does exist in this Gospel. Its impact on Christianity has been staggering.

## Endnotes

1. As is not usually the case, Luke's version of this parable is longer. It is reported in conjunction with the Parable of the Lost Coin (15:8-10) which Matthew has not included.
2. See discussion concerning the Parable of the Guest Without a Wedding Garment in Jeremias, Rediscovering the Parables, pp.148- 150.
3. See the story of Bar Ma jan in Jeremias, p.141 and p.145.
4. Jeremias, J., p.63
5. See Jeremias, p.46 for discussion about the Parable About a Claimant to the Throne and its historic reference.
6. Jeremias, J., p.166
7. Ibid, p,29
8. See Granskou, David M., Preaching on the Parables, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1972), pp.108-109 for discussion supporting this argument.
9. Jeremias, J., p,65
10. See Jeremias, J., p.84, footnote 1

## CHAPTER SIX

## Matthew's Concern for the Early Church

If we accept the premise that Matthew was a converted Jewish-Christian, writing for a Christian audience, his emphasis on the early church is easily understood. The developing Christian church was in its infancy, struggling for recognition, attempting to consolidate its dogma and becoming very much a part of the lives of new Christians.

During this same time, Judaism was also in a period of growth and transformation. After the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple in A.D. 70, Judaism, in its suffering, tried to recover and rebuild itself at the Council of Jamnia under the supervision of Rabban Johanan ben Zakkai. With the absence of the temple, community synagogues assumed increasing importance and began representing a subtle opposition to the developing Christian church. The tension between church and synagogue arose.

It was during this time of radical religious change and growth that Matthew lived and wrote. In his representation of the Christian community for whom he wrote, it becomes clear why Matthew would incorporate mention of the church into his record of the life of Jesus. The church was in conflict with the synagogue "across the street" and with the proceedings at Jamnia; hence Matthew indicated his bias in his writings. Historically, in Jesus' time the idea of a

new faith founded on Christ and his teachings and revolving around the Christian church was not yet a reality. However, by Matthew's time it was an important religious development; a development perhaps taken for granted by Matthew as he inserted its mention into his document.

Norman Perrin found Matthew's gospel to be very much a "churchbook" written specifically to meet the needs of the church as a developing organization./1/

W.D. Davies calls Matthew an "ecclesiastical Gospel"/2/ because it paid so much attention to the Church. Certain striking passages dealing with the Church are peculiar to St. Matthew:

And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the powers of death shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you lose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. (6:18-19)

These two verses are a part of the Confession at Caesarea Philippi and the First Prediction of the Passion (16:13-23) at which time Jesus questions his disciples about who people say he is, and gives some indication of his suffering to come. Mark 8:27-33 and Luke 9:18-22 contain basically the same material but with the obvious exception of the reference to the church (Matthew 16:18). Clearly Matthew saw a need to have Jesus make mention of the church in a possessive form thereby giving it credence and accreditation in the years following His death. Would this

not reassure potential Christian converts in Matthew's day of the authenticity and authority of Christ's church?

In chapter 18 we have a long discussion of church discipline:

If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every word may be confirmed by the evidence of two or three witnesses. If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.

Truly I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

Again I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them. (18:15-20)

Again Matthew makes direct reference to the church but in this passage, the church is portrayed as the highest authority to be approached in a time of disagreement. The indication is that the church will settle the law, and failing that, the law breaker (i.e., the brother who has sinned against you) is no better than a Gentile or a tax collector.

The implication that the church has the authority to settle the law is a direct contradiction to the teachings of Judaism. Not only does Matthew cast Jesus as a law giver, but church law comes into being as well. Matthew has supplanted Judaism as the authority of the law by Christ and his Christian church.

Once again it should be pointed out that these verses 18:15-20 are peculiar to Matthew. Luke makes a short statement about reproofing one's brother (17:3) but makes no mention of the church or its authority as Matthew does. In these two passages, Matthew's concern with the Christian as an entity distinct from the Judaism from which it came can be seen; he is the only evangelist to use the Greek word, "ekklesia" for church (16:18, 18:17)./3/

W.G. Thompson, in referring to chapter 18 as "the so-called Ecclesiological or Communitarian Discourse," stated that 18:15-20 provides a brief glimpse into the actual life of the early Church and that the entire chapter has been made the foundation for an ecclesiology proper to Matthew./4/ P.F. Ellis carries this notion further by writing, "If Matthew directs the discourse to the community as a whole, then it deals with the relationship of Christian to Christian within the community."/5/

In the last chapter of the gospel, words are placed on the lips of the Risen Christ, which are peculiar to Matthew, but full of significance for the life of the Church. They assure the Christian community of the continued living presence of Jesus./6/

And Jesus came and said to them, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the day.'  
(28:18-20)

Davies summarizes by saying that Matthew, throughout his five great discourses, provides guidance for the Church in its various aspects. Matthew's gospel moulds the tradition of the words and works of Jesus to provide guidance for his Church./7/

L. Gaston gives possible historical evidence confirming Matthew's concern for the early Christian Church. In A.D. 83, Ignatius became bishop of Antioch, in Syria just prior to the composition of the Matthean Gospel. It is probable that Ignatius was bishop of the church in which the final redaction of the gospel took place. The church in Antioch as reflected in the letters of Ignatius (c.A.D. 110) was completely oriented to the Gentiles./8/ It follows that Matthew, written in this environment, would reflect a Christian bias.



## Endnotes

1. Perrin, Norman, p.169
2. Davies, W.D., Invitation to the New Testament: A Guide to Its Main Witness, p.214
3. Perrin, N., p.175
4. Thompson, William G., Matthew's Advice to a Divided Community, (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1970), p.2
5. Ellis, P.F., p.68
6. Davies, W.D., op.cit., p.215
7. Ibid, p.216
8. Gaston, Lloyd, "The Messiah of Israel as Teacher of the Gentiles," p.34

## CHAPTER SEVEN

## The Cry of All the People (27:24,25)

Of all the anti-Judaic implications and innuendoes contained in Matthew, none has had a greater effect on Christian consciousness or has been so damaging to the reputation of Judaism than the passage in which Pilate delivers Christ to be crucified. Verse 27:25 along with the preceding verse openly places the blame for Christ's crucifixion upon the Jewish people:

So when Pilate saw that he was gaining nothing, but rather that a riot was beginning, he took water and washed his hands before the crowd, saying, 'I am innocent of this man's blood, see to it yourselves.' And so the people answered, 'His blood be on us and on our children.'

The statement is clear, concise and powerful. Judaism accepts the blame for Christ's death--not only at that moment but throughout the endless generations to come. Verse 25 acts as an explicit confession of guilt, a confession that has plagued Judaism ever since. The repercussions have been monstrous.

The author's purpose in verses 24 and 25 appear to have been twofold. Firstly, Pilate's ritualistic washing of hands symbolizes his innocence in the entire matter. He absolves himself of any guilt in the crucifixion confident that he has made an effort on Christ's behalf and has failed. No longer is he responsible for Christ's imminent

death.

By washing his hands before the crowd, Pilate represents not only himself, but, being a political figure, he also represents the Roman governmental authority. It would seem that his declaration of innocence is not entirely on a personal level, but that he speaks for the entire political establishment. His statement clears the way for verse 25 by freeing the government of responsibility in the crucifixion and allowing the true culprits, the Jewish people, to make their guilt known.

The author's second purpose in this passage is clear: Judaism--the people--accepts the blame for Christ's death forever. The fatal words, "His blood be on us and on our children," acknowledges that Pilate and the political establishment of which he is a part is not to blame. The true promoters of the crucifixion are Christ's fellow Jews--the people who followed and listened to his preachings, who lauded his wisdom and who begged for his miracles. The very people for whom he lived, denied him the pleasure of old age.

Need I ask if all this makes any sense? We are led to believe throughout the synoptic gospels that Jesus had a large and faithful following. Why then did they turn on him so violently and so unexpectedly? Was some important historic detail accidentally omitted?

The answer appears not to be in some lost historic fact but within the mind of the Matthean author. First and foremost it must be emphatically pointed out that Matthew is the only synoptist who includes the washing of hands by Pilate and the cry of guilt by the people. Mark and Luke contain similar material about freeing Barabbas as opposed to Christ during the feast of Passover, but there is no hint of innocence or guilt connected with Christ's crucifixion. One must ask then, did Mark and Luke omit an important detail in the Passion account or did Matthew include information that the others missed?

Judging from what we have seen of Matthew and his particular bias to this point, I feel one can safely assume that Matthew included verses 24 and 25 for a certain purpose. As has been pointed out many times in this study, Matthew clearly supports an anti-Jewish perspective in his "biography" of Jesus. Verses 24 and 25 fit the pattern of the special (anti-Jewish) M material in Matthew and bluntly point toward his anti-Judaic bias.

In his choice of wording in these two verses, Matthew has made a definite shift in meaning that implicates Judaism. Through these words supposedly uttered by a crowd, Matthew has Judaism condemn itself for a sin it never committed. But Matthew's perspective is in the time when the early Church is fully aware of itself as ekklesia, and the evangelist is at pains to depict Jesus' work and mission

as a preparation for the qahal Yahweh-- "the Congregation of the Lord."/1/ Someone needed to be responsible for the untimely death of Christ--so who else but the Jews who appeared to Matthew and the Church to be fundamentally opposed to Christianity.

Of all of Matthew's anti-Judaic implications, this blatant statement (verse 25) has been the most damaging throughout history. Verse 25 instigated and promoted the theory that Jesus was rejected and ultimately put to death by the Jews. These "Killers of Christ" have suffered with this reputation through the early Christian centuries, during the Russian persecution of Jews, throughout the holocaust and into the present day.

Ask any Christian child who has attended Sunday School regularly to pin point the murderer(s) of Jesus. Almost invariably the child will answer, "the Jews." Among a large sample of members of different Protestant and Catholic denominations, it was found that 60% of Protestants and 46% of the Catholics interviewed still linked the modern Jew with the crucifixion of Jesus!/2/

These are startling figures. It is awesome to consider that the destiny of a people has been judged on the basis of the words written by one biographer who was most likely just expressing his personal opinion in an oblique way.

It must be with considerable insight and understanding that we read these verses of the Matthean Passion and apply

them accordingly to our Christian perception of historic and modern-day Judaism.

## Endnotes

1. Fitzmyer, Joseph, A., S.J., "Anti-Semitism and the Cry of the People," Theological Studies 26, 1965, p.671
2. Glock, Charles and Stark, R., Christian Beliefs and Anti-Semitism, (New York: Harper and Row, 1966), ch.4

## CHAPTER EIGHT

## The Passion and Resurrection Narrative

As was indicated in chapter one of this study, there are a number of passages in the Matthean passion and resurrection narrative that appear to originate with the M source material. The most notable of course is the "Cry of the People" (27:25) just discussed, but beyond that, one can isolate other examples of anti-Judaic bias.

The repentance and suicide of Judas (27:3-10) is a feature that the other synoptists do not include. In this passage, Judas, struck by the grave realization of his sin of betrayal, returns the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders with the explanation, "I have sinned in betraying innocent blood." (27:4a) He then hanged himself (27:5b).

Matthew apparently saw the need to subtly de-emphasize the blame on Judas for the death of Jesus in this passage. Although Judas had been made into the scapegoat of betrayal, Matthew carried the issue to a conclusion that would have been less disturbing for his Christian community.

The early Christians would have felt little personal sorrow about the Jewish role in the death of Jesus but the notion that one of Christ's special chosen few would contribute to his death would have been unthinkable. Thus, Judas had to be made repentant of his role in bringing about



the crucifixion. The closest he could come to atoning for his crime was to return the blood money in the face of possible derision by the chief priests and elders and make them aware of his penitence. The final step was to take his own life.

By these actions, Matthew was able to partially appease the Christian community in its shock at Judas' betrayal. Judas' acknowledgement of Jesus' innocence before the chief priests and scribes further served to soothe the Matthean Christian audience.

Mark and Luke make no mention of Judas' repentance and suicide. In their accounts, Judas betrayed Jesus and that was that; he was left with his guilt and presumably, felt no remorse. Matthew, on the other hand, felt the need to heighten the role Judaism played in the crucifixion and at the same time, lessen the guilt of those on the side of Jesus. Although Matthew could not alter the fact that Judas was the betrayer (as Mark and Luke had recorded), he could soften its impact by picturing Judas as suffering great remorse for his sin and inflicting the ultimate self-punishment: suicide. It was with his Christian community in mind then that Matthew incorporated these details of Judas' death.

As if to give this passage authority and credence, Matthew completed the narrative with reference to Old Testament scripture:

Then was fulfilled what had been spoken by the prophet Jeremiah, saying, 'And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of him on whom a price had been set by some of the sons of Israel, and they gave them for the potters' field, as the Lord directed me' (27:9-10).

This implies of course that Jesus' betrayal in this manner was predestined by scripture and therefore unavoidable. The reference to scripture further served to help absolve Judas of blame in his involvement with the chief priests and elders. His involvement was necessary to fulfil the prediction of Jeremiah the prophet.

In all, Matthew has cleverly softened the impact of Judas' sin on the early Christian community. Matthew's intent was to place blame for Jesus' death on all of Judaism from the high priest to the common people, not on the true followers of Christ.

Matthew heightened Judaism's involvement by specifically implicating Caiaphas, the high priest, on two occasions (26:3 and 26:57). Mark and Luke refer to various unnamed Judaic officials frequently, but they do not designate Caiaphas specifically. Mark 14:1b and Luke 22:2a state that the chief priests and scribes were seeking Jesus' death but in Matthew 26:3, the chief priests and scribes meet with Caiaphas at his palace to plan Christ's death.

Matthew's involvement of Caiaphas serves to heighten Judaism's role in the crucifixion. By naming names of the highest officials within Judaism, Matthew was attempting to

discredit the entire hierarchy within Judaism, especially its leaders. No Jew was immune from Matthew's pen.

Matthew included a third unparalleled passage in his passion narrative in 27:62-66. In this section the chief priests and Pharisees approached Pilate and requested that Christ's tomb be sealed and guarded "until the third day, lest his disciples go and steal him away, and tell the people, 'He has risen from the dead,' and the last fraud will be worse than the first" (27:64b-c). Obviously, Matthew wanted to dispel any rumours suggesting that Jesus did not arise on the third day as He had predicted.

This passage is better understood when studied in conjunction with 28:11-15, the Bribing of the Soldiers. Here, the chief priests, after counselling with the elders, "gave a sum of money to the soldiers and said, "Tell people, 'His disciples came by night and stole him away while we were asleep.' And if this comes to the governor's ears, we will satisfy him and keep you out of trouble" (28:12b-14).

It became clear in reading these two passages that Matthew was somewhat concerned with the verification of Christ's resurrection. This M source material appeared to have had a very specific purpose: to re-enforce the authenticity of Christ's resurrection in the face of anti-Christian criticism and/or pro-Christian skepticism. Matthew cleverly shifted the responsibility for believing in the messianic resurrection from Christianity to the Judaic

community. The Jews, Matthew contended, had purposely spread the story of Christ's body being stolen (28:15) and so this deliberate Judaic deception was responsible for inhibiting Gentile belief in Christ's resurrection./1/ In verse 15, Matthew stated furthermore that the Jews continued to spread this story until the present day. Just as 27:25 implied eternal guilt on the part of the Jews, so does 28:15 as it suggests that Judaism has purposely continued to spread the untrue story to the detriment of Christianity.

Again it must be pointed out that Matthew's portrayal of blatant distrust and deceitfulness of Judaism in 27:62-66 and 28:11-15 is found only in the first Gospel. His anti-Judaic polemic is once more found to be an integral feature of Matthew's special M material.

The final pericope of Matthew's Gospel is found in 28:16-20 where Jesus commanded his disciples to, "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you" (28:19-20a). This statement is interesting because it is a reversal of the mission command pronounced by Jesus on two earlier occasions: "...but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel..." (10:6) and "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (15:24).

Although 10:6 and 15:24 have parallels of a sort, neither Mark nor Luke mention Jesus' responsibility to the

lost sheep of Israel. Furthermore, the final passage, 28:16-20 is also unparalleled throughout the synoptic gospels.

Matthew is unclear as to why he shifted his focus from the lost sheep of Israel to the entire world. Could it be that he has given up on the lost sheep who have not responded to his messages? Or perhaps he simply wished to complete his Gospel in a broader sense, appealing to all nations of the world (which would presumably include Judaism). Whatever his intent, Matthew was successful in ending his narrative of the life of Christ in a dramatic fashion: "...lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age" (28:20b). The Christian flavour in this passage abounds.

Throughout the passion and resurrection narratives we have once again isolated various anti-Judaic implications. Matthew carried his anti-Judaic, pro-Christian bias through his text to its completion and left his indelible imprint upon Judaic-Christian relationships since that time.

## CHAPTER NINE

## Conclusion

The purpose of this study has been two-fold: its primary aim has been to delineate and investigate the many varied examples of anti-Judaism contained in the text of the Gospel of St. Matthew. Numerous examples have been cited and discussed and suggestions have been offered as possible explanations to interpret Matthew's particular bias.

Secondly, this study has attempted to persuade its readers into a state of thinking where imagination and an open, and if possible, unprejudiced mind, can allow one to approach scriptural literature devoid of pre-conceived notions and accepted religious themes. Only with an open style of thinking can one see and come to terms with the anti-Judaism that supposedly did not exist in Matthew.

That Matthew is anti-Judaic in his writing cannot be doubted. A number of themes emerge within the perimeters of the anti-Judaic features of St. Matthew that confirm his stand.

First of all, the M source material is largely anti-Judaic in nature. Many passages originating with the M source that have been studied here have a decidedly anti-Judaic, pro-Christian flavour about them. It seems that in much of the material peculiar to Matthew he has deliberately gone out of his way to promote anti-Judaism whereas his fellow synoptists have not adapted this stand.

Secondly, the verbal attacks launched upon the Pharisees and other officials of the Judaic religious hierarchy throughout the text of Matthew and particularly in chapter 23 are inexcusably anti-Judaic. Matthew has set up the Pharisees as being in opposition to Jesus just as Judaism was in opposition to developing Christianity one-half century later. Jesus has been made to appear vastly superior to the small minded, deceitful and uninformed Pharisees who in reality were the highly regarded and respected promoters of Judaism.

Thirdly, Matthew, through Jesus, attacked the Law, that sacred precept within Judaism--in fact, the very essence of Judaism. At various places throughout the gospel, and especially in chapter 5, Jesus is pictured as denouncing the time-honoured and revered Laws of Judaism and supplanting them with his own new and harsher laws. Matthew gives all authority to Jesus who in turn challenges the righteousness of Judaism by asserting his new and better righteousness. Contrary to historic probability, Jesus set himself against the Law of Judaism and proclaimed his new Christian law to be superior to Jewish morality. Even the Law of Moses is not immune from Matthew who sets Christ as the supreme lawgiver. This is a direct contradiction and insult to Judaism.

Fourthly, one must consider the highly developed Christology and ecclesiology of Matthew. The concept of the

Church is more pronounced in Matthew than the other gospels. It is specifically mentioned in two places in the Matthean gospel and is related to the new concept of Church law and the mission to other nations. Christ is set as head of the new Church and his new ecclesiology surpasses the old, worn-out Judaism.

A fifth anti-Judaic theme can be found directly in chapter 13, the turning point in the Gospel of St. Matthew. Jesus is depicted as turning from the uncomprehending and unbelieving crowds (i.e., the Jews) to his special people within the early Christian community. To them has been given the power to understand and promote the words and works of Christ. From this point on, Jesus dwells on the mission of the early Church and denounces Judaism as being without the ability to understand.

At various places throughout St. Matthew the sixth theme of the rejection of Israel can be noted. The Jews are portrayed as having had the opportunity to accept and believe the prophets and Christ but have rejected them. As a result, Judaism in return is rejected by God. "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, killing the prophets and stoning those who are sent to you!" (23:37a) Judaism is made to carry the guilt for the deaths of all the prophets and because of its sin, Christ's ministry turns away as in chapter 13.

The various anti-Judaic themes found in the parables constitute a seventh anti-Judaic feature in Matthew. Many



of the Parables of the Kingdom in chapter 13 imply Matthew's concern for the early Christian mission while pointing out the rejection of Jesus by the Jews. Others are embellished by Matthew to focus in on specific anti-Judaic implications. A separate group of parables are M source material and have rather distinct pro-Christian features that reflect an anti-Judaic bias as well. Although Jesus employed a variety of themes in his parables, Matthew has injected his peculiar polemic into many of them.

The eighth and final example of anti-Judaism in Matthew are found in the passion and resurrection material. The most notably anti-Judaic feature in Matthew is found in 27:24-27 where Judaism accepts the everlasting blame for the death of Christ. The repercussions of this statement are still evident in present day Judeo-Christian relationships. Matthew also employs other techniques in his passion and resurrection narrative to further place guilt on Judaism and consequently, promote Christianity.

In all, there can be little doubt about Matthew's stand in the religious community during the final decades of the first Christian century. Matthew may have been a Jew but his discussion was with Christianity and the developing Christian Church. Due to the religious climate of his environment that included the proceedings at Jamnia, the re-vitalization of Judaism without the Temple and the Jewish persecution of Christians, Matthew felt forced to take an

ardent Christian stand in the face of opposing Judaism. His writing is a reflection of the Judaic-Christian tensions that arose out of the need for sibling faiths to expand and pronounce their various needs. Matthew was a product of this environment and this is reflected in his gospel.

Whether or not Matthew deliberately set about incorporating an anti-Jewish flavour into his version of the Gospel is of little importance. The fact remains that anti-Judaism is an integral part of St. Matthew.

For centuries the polemics and subtle nuances against Judaism have been unconsciously absorbed into Christian thinking and theology. The damage has been great.

The problem now lies, as I see it, in understanding the Matthean elements of anti-Judaism in their appropriate perspectives and opening Christian minds to a re-evaluation of the role of Judaism in the first century of the Christian Era.

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