

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY

A RESEARCH INTO THE INFLUENCE OF JEWISH PRIESTS, SCRIBES, AND
CANONICAL AND NON-CANONICAL JEWISH APOCALYPTIC LITERATURE ON M
MATERIALS

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO DR. RONNIE CAMPBELL AND COMMITTEE
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THE PHD IN THEOLOGY AND APOLOGETICS

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY
RAWLINGS SCHOOL OF DIVINITY

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ABSTRACT

M materials refer to any content in Matthew that is not found in Mark and Luke and hence considered to be not part of the hypothetical Q. Questions are raised regarding the source and historical reliability of M materials. Many scholars consider M narratives to be fictional. Research work has been lacking among Matthean scholars to identify a source for M narratives. The primary goal of this research is to identify the Jewish priests as a plausible source of some M narratives. The research also attempts to unravel the reason for the Jewish apocalyptic influence on M materials and argues that it is due to Matthew's self-identity as an apocalyptic scribe. In chapter one significant M materials are identified, a literary review is presented, the need for this research is demonstrated, and the methodological tools used in this research are listed. In chapter two, the research looks at the influence of Jewish apocalyptic literature on M materials and based on its unique vocabularies and peculiar narrative structure, argues that the entire body of M materials is the work of a single mind; and that the apocalyptic influence is due to Matthew's self-identity as an apocalyptic scribe. Therefore, the research negates the possibility that other scribes were involved in the development of M. In chapter three, the research does case studies of five narrative passages in M to identify Jewish priests as a plausible source of a large number of M materials. Chapter four summarizes the findings of the research to support the main argument and subordinate arguments of the research. A conclusion is provided to argue that the Jewish priests can be identified as a plausible source of a large number of M narratives, M materials seem to be the work of a single mind who considered himself to be an apocalyptic scribe, and that some of the findings on the literary features and evidence support the case for the historical reliability of M narratives.

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to Mary Sebastian, my mother who is in heaven now. She is the one who encouraged me to pursue theological studies and kept encouraging me to go into missions even when the situation in our family was not very conducive. Her love, faith, sacrifices, courage, and determination have always been a motivating factor in my life. I miss her unconditional love. One of the best things in this life was to be her son and to experience her unconditional love. I look forward to hugging her in heaven.

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Introduction

M materials or Special Matthew materials refer to any content found in the Gospel According to Matthew but not found in Mark and Luke and hence considered by critical scholars to be not part of the hypothetical Q Source materials. Since critical scholars widely accept that Matthew used Mark and Q as his written sources, questions are raised by critical scholars regarding the source and reliability of M materials. Though Matthean scholars have put a lot of effort into seeing connections between the Synoptic Gospels and the possible link of all three to the hypothetical Q Source, not much work has been done to identify sources of M narrative materials.¹

The primary goal of this research is to identify some Jewish priests as a likely source of a large number of narrative passages in M materials. On top of the challenge to identify the source of M narratives, many scholars have rejected the historical reliability of M narratives due to the seeming legendary nature of some of its content. The problem is made even more complex because not all scholars agree on what constitutes the M materials. While some argue that a different word or an additional word or words used by Matthew can refer to M materials because such use is special to Matthew, others consider that the term should refer to passages or verses that contain significant details not found in Mark and Luke. Taking a similar view, this research will not focus on every word that is slightly different in M. Therefore, this research will begin by identifying the M materials as those passages that contain significant details that are not available in other Synoptic Gospels.

¹ Craig S. Keener says that M refers to more than one sources—Septuagint, Saying Notes, and possible other ones. See: Craig S. Keener, *A Commentary on the Gospel According to Matthew* (Grand Rapids: WB Eerdmans, 1999), 9.

This research will also review the works of Matthean scholars to see the influence Jewish apocalyptic literature has on M materials, especially the discourse materials, to argue that the M materials are the work of a single mind and that the influence of apocalyptic literature on Matthew can be attributed to Matthew's own identity as a scribe, without having to necessarily look for the involvement of a late redactor or contributor. In addition, the research will do case studies of five narrative passages in M materials to support the researcher's main argument that some Jewish priests or scribes can be identified as likely sources of some of the M narratives. The case studies will look at internal evidence, circumstantial evidence, and some coincidences to support the main argument. The research will also use some tools of Source Criticism, Literary Criticism, Form Criticism, Narrative Criticism, and Textual Criticism to analyze the passages discussed in the case studies. In addition, the research will do some exegetical work on a few passages. Once a source is identified, other findings of the research will be used to support arguments for the historical reliability of M narratives.

Chapter one will begin the research by identifying M materials that are of significance. By significance, the author of this dissertation means a passage that contains at least one phrase with details that is not found in other Synoptic Gospels. Attempts will also be made to classify M materials into two categories, namely, narrative materials and sayings. The author will then do a literary review of the critical scholarship on its sources and the historical nature of those materials. This chapter will discuss the sources identified in the past by scholars that include the suggestion of the possible involvement of Jewish priests and scribes in the development of M materials. The chapter will also show that the suggestion about the involvement of Jewish priests stands in need of further research. The chapter will also analyze related texts and evaluate scholarly views on Jewish apocalyptic influence on M discourse materials in order to argue that

such an influence can be attributed to Matthew's self-identity as a former priest or as a scribe of the Jewish apocalyptic tradition; without having to attribute it to possible redactors or scribal peers.

In chapter two, the author will research the influence of canonical and non-canonical Jewish apocalyptic literature from the intertestamental period on M materials. The author will argue that several theological and eschatological ideas presented in M materials are deeply rooted in the theological understanding of the intertestamental religious setting and were influenced by the canonical and non-canonical Jewish apocalyptic writings to argue that the theological and eschatological ideas contained in M materials are fitting to the theological belief system of the society in which it was written. It is reasonable to assume that the Jewish priests and scribes were deeply immersed in the Hebrew Bible and the Jewish apocalyptic writings. The contents of M materials, though they may look as if they are legendary to the mind of a critical modern reader, were acceptable to the standards and expectations of the beliefs and values of the time in history during which the Gospel was written and received. This chapter aims to show that the strong apocalyptic influence on the discourse materials in Matthew could be due to the influence of Matthew's likely background as a former priest or scribe. Detailed discussions will be made on some passages that could reveal the self-identity of the author, who, probably saw himself as an apocalyptic scribe well-learned in the existing Jewish religious literature, now being trained by Jesus to be a scribe in the eschatological kingdom of heaven (13:52).

In chapter three, the research will do five case studies of selected narrative passages from M to make a case for identifying some of the Jewish priests and scribes as likely sources of information to Matthew for some of the specific information provided in those passages due to the exclusive nature of those meetings to which outsiders had no access. The research will show

that Matthew and other disciples were not eyewitnesses to the events reported in most of the M narratives and that some of the details given in those passages were available only to a closed group of people present at those events. The case studies will attempt to show that the Jewish priests stand as likely candidates to be a source of information to Matthew because they were party or eyewitnesses to most of the narrative passages in M. They could have passed the information to Matthew directly or indirectly. The identification of priests or scribes as a likely source of M narratives, as opposed to viewing M as the imaginary creation of Matthew, will add some credibility to Matthean special narratives. The evidence may need to be more adequate to make a persuasive case for the historical reliability of M narratives. However, attempts will be made through careful analysis of M narrative passages to show that Matthew wrote them based on reports that were possibly presented to him by real people in history who were likely eyewitnesses of events in the camp opposed to Jesus.

The focus of chapter three will be on five selected narrative passages from M materials that can be divided into three categories. The first one is the visit of the Magi (2:1-12) when Matthew and other disciples were not in the picture, requiring the Evangelist to depend on other sources. The second one is a set of passages describing incidents in the opposition camp during the passion of Jesus Christ. The first of these two meetings were attended only by the chief priests and elders (26:3-5). The second meeting was attended only by the chief priests and Judas (26:14-16). The elders and scribes were absent in the second meeting. The disciples of Jesus had no access to those meetings. Unless it were reported to them by someone who was in the meeting or heard it from them, they would have been unaware of what happened in those meetings. The third set of narrative passages informs about the delegation of chief priests and Pharisees that went to Pilate to get the tomb sealed and guarded (27:62-66) and the narrative about the reports

of the Roman guards and the deal made between the chief priests and the Roman guards to report a lie to the public in order to give an explanation for the empty tomb (28:2-4, 11-15). All these meetings took place in the opposition camp and are shown to be secretive. No disciple of Jesus could have had access to any details of the discussions that occurred in those meetings unless they were informed by someone who was part of the meeting. Since the Jewish priests are the only consistent party in all those events, the research would argue that they stand as a plausible source of information to the Evangelist or his associates directly or indirectly.²

Chapter four will summarize the findings of the research to affirm the following:

1. The Jewish priests can be identified as a plausible source of information for a number of M narrative passages.
2. The heavy influence of Jewish apocalyptic literature on M discourses points towards possible scribal involvement in the development of M. However, the findings of this research will show that such an influence could be attributed to Matthew's self-identity as a former scribe of Judaism, who, after becoming a disciple of Jesus, saw himself as a scribe trained for the kingdom of heaven.
3. Some of the findings of the case studies in chapter three will be used to make arguments for the historical reliability of M narratives. This will be done based on internal evidence, circumstantial evidence, and some coincidences found in other New Testament writings. The conclusion will also point out areas that need future research.

² It is likely that the some of the Jewish priests passed the details of the events to Matthew directly. However, it is also possible that they passed the details to one or more of their friends or family members and the news eventually got to the Evangelist who put them into writing. Even if the details came to Matthew through those who heard it from the priest or their other hearers, the buck stops with the Jewish chief priests as the details could have originally come from only one or more of them.

Chapter One

M Materials: A Literary Review

1. Introduction and Definition of M Materials

Once Markan priority was popularized by Karl Lachmann in 1835 and Gottlob Wilke in 1838, Christian Weisse made an additional contribution to Synoptic studies by recognizing M materials in 1838 itself.³ Some commentators have painstakingly gone through every word of the Synoptic writers to identify the differences between the three due to even the use of a slightly different word or a phrase employed by Matthew, including introductory and minor editorial comments at the beginning or end of some passages. Some other scholars have focused on larger passages that contain possible redactionary materials or larger units that contain at least an important title, phrase, verse, or paragraphs with significant information that is not available in Mark and Luke and therefore is not from the hypothetical Q. This research will not focus on every passage that has used a slightly different vocabulary or a phrase but would focus on passages that contain at least an important phrase or verse that contain some significant details not found in Mark and Luke. Therefore, the research will begin by identifying passages in Matthew that can be labeled as Special Matthew in a strict sense. Once the passages are identified, this chapter will do a literary review of the scholarly views on its source concerning the involvement of Jewish priests and scribes without engaging the well-researched topic of the

³ Helmut Koester, *Ancient Christian Gospels: Their History and Development* (Philadelphia: Trinity Press, 1990), 128.

Q source hypothesis. This chapter will primarily review the views of some scholars who used Source Criticism,⁴ Form Criticism,⁵ Literary Criticism,⁶ and Narrative Criticism.⁷

2. The Author of the Gospel

This research has more to do with the source of M narratives and the apocalyptic influence on M discourses. However, the research has a lot to do with the identity of the Evangelist and his professional background. The research deals primarily with the involvement of some Jewish priests and scribes in developing M narratives and the reason for Jewish apocalyptic influence on the discourse materials. However, because of the likely role of the Evangelist as a former Jewish scribe by profession,⁸ a brief discussion is warranted here for and against the Matthean authorship of the first Gospel without getting into a major discussion. The author of this research would go with the traditional view of identifying the Evangelist as Matthew the Apostle, who was an eyewitness to the public ministry of Jesus and was a direct

⁴ Source Criticism looks for the sources that the author might have used. This research primarily focuses on the source of M materials.

⁵ Form Criticism looks at the literary genre of the passage. For example, the reader looks at a passage to see if it is a dialogue, narrative, poetry, etc. In this dissertation, the focus is on dialogues and narratives in M materials to see possible influence of Jewish apocalyptic literature and possible identity of sources to M narratives.

⁶ This research will use some of the tools of Literary Criticism to analyze some narrative passages in M in order to make some argument to support the main argument of the dissertation.

⁷ Janice Capel Anderson, *Matthew's Narrative Web: Over, and Over, and Over Again* (np: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 1994), 225. ProQuest Ebook Central, <https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/lib/liberty/detail.action?docID=742487>. Anderson says that “Narrative Criticism sees the whole work as a single unit (as opposed to disintegrating units) and the reader tries to see the plots in the stories to see the entire message.”

⁸ Several scholars believe that Matthew was a scribe before becoming a disciple of Jesus and that he was mentored by Jesus to become a Christian scribe. This point will be discussed in detail below to account for the Jewish apocalyptic influence on the M discourse materials.

listener to Jesus's discourses, which makes him stand fully qualified and resourceful to be a primary source of some of the M materials.

The earliest tradition that ascribes the authorship of the first Gospel in the NT canon to Matthew the Apostle can be traced to Papias, a disciple of John the Apostle and a contemporary of Polycarp. Papias is said to have reported about "a Gospel written in Hebrew for Hebrews."⁹ The testimony of Papias carries a lot of weight as he lived and wrote in the first century itself, just a few decades after the writing of the Gospel, considering that it was written before the fall of Jerusalem. If one accepts the view of some critical scholars that Matthew wrote his Gospel after the fall of Jerusalem in the 70s or 80s, it would mean that Papias's testimony would be even closer to the date of the writing of the Gospel, making his testimony even more reliable.¹⁰ Hence, a later date of writing, make the case for Matthean authorship stronger.

Critical scholars have made attempts to trace Papias's tradition further back to the time of the Apostles themselves. France holds that it would be unreasonable to assume that the tradition of Matthean authorship would spring out of Papias independently out of nowhere. He argues that "it is highly likely that the belief was in place already and is something that Papias inherited from the apostolic fathers before him."¹¹ Though this is a possibility, the argument stands on

⁹ W.D. Davies and Dale C. Allison Jr., *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint Matthew, Vol I* (Edinburgh: T& T Clark, 1988), 12.

¹⁰ There are mainly three objections made by critical scholars on the comment of Papias. 1. The record is from the writings of Eusebius who lived in the third century. 2. Papias said that the Gospel was written in Hebrew language. This raises a problem to the NT Canon. One who accepts the comment of Papias will have to agree that what we have in the NT Canon is a Greek translation, not the original version. 3. If Matthew wrote in Hebrew, it would be hard to maintain the argument for Markan priority which says that Mark wrote first and then Matthew used the Mark's Gospel written in Greek to develop his Gospel account in Hebrew.

¹¹ R. T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2007), 56.

flimsy ground as one has first to prove that the claim of Papias was valid before one looks for speculative sources behind his claim.

A few records validating the testimony of Papias are available from early church history. Eusebius provides a little more information about the Gospel as he says that Matthew's Gospel was written in Hebrew and was then translated into Greek by some Christians.¹² Eusebius also quoted Irenaeus, who claimed that Matthew produced his Gospel among the Hebrews, in their dialect when Peter and Paul were preaching in Rome.¹³ Eusebius also quoted Origen who claimed that he had learned from tradition that Matthew wrote a Gospel in Hebrew for the Jewish converts.¹⁴ According to Eusebius, Pantaenus, a second-century Christian philosopher, is said to have seen a copy of the Gospel According to Matthew written in Hebrew that was handed over to someone who lived close to India by Bartholomew, the Apostle who went there and preached the good news before the arrival of Pantaenus there in the second century.¹⁵ Augustine also claimed Matthean authorship of the Gospel when he wrote that among the four Gospels, "Only Matthew was written in Hebrew."¹⁶

Though no other title was ever given to the Gospel, W.D. Davies and Dale C. Allison Jr. show that the Matthean authorship "cannot be concluded on the basis of the title alone. They show that it was unlikely to be a part of the original manuscript. This claim is supported by the fact that there are early manuscripts available with variant readings of the title, indicating that the

¹² Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical history*, III.xxxix.16.

¹³ *Ibid.*, V.viii.2.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, VI.xxv.4.

¹⁵ Eusebius, V.x.3.

¹⁶ David Hill, *The Gospel of Matthew* (Grand Rapids: WM B Eerdmans, 1972), 22.

title was not part of the original document.¹⁷ On the other hand, Davies and Allison also argue that, “given of the unanimous attribution of our Gospel to Matthew . . . although not demanded by the evidence, the attribution is quietly reasonable.”¹⁸ Craig S. Keener also points out that “there is an absence of any other particular suggestion about the authorship of the Gospel.¹⁹ However, one might allege that this is an argument from absence of evidence.

Looking for internal evidence of Matthean authorship, Ned B. Stonehouse made an interesting argument based on the explanation of Matt 9:10. He showed that there is a difference in the Matthean account of the event compared to Mark’s and Luke’s reports on the passage that describes the call of Levi and the following meal. Mark (2:15) and Luke (5:29) say that Jesus, after calling Matthew, had a meal “in his house,” (ἐν τῇ οἰκίᾳ αὐτοῦ), referring to the house of Matthew using the third person pronoun αὐτοῦ. However, in Matthew’s account (9:10) of the event, he says that the meal took place “in the house”²⁰ (ἐν τῇ οἰκίᾳ), without the use of the third person pronoun. Based on this unique use of the Evangelist, Stonehouse suggests that Matthew’s different use could be because of the fact that the Evangelist was referring to his own house.

One can see that, based on the minimal internal evidence and the early church report, Matthew the Apostle can be identified as the author of the first Gospel of the New Testament Canon. The acceptance of Matthean authorship goes back to an early stage of ecclesiastical history.²¹ Since the tradition is very old, unanimous, and can be traced to the first century itself,

¹⁷ Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 129.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ Keener, *Matthew*, 38.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 20.

²¹ Simon Gathercole, based on a comment about Matthew in 13th Saying of the Gospel of Thomas, has suggested that the author of the Gospel of Thomas knew Matthew and possibly used his writings to compose his Gospel. However, Stephen J. Patterson has pointed out that there is nothing special about the author of the Gospel of

it can be considered as a historically reliable tradition. Hence, the author of this research would proceed by accepting this tradition without engaging in detailed arguments for and against Matthean authorship as it is not an important goal of this research.

Those who oppose Matthean scholarship base their arguments based on two assumptions. The first assumption is that Matthew could not have written the Gospel because it was possibly written very late—towards the end of the first century or early second century.²² The second assumptions, based on some details provided in the Gospel, argue that it was possibly written by a group of people who lived at a different time than the one mentioned in the Gospel.²³ Hence a brief discussion of those objections and a brief discussion on the date of writing the Gospel is warranted here.

3. The Date of the Gospel

Though this research does not intend to engage in a serious discussion of the date of the writing of the Gospel, a brief comment is necessary here as the author of this dissertation argues for a date before 70 AD for the writing of Matthew's Gospel. The assumption of an earlier date is important for this research as it tries to show that the content of the Gospel is directly

Thomas knowing Matthew because Matthew was one of the Twelve Apostles of Jesus, and his writings must have been circulating widely by the time Thomas used it. For a detailed discussion, see: Stephen J. Patterson, (2014). Twice More—Thomas and the Synoptics: A Reply to Simon Gathercole, The Composition of the Gospel of Thomas, and Mark Goodacre, Thomas and the Gospels. *Journal for the Study of the New Testament*, 36(3), 251–261. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0142064X14521947>.

²² For a detailed discussion of non-Matthean authorship, see: France, *Matthew*, 77-80.

²³ Leopold Sabourin, *The Gospel According to St Matthew, Vol. I* (Bombay, India: St Paul Publication, 1982), 20.

connected to the historical, theological, and cultural belief system of the time during which the Gospel was written.

Some critical scholars, citing two popular reasons, argue for a late date for writing the Gospel after 70 AD. The first one is based on the prophecy about the fall of Jerusalem recorded in Matt 22:6-7²⁴, and the second one is due to the developed Christological ideas found in the Gospel that supposedly need more time to develop. The argument based on the mention of the prophecy about the fall of Jerusalem is a matter of worldview rather than evidence for a late date, as the proponents of such a view reject the possibility of prophecies coming true due to their anti-supernatural bias against the possibility of any miraculous predictions being fulfilled in history. Those who hold such an anti-supernatural worldview would assume that the prophecy was written after the incident took place.²⁵

However, the argument for a later date stands short of good reasoning. A. T. Robinson shows that it is hard to put a date for Matthew after 70 AD, because “there is extremely little information in the New Testament about events that took place after 70 AD.”²⁶ He argues that “those events are not mentioned because they had not yet occurred and it is an aspect that

²⁴ O. Lamar Cope, *Matthew: A Scribe Trained for the Kingdom of Heaven* (Washington: The Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1976), 125.

²⁵ Earlie Ellis, *The Making of the New Testament* (Boston: Brill Academic, 2002), 3. Ellis speaks about the influence of such a worldview in the field of New Testament scholarship when he says that “The presuppositions of the investigator govern the historical study of the Gospels more than one might suppose. They include both confessional attitudes and methodological assumptions. As is detailed below, a cleavage in worldview, that is, *a priori* assumptions that are ultimately confessional in nature and thus not subject to scientific proof, has marked biblical criticism from its beginning. In the eighteenth century, it was characterized by Deism on the one hand and Theistic (and Pietistic) assumptions on the other, viewpoints appropriately labeled in recent times as Cartesian and non-Cartesian. In the criticism of the Gospels, the cleavage has manifested itself most significantly in the approach taken to the accounts of the miracles of Jesus and of his resurrection from among the dead bodies.

²⁶ John A. T. Robinson, *Redating the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1976), 14.

demands more attention than it has received in critical circles.”²⁷ B.H. Streeter holds a similar view and argues for a date for the composition of the Gospel before 65 AD.²⁸ William Graham Scroggie argues for a much, earlier date around 58 AD, much before the fall of Jerusalem and Jewish temple. To support his argument, he cites the references in the Gospel to ‘the city of the Great King’ (5:35), ‘the temple’ (24:1, 2), ‘the holy place’ (24:15), ‘impending trouble’ (24:16, 20), and to ‘the holy city’ (27:53), as if they are still existing.²⁹ However, a date closer to 70 AD and before the destruction of Jerusalem also can account for all those references. Nevertheless, Scroggie’s arguments make a good case for a date before the fall of Jerusalem. A recent work by Jonathan Bernier argues that Matthew would have been written before 68 AD if Luke-Acts was written before that. He also discusses several internal texts that support the argument for an earlier date.³⁰

The argument for a late date based on the high Christology found in the Gospel seems to be based on assumptions that go against the details we have from the writings of Paul, who traces his sources to Peter, James, and John in Jerusalem and argues that his Christological views were found to be in complete agreement with that of the Apostles right from the beginning (Gal 1:18-19; 2:9).³¹ William Hendricksen rightly pointed out that an argument for a late date of Matthew’s Gospel based on high Christology in M is a very weak one. He showed that, “if one is

²⁷ Robinson, *Redating the New Testament*, 14.

²⁸ B.H. Streeter, *The Four Gospels: A Study of Origins* (London: Macmillan and Company, 1924), 261.

²⁹ William Graham Scroggie, *A Guide to the Gospels* (London: Pickering & Inglis, 1948), 248-249.

³⁰ For a details discussion of internal evidence listed by Bernier, see: Jonathan Bernier, 2022. *Rethinking the Dates of the New Testament: The Evidence for Early Composition* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2022).

³¹ Ulrich Luz, *Matthew 1-7: A Commentary* (Augsburg, MN: Fortress Press, 2007), 58-59. For an argument for a late date for the composition of Matthew’s Gospel around 80 AD.

going to reject the possibility of seeing developed Christological ideas in confession texts written before AD 75, consistent reasoning will demand that one also will deny the authenticity of all Paul's epistles, and in fact, much of the New Testament."³² Supporting the view that the main reason for holding a late date for the Gospel is the anti-supernatural worldview of the proponents of that view, Willoughby C. Allen shows the skeptics that "It is only the narrow and undiscerning logic of modern criticism which finds it necessary to detect earlier and later stages of Christological thoughts in these chapters."³³

After considering various arguments for and against an early date, R.T. France concludes that Matthew's Gospel was written in the mid-sixties before the Roman persecution started.³⁴ Allen. makes an interesting argument for an early date before the destruction of the Jerusalem temple. He draws attention to the use of 'Shekel' as temple tax (Matt 17:24) and relates it to the comment of Josephus³⁵, who wrote about Shekel being equivalent to four Attic drachme, indicating that the writing of the Gospel took place when the temple is still existing because after the destruction of the temple in 70 AD, the Romans confiscated the temple tax to support the temple of Jupiter.³⁶ However, this is not a conclusive argument as R. Alan Culpepper points out that, the passage could be seen as a post-70 reflection made by Matthew about the situation when

³² William Hendricksen, *New Testament Commentary: Exposition of the Gospel According to Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1973), 95.

³³ Willoughby C. Allen, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to S. Matthew*, Third Edition (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1912), lxxxv.

³⁴ France, *Matthew*, 91. For a detailed discussion of the arguments for and against an early date, see: pp. 82-91.

³⁵ Josephus, *Antiquities*, iii.viii.103.

³⁶ Allen, *Matthew*, 191.

the temple existed.³⁷ Keener, though he maintains that Matthew wrote this passage before 70 AD, accepts the possibility that the passage could be describing post-temple era because Romans required Jews and Christians to continue to give the same tax to the Roman government.³⁸

The author of this research prefers a date before AD 70 when the fall of Jerusalem took place. Besides the arguments mentioned above, there are two other reasons for holding such a view. The first one is that the mention of “to this very day” in Matt 27:8 speaks about a place that can be pointed out to people still living in Jerusalem. Robert H. Mounce shows that though the phrase “to this day” indicates that a considerable time has lapsed between the time of the event and the time of writing about it, it cannot be a very long time as the writer of the Gospel is still alive. He is pointing out a place that still exists in Jerusalem.³⁹ Moreover, if the Gospel was written after the fall of Jerusalem, it would have been strange for someone like Matthew, who frequently mentions “time and fulfillment,” to have not mentioned the fall of the Jerusalem temple as a fulfillment of a prophecy. Especially so when one considers the magnitude of the impact caused by the event on Jewish people and their identity.⁴⁰

If not for the sole reason of holding a worldview against the possibility of prophecies coming true, critical scholars should be willing to accept a date for the writing of the Gospel before the fall of Jerusalem. Allen shows that. “The traditions may well have been current in Palestine⁴¹ before the year 70 AD, and the compiler need not have done his work much later, if at

³⁷ R. Alan Culpepper, *Matthew: A Commentary* (Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 2021), 334.

³⁸ Keener, *Matthew*, 443-444.

³⁹ Robert H. Mounce, *Matthew* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1985), 3.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ Throughout his work, Allen refers to Palestine tradition as the source of most M narratives without trying to give much explanation to pinpoint the source. See, Allen, *Matthew*.

all later, than 70 AD.”⁴² However, Allen seems to be trying to please scholars on both sides when he accepts the possibility of an early date or a slightly late date when he says that “The data furnished by the Gospel itself seems best satisfied if we suppose that its author compiled it within a period of a few years before or after the fall of Jerusalem in 70 AD.”⁴³ Based on the arguments of Streeter, Scroggie, Allen, and Hendricksen, etc., listed above, and because the case for a late date seems to be based on a worldview rather than on some reasonable evidence, the author of this dissertation accepts an early date before 70 AD for the writing of the Gospel.

4. Significant M Narratives and Discourse Materials

As mentioned above, there are differing opinions on what qualifies as M materials. According to Mark Goodacre, there are around 169 verses that constitute M materials.⁴⁴ Yet, one has to consider that some of the narratives, though they are found in Mark and or Luke, are still considered ‘M’ materials due to the nature of additional details provided in the Matthean version of it. Out of the 169 verses listed by Goodacre, ninety verses are sayings probably from Logia or collection/records of sayings of Jesus by Matthew himself.⁴⁵ In addition, six of those 169 verses are the ones that describe Jesus’s post-resurrection appearances to women (Matt 28:5-10). It is likely that the women narrated the story directly to Matthew, requiring no other source. If we

⁴² Allen, *Matthew*, lxxxv.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, lxxxiv.

⁴⁴ Mark Goodacre, *The Case Against Q: Studies in Markan Priority and the Synoptic Problem* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press, 2002), 43.

⁴⁵ Alfred Plummer, *An Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1962), xi. A brief discussion of Plummer’s views on four sources of Matthew’s Gospel will follow in the next chapter.

agree with Alfred Plummer that the sayings of Jesus were recorded by Matthew himself⁴⁶ as an eyewitness and direct listener, we are left with just sixty-five (169-90-6=73) verses that are specially Matthean and are of narrative style for which a source is yet to be identified.

However, Goodacre left out some narrative materials that are unique to Matthew in his list of the 169 verses he listed. Some scholars argue that M materials contain around 250 verses.⁴⁷ Some important M passages left out by Goodacre include ‘the resurrection of the saints’ (27:51-54) and ‘the price for which Jesus was betrayed’ (26:14-16, 27:1-10) When we add those sixteen additional verses about the betrayal price and the resurrection of the saints to the seventy-three verses mentioned above, we have eighty-nine (73+16=89) verses that are ‘M’ materials of narrative style for which a source needs to be identified. A closer look at these eighty-nine verses, as shown in the case studies in chapter three below, will show that direct or implied involvement of Jewish priests can be seen in the events narrated by Matthew. Moreover, one can also see that some of the details in those passages could have come only from someone in those meetings because of the secretive nature of those meetings to which only a few high-powered individuals of that time had access. Or else, one will have to assume that the entire narratives were the imaginative creation of Matthew.

Below is a list containing two types of M materials—dialogues and narratives. Due to the limit of this research, the author will not focus on the source of the dialogue materials as the critical scholars are in somewhat agreement that the sayings were based on the eyewitness accounts of Matthew himself and from possible written records of a few other disciples. On the

⁴⁶ Plummer, *Matthew*, xi.

⁴⁷ J. Julius Scott Jr., “The Synoptic Gospels,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary, Vol 1*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1979), 511.

other hand, the narrative passages, especially the eighty-nine verses mentioned above, are the ones for which a source is yet to be identified. In the list provided below, not every word that is different from Mark and Luke is included. Nor are the quotations from the Old Testament included as the source of those quotes is somewhat evident. For the sake of focus and brevity, this research is dealing with only discourse passages that have some connection with Jewish Literature that existed prior to Matthew's writing the Gospel and narrative passages that provide some significant information that is not provided in Mark and Luke.⁴⁸ By the use of the word 'significant,' the author means, those verses in Matthew that contain at least a phrase or sentence that is not found in Mark and Luke.

5. List of Significant M Materials

1. Genealogy, birth narratives, Maggi passage, etc. (narrative - chapters 1-2).
2. Sermon on the Mount (sayings- 5:1-7:28a).
3. Healing of two blind men and the news about it (editorial, narrative - 9:27-31).
4. Charge to Apostles (sayings- 10:5b-41).
5. Identity of Elijah (sayings- 11:14).
6. Come unto me all who are weary... (sayings - 11:28-30).
7. Parable of the Tares (sayings- 13:24-30).
8. Explanation of the Tares with an editorial introduction (sayings - 13:36-43).
9. Parable of Hidden treasure (sayings-13:44).

⁴⁸ For a special treatment of the text and translation of M materials as a separate unit, please see: Brice. C. Jones, *Matthean and Lucan Special Materials: A Special Introduction with texts in Greek and English* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2011), 18-46.

10. Parable of Precious Pearl (sayings- 13:45-46).
11. Parable of Net in the sea (sayings-13:47-50).
12. About Scribes who bring out new and old treasures (sayings-13:51-52).
13. Peter's walk on Water (narrative- 14:28-31 cf., Mk 8:10 – in Mark Jesus just goes to the other side).
14. An insertion in Mark's narrative (sayings- discourse of Jesus in 15:12-13).
15. Words of Jesus on Canaanite women vs. Israel and an insertion in Mark's narrative with editorial comment (sayings- 15:23-25).
16. Jesus' saying on signs of time (sayings- 16:2b, 3).
17. The comment on the leaven of the Pharisees (sayings- 16:11b-12).
18. Peter and the keys of the kingdom of heaven- words of Jesus (sayings- 16:17-19).
19. Peter's rebuke of Jesus (Narrative by eyewitness 12:22b).
20. Comments about Elijah and John the Baptist (sayings- 17:13).
21. Coin from Fishes mouth- for tax (sayings- 17:24-27).
22. Be Like children in the kingdom of heaven (sayings- 18:3, 4).
23. Angels were seeing the face of Father (sayings- 18:10).
24. Jesus' saying about "one of these little ones" (sayings- 18:14).
25. Jesus on discipline in ecclesia (sayings- 18:16-20).
26. The story of two debtors (sayings- 18:23-35).
27. Sayings of Jesus on Eunuchs (sayings- 19:10-12).
28. Saying on the Son of Man on the throne and the twelve judging Israel (sayings- 19:28 cf., "on the throne" is not in Luke, and the entire story is not in Mark).
29. Parable of the Laborers and the vineyard (sayings- 20:1-16).

30. The chief priest and scribes (sayings and editorial comments 21:15-19).
31. Parable of Two Sons (sayings- 21:28-32).
32. Saying on the “Kingdom of God” and “reward” (sayings- 21:43).
33. Whoever falls on this stone will be broken to pieces ... (sayings- 21:44).
34. Parable of the Wedding Banquet (sayings- 22:1-14).
35. Jesus’ words on “all the law and the prophets” (sayings- 22:40).
36. Scribes and Pharisees sitting on the chair of Moses (sayings- 23:1-3).
37. Jesus’ Charge against Scribes and Pharisees (sayings- 23:5).
38. Jesus on Rabbi, One Father, Messiah as the teacher, etc. (sayings- 23:7v-10).
39. Condemnation of Scribes and Pharisees (woes- sayings- 23:15-22).
40. Jesus on straining out a gnat but gulping down a camel (sayings- 23:24).
41. Condemnation of hypocrisy (sayings- 23:28).
42. Stern warning about hell (sayings- 23:32-33).
43. Warning about betrayals and false prophets (sayings- 24:1-12).
44. “Signs of the Son of Man” (clouds and glory- sayings- 24:30a).
45. Parable of the Ten Virgins (sayings- 25:1-13).
46. Parable of the Talents (sayings- 25:14-30 cf., Lk 19:11-28. vs. 30 is unique to M)
47. Parable of the Sheep and Goats and Son of Man coming in glory with all the angels (sayings- 25:31-46).
48. Twelve legions of angels ready to act (sayings- 26:52-54).
49. Judas and blood money (narrative- 27:3-10).
50. Dream of Pilate’s wife (narrative- 27:19).
51. Pilate’s washing of hands (narrative- 27:24, 25).

52. Editorial comment on crucifixion narrative (narrative – 27: 36, 41, 43 says that the chief priests, the teachers of the law, and the elders were watching).
53. The resurrection of the saints (narrative- 27:51b-53).
54. Sealing of the tomb (narrative- 27:62-66).
55. The appearance of the angel and soldier’s fearful reaction (narrative- 28:1b-4).
56. Bribing of guards by the Jewish chief priests (narrative- 28:11-15).
57. Last commission⁴⁹ – 28:16-20 (sayings- accepting the shorter ending of Mark).⁵⁰

6. Scope and Limitation of this Research

Critical scholars have generally dealt with M materials as a part of their works on the Gospel of Matthew. Only a little work has been done with a special focus on the source of the narrative materials that are unique to Matthew. Strictly speaking, if Matthew used Mark and Q, that leaves the M materials as the sole contribution of the Evangelist, except for the editorial

⁴⁹ For a comprehensive list of M materials with every word accounted for, please see: Allen, *Matthew*, 1-liii.

⁵⁰ There are scholars who argue that Matthew 28:16-20 also could be a later addition made by a redactor after the Council of Nicaea in the fourth century. However, Culpepper shows that Eusebius quotes 28:19 a number of times in the third century, which indicates that Matthew 28:16-20 was a part of the text before the Council of Nicaea. For a detailed discussion, see: Culpepper, *Matthew*, 579-585. There is a consensus among many New Testament Scholars of recent times about the shorter ending of Mark. For example, Robert Gundry, Morna Hooker, and R. Alan Culpepper, do not even comment on the text of Mark 16:9ff. The position for shorter ending being original are based on three observations. The first one is that the language of Mark 16:9ff deviates from the Mark’s language in the rest of Mark. The second one is that Matthew and Luke seem to follow the story of Mark till 16:8 and then diverges in their stories after that. This indicates that they probably knew only the shorter ending of Mark. ⁵¹The third one is that, most ancient mss do not have the longer ending of Mark. However, those who argue for the longer ending contend that, most mss of Mark have longer ending. However, their reasoning is rejected by most scholars who show that those mss are of late origin. For a detailed discussion, see: William Lane, *The Gospel According to Mark* (Grand Rapids: WB Eerdmans, 1974), 601-605. Also see the works of: Morna D. Hooker, *The Gospel According to St Mark* (London: A & C Black, 1991); and Robert H Gundry, *Mark: A Commentary on His Apology for the Cross* (GR: WB Eerdmans, 1992).

works on the content of Mark and Q. Such a critical view demands a special treatment of M materials to understand the theological background of the Evangelist, his source, and his narrative purpose by analyzing M materials as a separate unit altogether.

While suggestions have been made about the possible sources of M narratives, more research is needed in that field, focusing strictly on M narratives. This research will first look at M discourses and a few narrative passages to see the influence of Jewish canonical and non-canonical apocalyptic writings in shaping the M materials, especially the discourse materials. However, this research will only deal with some of the discourses in M materials to show that Matthew, because he identified himself as an apocalyptic scribe, decided to pick content with a heavy apocalyptic flavor.⁵¹ This research will engage in a detailed discussion on the self-identity of Matthew as a former Jewish scribe and as an eschatological Christian scribe trained for the kingdom of heaven.

In addition, the research will also focus on narrative passages with links or possible links to Jewish priests and scribes to identify them as a plausible source of some of the M narratives. This research will only deal with textual issues or variations that may have anything to do with identifying their source. This research will also limit the timeline of works produced to the period before 70 AD while acknowledging that it is possible to see the influence of earlier rabbinical tradition existing in Jewish literature that includes rabbinic writings and Targums that were produced after that time.

7. Literary Review of Critical Scholarly Approach to M Materials

As mentioned above, this research will not engage in a detailed discussion of Markan Priority, or Q Source Hypothesis or Matthean Priority or Lukan priority. This session will start with the historical-theological background of the development of mistrust on the historical reliability of miracle stories in the NT and the views that emerged on the reliability of the narratives in the Gospels. The review will also look at scholarly views on the seeming legendary nature of some of the M narratives and scholarly opinions about their historical reliability. Special focus will be paid to the scholarly mentions of the possible role of Jewish priests and scribes as likely sources to the Evangelist.

A. Historical Background that Undermined the Authenticity of M Materials

i. Denial of the Authority of Scripture in General

A Negative attitude towards a major portion of M materials resulted from a general suspicion of the authority of the Scripture among some critical scholars. Suspicion of the authority of the Scripture as the inspired Word of God and its truthfulness began among critical scholars with Karl Gustav Adolf Harnack, a German critical scholar who argued that anything that is found in the New Testament writings about Jesus is mere tradition put down by the four evangelists and that “the Scripture we refer to today should be regarded as primary tradition similar to the secondary tradition we speak of today.”⁵² William Wrede, a German New Testament Scholar argued that, though the New Testament writings show that the disciples of Jesus believed in Jesus, much of their faith contained myths based on traditions.⁵³ However, the

⁵² Adolf Von Harnack, *The Origin of the New Testament: and the Most Important Consequences of the New Creation*, Translated by J. R. Wilkinson (New York: Macmillan, 1925), 43.

⁵³ William Wrede, *The Origin of the New Testament* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1909), 73.

arguments of Harnack and Wrede deny even the mere possibility that the evangelists might have used some written notes that were made by one or more of the Apostles when they walked with Jesus observing what he did and listening to what he taught. A discussion will be made below to show that Jesus might have called a former scribe to be his disciple to mentor him as a Christian scribe following the prophetic pattern found in the Old Testament.⁵⁴

ii. Denial of the Historicity of All Miracle Passages in the Bible

Albert Schweitzer continued the assault on the historicity and reliability of the passages in the New Testament that had anything to do with supernatural involvement. He even challenged the historicity or truthfulness of the supernatural incarnation of Jesus as discussed in his treatise known as *The Secret of the Messiahship and the Passion*.⁵⁵ Rudolf Bultmann was another influential critical scholar who is known for his works on “demythologizing” the Gospels. In his work known as *Die Geschichte der synoptischen Tradition*, he portrays the miracle stories in the Gospels as myths similar to the Hellenistic stories.⁵⁶ He further argued that nothing could be known about the real Jesus from the Gospels as they are information that are non-historical.⁵⁷ Holding Bultmann’s view would make one unable to accept most of what we know about Jesus as they come from the records in the Scripture. Such a negative attitude about the nature of the entire Scripture comes with a strong bias against ancient writers and their authenticity.

⁵⁴ The example of Isaiah in using disciples to write down his oracles will be discussed in detail below.

⁵⁵ Albert Schweitzer, *The Mystery of the Kingdom of God: The Secret of Jesus’ Messiahship and Passion* (New York: Macmillan, 1950), 6.

⁵⁶ Rudolf Bultmann *The History of the Synoptic Tradition, Translated by Josh* (Oxford, England: Blackwell, 1963), 5-7.

⁵⁷ Rudolf Bultmann, *Jesus and the Word* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1958), 8.

Randel Helms cited an example from the first century to show that legendary claims like the ones found in the New Testament about miracles and resurrection existed in the Roman world. The followers of Apollonius of Tyana, who was put to death towards the end of the first century by the Romans, claimed that Apollonius had performed good miracles when he was alive and that he had resurrected and ascended to heaven later on.⁵⁸ Helms compared the story with the claims of the Gospel accounts and argued that “The Gospels are largely fictional accounts concerning an historical figure, Jesus of Nazareth.”⁵⁹ Ulrich Luz does not make such a sweeping comment but minimizes the historicity of M materials when he says that Matthew makes record of “legend that is not interested in historical probability,”⁶⁰ and used historical data available to him in his legend that incorporated unhistorical traditions about his birth.⁶¹ However, the discussion below will show that, not every critical scholar today holds such an absolute negative opinion about the historicity of Gospel narratives.

iii. Middle-Way or Attempt to See Miraculous Passages in NT as Quasi-History

Attempts have been made to strike a balance between total denial of historicity and unsuspecting trust in the historical truthfulness of the New Testament writings. Henry Wansbrough argued that while the essential beliefs of Christianity are based on historical facts, other facts in the Gospels may not be historical but are based on the faith of the Christians, which means the Gospels contain quasi-history.⁶²

⁵⁸ Randel Helms, *Gospel Fictions* (Buffalo, NY: Prometheus Books, 1942), 10.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ Luz, *Matthew*, 105.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 120.

⁶² Henry Wansbrough, “The Infancy Stories of the Gospels since Raymond E. Brown,” in *New Perspectives on the Nativity*, ed. Jeremy Corley (New York: T&T Clark, 2009), 5.

W.D. Davies and Dale C. Allison seem to be willing to take a similar position as they suggested that Matthew has inserted non-verifiable narratives that he received from the Jewish community to give an artificial Jewish flavor to his Gospel that was primarily written for the Jews.⁶³ They are not denying the historicity of passages like the guard-story, but suggest that such passages do not compel history. Bernard P. Robinson also argues that “it is difficult to view Matthew’s Magi story, as it stands, as history, but it may well contain a historical substratum.”⁶⁴

However, such an approach for a middle-ground, which is neither dogmatic nor radically historical⁶⁵ was bound to become unacceptable to the liberal scholars on one side who would not accept even the possibility of a prophecy coming true or the possibility of any miracles as it will be unacceptable to their anti-supernatural or Deistic worldview; and on the other side, the conservative scholars who believe that everything recorded in the Gospels is historically true and are reliable, would not accept the possibility of seeing Scripture as quasi-history with possible legendary materials. In trying to win both groups, scholars who take the middle-way approach usually lose respect from the liberal scholars, who feel that they are not rational or liberal enough and the conservative scholars who feel that they are not conservative or faithful enough.⁶⁶

⁶³ Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 27.

⁶⁴ Bernard P. Robinson, “Matthew’s Nativity Stories: Historical and Theological Questions for Today’s Readers,” in *New Perspectives on the Nativity*, ed. Jeremy Corley (New York: T&T Clark, 2009), 126.

⁶⁵ Jack Dean Kingsbury, “The Birth Narrative of Matthew,” in *The Gospel of Matthew in Current Study*, ed. David E. Aune (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans, 2001), 158.

⁶⁶ For example, Beare argues that the entire Matthean narratives are full of myths and are not even worth discussing. See: Francis Wright Beare, *The Gospel According to Matthew: Translation, introduction and Commentary* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1817), 72-75. On the other hand, there are scholars like Warfield who argue for the authenticity of all Scriptural passages in the Bible. Warfield claimed that “Modern criticism has not disproved the authority of any single book of our New Testament.” For a detailed discussion of Warfield’s view, see: Henk van den Belt, *The Authority of Scripture in Reformed Theology: Truth and Text* (Boston: Brill, 2008), 181. Alfred Jeremias is also known for his claim that, “the prophetic and apocalyptic style of the biblical narratives is completely mythological.” For a detailed discussion of similar views of other critical scholars, see: Carl F.H. Henry, *God, Revelation, and Authority, Vol. 1* (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1976), 52.

iv. Traditional View: Accepting the Scripture as Historically Reliable Accounts

There are several critical scholars who have made arguments for the authenticity of all Biblical passages, including the passages that contain records of miracles and alleged legends. To name a few, Benjamin Warfield,⁶⁷ A.A. Hodge,⁶⁸ Alfred Edersheim, Rene Pache,⁶⁹ Howard Marshall,⁷⁰ Carl F.H. Henry,⁷¹ etc., have argued for the authenticity of everything recorded in the sixty-six books of the Bible. The scope of this research does not permit more space for discussing their arguments in detail. However, it is important to note that there are accomplished critical scholars who affirm the historical reliability of miracle passages in the Bible. The rejection of the possibility of divine involvement in human history is usually attributed to the anti-supernatural worldview of critical scholars who reject the possibility of miracles, prophecies, etc.⁷² Conservative scholars see the Scripture as the product of a divine-human involvement, which is known as the doctrine of inspiration. Arguments for the authority of the Scripture and its authenticity, presented by the scholars mentioned above, are usually based on the doctrine of inspiration, the nature of God, and the character of human authors of biblical books.

⁶⁷ For a brief account of Warfield's argument for the authority of the Scripture based on the doctrine of the Inspiration, please see; Benjamin B. Warfield, *Critical Reviews* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1932), 231-242.

⁶⁸ For a summary of the positions of Warfield and Hodge, see: Bernard Ramm, "Is Scripture Alone the Essence of Christianity?" in *Biblical Authority*, Jack Rogers, ed. (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1977), 109-112.

⁶⁹ See: Rene Pache, *The Inspiration and Authority of Scripture* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1969).

⁷⁰ Marshall makes a simple presentation of the conservative view of the inspiration and authority of the Scripture. See: I. Howard Marshall, *Biblical Inspiration* (Vancouver, BC: Regent College Publishing, 1982).

⁷¹ See the work of Henry, *God, Revelation, and Authority*.

⁷² For a discussion of this view, see: Steven B. Cowan, and Terry L. Wilder, *In Defense of the Bible: A Comprehensive Apologetic for the Authority of Scripture* (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2012), 79-82.

B. Views of Critical Scholars on Possible Fictions in M Narratives

The critical scholarship influenced by the liberal views mentioned above eventually affected scholarly views on every book in the Bible. Due to the seeming legendary nature of the materials that are special in 'M,' it drew special attention to the critical view of suspicion that emerged in the NT studies. Some scholars argued that many of the passages in M materials are fictional. Some of the important passages whose historicity is challenged are:

- The birth narratives of Jesus, which some critical scholars treat as a myth influenced by stories from international royal birth narratives.
- The narrative on the money thrown at the temple by Judas, which some critical scholars consider as a fictional story created by Matthew to present another fulfillment idea by referring to a prophecy made by Zachariah.
- The posting of the Roman guards, the sealing of the tomb of Jesus, and the reports of the guard; are considered improbable events by critical scholars because some of them think that it is unlikely that the Jewish chief priests and Pharisees would take such measures to counter the news of the Resurrection by fabricating a lie. Instead, they believe that the Matthean account is an attempt by the Evangelist to counter the Jewish assertion at that time that Jesus had not been raised from the dead, but his disciples stole his body. In holding such a view, critical scholars assume that the Jewish leaders would not have lied, but Matthew creatively invented the stories or lies. They trust the character of the Jewish priests more than the character of Matthew the Apostle, who would give his life for what he believed.

i. Argument for Possible Fictions in M Narratives

Only some critical scholars on Matthew start with a total denial of all miracle stories in M narratives or challenge the historicity of M narratives. Some critical scholars began arguing that, from a literary point of view, anyone can or should consider the possibility of M narratives containing some fiction. Robinson entertained such a possibility by suggesting that Matthew would make up some stories in order to prove a point or in order to teach some truths. He argues that Matthew's account of Jesus includes the creation of fictitious stories that would attest to more profound truths than those of factual historicity.⁷³ The examples given by Robinson are: the tale of Pilate's washing of his hands (27:24-25), of the role of the Jewish high priests in Jesus' burial (27:62-66; 28:11-15), and of the appearance of Jesus to the Twelve on a mountain in Galilee (28:16-20).⁷⁴

However, it is essential to see that Robinson is not directly questioning the historicity but invites the readers to go beyond factual history to find more profound truths. In his opinion, the stories are cooked-up not to mislead readers but to teach some deeper truths. However, such sugar-coated exhortations do enough damage in the mind of the readers of his works as doubt gets cast on the actual historicity of the miracle passages in M's narratives. Taking a similar approach to the historicity of M narratives, Raymond E. Brown suggested that the Matthean birth narratives are duplication of similar stories and traditions that existed in the intertestamental period and argued that the passages speaking about the sudden appearance of the Magi worshipping Jesus and then leaving Jesus with no believers before he started the public ministry,

⁷³ Robinson claims that "For Matthew, the importance of the story lies in what it says about Jesus's kingship and his divine sonship." See, Robinson, *Nativity Stories*, 126.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

should not be taken at face value for being historically accurate or as reports of actual incidents.⁷⁵

Robert M. Grant claims that, just like most of the people of his time, Matthew “has a tendency to accept legends without much, if any, critical thinking.”⁷⁶ Grant considers most of the M narratives to be legendary. However, he also affirms that there are materials in Matthew that are not legends.⁷⁷ According to Grant, unlike Luke, Matthew, while writing his account, was not targeting readers who “preferred historical testimony.”⁷⁸ Grant argues that the special Matthew materials contain the religious interpretations of the Evangelist who pictures Jesus in the light of the apocalyptic-minded Christianity that was emerging from Judaism.⁷⁹

David Hill was cautious about the employment of suspicion in his approach to the historical nature of M materials. He does not deny them to be historical but argues that they are more than historical facts as they deal with matters of faith.⁸⁰ Hill argued that, M narratives, like the one about Jesus’s birth, are not “simply history, although they deal with a historic fact, but

⁷⁵ Raymond E. Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah: A Commentary on the Infancy Narratives in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke* (New York: Doubleday, 1993), 190.

⁷⁶ Robert M. Grant, *A Historical Introduction to the New Testament* (New York: Harper & Row, 1965), 131.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 132.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰ The anti-supernatural worldview of some of the modern critical scholars is said to be due to the influence of the Renaissance thinkers. Rene Descartes argued that everything needs to be evaluated by reason alone. Baruch Spinoza argued that Scripture must be interpreted in the light of reason. He also denied the possibility of miracles as one cannot expect natural laws to be suspended. David Hume influenced the thoughts of Spinoza also denied the possibility of miracles. Influenced by such thinkers, Friedrich Schleiermacher and Rudolf Bultmann alleged that the biblical narratives are full of myths and argued for the need to “demythologize” scriptures in order to find real history. Many New Testament scholars followed the idea of Bultmann and started questioning the authority and historicity of Scriptures. For a detailed discussion, see: Steven B. Cowan, and Terry L. Wilder, *In Defense of the Bible: A Comprehensive Apologetic for the Authority of Scripture* (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2012), 70-82.

rather are confessions of a faith, proclamations of the truth about the person of Jesus adorned in tales about his birth.”⁸¹ While he upholds a historical foundation for the “faith statements” and stories recorded in M narratives, Hill considers that stories about Jesus are “adorned in tales,” especially the ones about his birth.⁸² Hill acknowledges that there could be some kernel of historical facts behind the narrative, like, Jesus was conceived before the wedding to Joseph. Such facts are said to be adorned in fictional tales. Hill fails to explain why statements of faith cannot be based on historical facts and why one must assume that they are mere tales. Michael R. Licona, in his giant volume on the Resurrection of Jesus, commenting on the passage on the resurrection of the saints in Matt 27:52-53 says that, “we may also be reading poetic language or legend at some points, such as the report of some dead saints at Jesus’ death.”⁸³ As mentioned above, the view that considers M narratives as a mixture of facts and fiction, disappoints the liberals who consider all of M narratives to be fictional and the conservatives who consider every one of those verses to be historically reliable.

ii. Argument for Considering All of M Narratives as Fiction

Some scholars have gone to the extreme to argue that M narratives have nothing to do with facts or history.⁸⁴ Francis Wright Beare made an extreme claim that M narratives are fictional in its entirety. Instead of arguing for the possibility of fiction in M narratives, he went to

⁸¹ Hill, *Matthew*, 56.

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ Michael R. Licona, *The Resurrection of Jesus: A New Historiographical Approach* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2010), 186.

⁸⁴ Alfred Jeremias claimed that, “the prophetic and apocalyptic style of the biblical narratives is completely mythological.” For a detailed discussion of his views and similar views of other critical scholars, see: Carl F.H. Henry, *God, Revelation, and Authority, Vol. 1* (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1976), 52.

the extreme of denying even any remote possibility of M narratives containing anything related to historical facts. He calls them all myths or fictions. While *discussing* (italics mine) the M narratives in his famous work, he negates the need even to “*discuss*” (italics mine) them. He calls ‘M’ “a chain of stories whose historicity need not be even “*discussed*” (italics mine) as whatever significance they possess does not lie in any possible kernel of historical facts which may be embedded in them.”⁸⁵ Such biased and sweepingly negative opinions, appearing in scholarly language, cannot be seen as a balanced view, as Beare denies the need to discuss the passage while discussing the M narrative passages in a lengthy manner.

Beare also argued that, except for a “few additional anecdotes which Matthew offers (in addition to the borrowed materials from Mark) M materials are without exception legendary.”⁸⁶ He not only denied the historicity of the M materials in its entirety, but also went on to suggest other influences that caused the creation of allegedly fictitious stories in M materials. He argued that materials found in Matthew, in addition to what Mark wrote, are tales “built around a number of traditional motifs of mythology which may rightly be called international, interwoven with early Christian theological presuppositions.”⁸⁷

Beare’s extreme view is unjustifiable, because not all critical scholars necessarily mean legend to be non-historical. For example, Martin Dibelius not only shows that the word ‘legend’ can refer to “vite et obitus confession” to honor someone on their memorial day and points out that legendary details are minimal in the Gospels as the focus of the writers is to pass on the teachings of Jesus than to show him as a legendary hero as the Gospel traditions are very shy of

⁸⁵ Beare, *Matthew*, 72.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 6.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 74-5.

legendary tendencies.⁸⁸ He does the same thing to deny myths in the Gospels by showing that the writers are not speaking about the actions of a god but of a teacher who is teaching something even though he performs miracles.⁸⁹

However, Dibelius also argues that there are some mythological passages in the Gospels and point out the baptismal miracle, the Temptation passage, and the Transfiguration narrative as a few examples of that.⁹⁰ Annette Merz also sees the use of fiction in the development of M narratives. She considers narratives in Matthew with legendary nature to be stories developed by Matthew, probably based on traditions and from the historical imagination of Matthew himself.⁹¹

Hill seems to be more reasonable in his approach as he seriously discusses M materials to show that the influence on M materials is more likely to be from Jewish writings rather than from pagan literature or stories. He therefore disagrees with Beare who points to possible connections to Graeco-Roman literature. While arguing that there are mythological influences in M materials, Hill pointed out that such influences were limited to Jewish literature, thereby negating the influence of Hellenistic mythologies on its content. He wrote that “The unmistakably Jewish atmosphere of the prologue suggests that its contents should be treated as examples of Christian or Jewish-Christian Midrashic activity; the literary genre to which they

⁸⁸ Martin Dibelius, *From Tradition to Gospel* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1935), 104-106.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 266-267.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 271.

⁹¹ Annette Merz, in “Matthew’s Star, Luke’s Census, Bethlehem, and the Quest for the Historical Jesus,” in *The Star of Bethlehem and the Magi*, eds. Peter Barthel and George Van Kooten (Boston: Brill, 2015), 492-493.

belong is Haggadah's⁹² homiletical interpretation or illustration which, by emphasizing the marvelous and supernatural, underlines the theological significance of historical events."⁹³

Similarly, George Dunbar Kilpatrick has shown that the influence of Jewish literature is evident in the New Testament literature and pointed to the style of Haggadah that can be seen in it.⁹⁴ M.D. Goulder, in his well-researched book, makes a similar suggestion when he says that application of imagination, rhythm, language, etc., points to an influence of Midrash in the writings of Matthew, who seems to be building on the historical facts by adding fulfillment quotations and editorial comments all through the writing as he makes a unique literary piece.⁹⁵ As mentioned above, the influence could be accounted to the possibility of Matthew's identity as a scribe who made use of various styles to produce a unique literary piece.

iii. Argument for the Historically Reliability of All M Narratives

Even though there are many critical scholars who doubt the historical reliability of M narrative materials, there is a respectable number of critical scholars who affirm its historical reliability. The scope and space of this research does not permit a detailed discussion of all their views and arguments. However, a brief discussion of a few of them is warranted to provide a glimpse of the arguments advanced by a few scholars. Allen argued, "In view of the character of

⁹² For more information on Haggadah, see: Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, *Haggadah and History* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 2005), 1-85. Haggadah is shown to be an inseparable mirror of history itself. The author looks at a historical event and provides explanation or theological reflections and the truth expounded from the historical event or speech cannot stand in isolation as it is built on the truthfulness of a historical fact. Yerushalmi says, "To the uninitiated, some Haggadahs seem at first to betray no particular features at all. Yet, as soon as we bring to bear some modicum of knowledge concerning the time and place in which they were printed, their seemingly bland title pages come alive with historical drama." (See p.75).

⁹³ Hill, *Matthew*, 34.

⁹⁴ George Dunbar Kilpatrick, *The Origins of the Gospel According to Matthew* (Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press, 1946), 60-61.

⁹⁵ M.D. Goulder, *Midrash and Lection in Matthew* (London: ISPCK, 1974), 6-7.

the editor of this Gospel, it is almost certain that he believed that he was transmitting matters of fact. And it is in every respect probable that he was not altogether mistaken.”⁹⁶ Merz argued that, when compared with texts of other ancient heroes, the Matthean narrative seems to contain less legendary descriptions.⁹⁷ She cautioned critical scholars from the field of historical research to “refrain from their tendency to hold an unjustified skepticism towards the biblical text and shun the unwarranted confidence in their method as their work has to depend largely on ancient texts.”⁹⁸ Plummer, citing the historical details and other characteristics in Matthean narratives, argued that, unlike mythological stories, Matthean narratives display characteristics of historical reliability.⁹⁹ Morris pointed out that some Matthean narratives are “in many respects noteworthy for its historical probability.”¹⁰⁰ Robert Horton Gundry pointed out that, unlike apocryphal writers, Matthew did not make any fanciful claims about Jesus, indicating that what he wrote was actual history.¹⁰¹ Hughes argued that, if Matthew invented some of the stories he wrote down, he would have made it more coherent and plausible for his readers.¹⁰² One can see that all these arguments have some weight as they make a case for the historical reliability of M

⁹⁶ Allen, *Matthew*, 18-19.

⁹⁷ “Merz also reminds the readers that “Matthew wrote in a cultural climate where possible proofs from scripture and the interpretation of the present in the light of a normative past were extremely common.” See: Merz, *The Star of Bethlehem and the Magi*, 464-467, 479.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 479.

⁹⁹ Plummer, *Matthew*, 12.

¹⁰⁰ Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew* (Grand Rapids: WB Eerdmans, 1992), 34.

¹⁰¹ Robert Horton Gundry, *The Use of the Old Testament in St. Matthew’s Gospel: With Special Reference to the Messianic Hope* (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 1967), 195.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*

narratives. However, they also fall short of enough force to convince a skeptical reader as some of the arguments are based on the author's character and other usual conservative assumptions.

C. A Review of Scholarly Opinions on the Source of M Narratives

i. Importance of Identifying the Sources of M Narratives

One issue about the reliability of any discussion on M narratives is identifying a source Matthew had for his special stories. If he had no source, he had to invent the stories¹⁰³ or appeal to supernatural revelation. Matthew was an eyewitness to the public ministry of Jesus and was a direct listener to the discourses of Jesus. As an educated disciple, he was probably the records keeper of those discourses. However, questions surface regarding his source on the narrative passages about events when Matthew and other disciples were absent. The question becomes even more serious regarding information about meetings and conversations that took place in the camps opposed to Jesus, where only an exclusive and limited number of people opposed to Jesus were present.¹⁰⁴ Hence, the source of information is deeply connected to the reliability of the content of M narratives. Identifying a possible source of eyewitnesses who became direct or indirect sources to Matthew can strengthen the reliability of M narratives for which a source has not yet been identified.

¹⁰³ Donald Senior argues that Matthew's style and narrative weaving of special materials indicate that he had no pre-existing source or sources. See, David Senior, "Matthew's Special Material in the Passion Story." *Ephemerides theologicae Lovanienses : commentarii de re theologica et canonica* / 63, no. 4 (1987), 285. However, Senior also agrees that Matthew did not create those narratives from thin air but argues that Matthew developed them from Mark's writings and Old Testament prophecies. See, Senior, 191.

¹⁰⁴ Keener says that "Matthew's method elsewhere leads us to accept his dependence on the substance of his source; his source, however, is not available for more detailed historical examination." See: Keener, *Matthew*, 98.

Some attempts, though lacking vigor, have been made by critical scholars to identify possible sources of M narratives. The lack of intensity could be due to the extra attention that the Q hypothesis got from critical scholars. A review of critical scholars' opinions on Matthew's sources will show that Matthew, besides the shared sources and his own records, had other special sources or sources from which he developed some of the M narratives. The scope of this discussion on sources will not deal with source-critical views on Markan Priority and Q Source hypothesis or other views on the dates of Luke, as that is not a goal of this research. Instead, the goal of this review is to list the sources identified for some materials in Matthew that are not in Mark or the hypothetical Q.

ii. Matthew as an Eyewitness

As stated above, tradition holds that Matthew, the Apostle, was the writer of the Gospel that bears his name and that he wrote down his account as an eyewitness. Edgar J. Goodspeed draws on the tradition of the prophetic movement in which some prophets used disciples as scribes and cites the example of Isaiah (Isa 8:16-17). He suggested that Jesus, “following the successful practice of prophet Isaiah may have called Matthew and possibly a few other educated people to become his disciples for the specific purpose of preparing them to preserve his teachings that can be published posthumously.”¹⁰⁵ Hendricksen is in agreement with such an idea and points out that by choosing Matthew, Jesus made a strategic selection because, Matthew, as a publican, would have been “capable of using deviations of Hebrew, Greek, and Aramaic as his writings indicate based on the quotes he makes from varying Hebrew texts, the LXX and in addition, employs Aramaic phrases at ease.”¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁵ Edgar J. Goodspeed, *Matthew: Apostle and Evangelist* (Philadelphia: John C. Winston, 1959), 51-55.

¹⁰⁶ Hendricksen, *Matthew*, 95. For examples of Aramaic use, see the work of Matthew Black who argues that a couple of uses in Matthean passages make better sense if the Aramaic roots behind the word can be identified.

However, even if one grants that Matthew was the author of the Gospel, who, as an eyewitness, made a record of the teachings of Jesus and the events that took place during the public ministry of Jesus, a question remains on the source of information about the events that took place when Matthew was not present. The important passages are the birth, passion, and post-resurrection narratives. In addition to Q and Mark, Source critical scholars have suggested the following possible sources that Matthew might have used:

a. Tradition as a Source

This view holds that an oral tradition existed among the members of the early church and that the content of that tradition was formulated by Matthew, who put it into writing. Luz calls it the “saying source of the Matthean community,¹⁰⁷ and argues that the special character of redactions indicate that, except for the two passages in M—‘Sermon on the Mount’ in chapter 5 and the passage on ‘alms, prayer, and fasting’ in chapter 6: 2-6 and 16-18, all other passages were written down for the first time by the Evangelist based on oral traditions that could be factual or legendary.¹⁰⁸ Kilpatrick also speaks about the possible existence of a ‘Saying Source’ and suggests that Jesus’s “disciples presumably transmitted the sayings more carefully and the narratives more in their own words.”¹⁰⁹ Kilpatrick’s view assumes possibility of narrative

For examples, he shows that, the word ‘ἐπιούσιον’ in Matt 6: 11, is a word that was never employed by any Greek author (Black quotes Origen to support this claim). Black cites Meyer and affirms the word belonged to Aramaic language. Similarly, Black also comments on Matt 8:22 that says, “Let the dead bury the dead” and claims that saying does not belong to any known proverbs and argues that the phrase actually belongs to an Aramaic proverb which means “Leave the dead to the undertaker.” See, Matthew Black, *An Aramaic Approach to the Gospels and Acts* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), 204, 207. Examples of Greek and Hebrew usage will be mentioned below.

¹⁰⁷ Luz, *Matthew*, 49.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 21.

¹⁰⁹ Kilpatrick, *Origins*, 9, 33.

materials containing some non-historical elements. Luz and Helmut Koester would agree that Matthew had sources that were oral or written in addition to Mark and Q. However, they do not try to identify those sources with a name, like the case of Q. One may have to call them ‘unknown sources.’ Donald Senior is of the view that the Evangelist used “a source that reflects popular dramatization through storytelling.”¹¹⁰ In order to support his view, he lists passages that speak about the dream of Pilate’s wife, the bribe of silver given to Judas, the earthquakes and other phenomena that accompany the death of Jesus, the intervention of angels, etc. Senior argues that “all of these passages smack of popular storytelling, influenced as well by reflection on Old Testament themes.”¹¹¹ Again, Senior speaks about the possible style of the assumed material Matthew might have used and does not try to identify a source for that material.

Kilpatrick also argued for an oral tradition that Matthew might have used. He argued that, except for the genealogy, “it is impossible that Matthew had another written source for M materials as there is no continuity in the stories narrated by Matthew.”¹¹² He argued that M narratives contain details that lack a common character and unity (as in Mark and Q) and therefore denies the possibility that Matthew used a written source that existed before him.¹¹³ Instead, Kilpatrick contends that Matthew might have depended on oral traditions that were

¹¹⁰ Donald Senior, “Revisiting Matthew’s Special Materials in the Passion Narrative.” *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses*” *Commentarii de re Theologica et Canonica*/70, no. 4 (1994): 418.

¹¹¹ Ibid. Senior argues that some narratives in M materials are inspired by some passages in the Old Testament, like, the sale of Joseph for pieces of silver; Jeremiah and/or Ezekiel and the potter’s field; Ahitophel’s suicide after his betrayal of David; and the raising of the saints in Ezekiel and Daniel.

¹¹² Kilpatrick, *The Origins*, 51. However, Kilpatrick agrees that the Old Testament quotations are from the Hebrew Bible, which is a written source; but suggests that they were first provided by Matthew himself in the way it is found in the Gospel. See, pp. 51-52.

¹¹³ Ibid., 41.

already in existence, to which he made additions based on his records and memory.¹¹⁴ He also suggested that it is challenging to know what was from the Evangelist and what was not from him.¹¹⁵ However, the argument of Kilpatrick is not very strong as the lack of continuity can be attributed to another written source that Matthew might have used in which there was no continuity. While Kilpatrick's view sounds to be more reasonable—Matthew using written sources for materials common to Mark and Luke and oral tradition for developing M narratives, his view negates the theoretical possibility of Matthew using some written sources in developing M narratives. A discussion below on Matthew 27:52-53 will show that Matthew might have used a written source for that verse as he seems to be quoting from a poetical source. On the other hand, the view of Kilpatrick agrees with one of the arguments of this research that Matthew might have used oral traditions that were in existence. However, Kilpatrick, like others mentioned above, does not try to provide an identity to the source of this tradition other than insisting that it is oral in nature.

Also, Kilpatrick cannot justify his argument that there is no unity in M as the work of Plummer has shown that there is a careful employment of narrative plots in the M narratives through similar or contrasting events placed in the birth narratives in the beginning and in the passion narratives towards the end of the Gospel.¹¹⁶ Moreover, even if Kilpatrick is right, this view does not say anything more than what we already know—that Matthew used other sources that might be oral. Kilpatrick's discussion is more about the nature of the source, oral vs written, rather than trying to identify the source itself.

¹¹⁴ Kilpatrick, *The Origins*, 57-58.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ For more details, see the comments on the narrative passages in, Plummer, *Matthew*.

b. A Different Version of Q

Some scholars have suggested that Matthew might have used a different version or “full version” of Q from which he derived all or most of his special materials that are not found in Mark and Luke.¹¹⁷ They suggest that Mark, who wrote his Gospel first, got only a limited version of Q. However, this view does not hold much water as it assumes the existence of different versions of Q before the fall of Jerusalem and that the historian and researcher Luke would miss the existence of such important documents. Moreover, one may ask, if there were so many Q writers who were authors of core materials before Mark and Matthew, why can’t one accept that Matthew, the Apostle stands as a better candidate to be the author of an original document instead speculating about the existence of several unknown Q writers from whom the Apostle had to copy his material. Again, even if one accepts that there were different versions of Q, the argument does not try to identify who produced them.

c. A Source in Addition to Q and Mark

George Strecker argued that Matthew used other sources besides Mark and Q, which is called “M.” While M materials can be grouped into two categories—the Special discourse materials and the special narrative materials. He further classifies them into five groups, namely, Sermon on the Mount, Other Discourses, The Parables, The Apocalyptic Discourses, and the Special Narratives.¹¹⁸ He considers the first set to be a written source and the second one to be an oral tradition (birth stories, Petrine stories, the Passion, and the Resurrection stories, etc.). However, Strecker’s view does not throw any light on the topic of the source of M materials

¹¹⁷ For detailed work, see, George Strecker, *Minor Agreements* (Gottingen, Germany: Vandenhoeck, 1993).

¹¹⁸ For details, see the work of Strecker. Strecker, *Minor Agreements*.

other than what we already know—that Matthew had some other sources. His statement had more to do with the classification of M materials into two categories and then into some sub-categories instead of providing some new light on identifying the sources.

Koester shows that the words of Matthew 10:32 are remarkably similar to 2 Clement 3:2¹¹⁹ and, at the same time, are different from Matthew. Citing the similarities and differences between the two accounts, he argues that Clement is quoting from a document that is probably different from Matthew. Koester then argues for the possibility of the existence of such a document and suggests that Matthew might have used such a source based on which he made his document.¹²⁰ However, the argument overlooks the probability that it could be Clement who made minor changes to the words of Matthew. Hence, Koester is just speculating about the possibility of Matthew using another source based on a quotation from the writings of Clement.¹²¹

d. A Combination of Written and Oral Traditions

Some scholars have argued that M narratives represent a pre-written source that existed independently and was used by Matthew. It was Jewish-Christian, polemical toward the scribes and the Pharisees; and probably not as reliable as the other Synoptic sources (Mark, Q). He holds that the quotes on fulfillment themes could be a later work of the author after compiling the main body of the Gospel or could be from a collection of Old Testament prophecies that were believed

¹¹⁹ 2 Clement 3:2 reads: “Whosoever shall confess me before men, him will I confess before my Father. Matt 10:32 reads: “Whoever, then, acknowledges me before people, I will acknowledge before my Father in heaven (NET).

¹²⁰ Koester, *Ancient Christian Gospels*, 349-350.

¹²¹ The quote from clement can be dated to late second century or early third century.

to be messianic.¹²² Allen also argues for multiple sources from a Jewish background but does not try to identify them. In his famous work, most of the M materials are ascribed to a Palestinian source called “P” without further explanation of its identity.

However, Werner George Kummel argued against the possibility of multiple sources or another written source to which Matthew alone had access. He holds that M narratives must be from an oral tradition.¹²³ Again, it must be noted that while all these scholars try to make a case for an oral tradition or written tradition, they are referring to the nature of those sources, namely oral or written, instead of trying to identify the source itself from the Jewish sects or Matthean community that might have provided the source material. This is where an argument from coincidence can be made. The words of Luke in Acts 6:7 point to a possible source that came from the opposition camp. Luke records that, soon after the death and the Resurrection of Jesus, many priests became obedient to the faith and followers of Christ. Assuming that Matthew lived in Jerusalem, it is reasonable to think that some Jewish priests who converted to the Way brought a wealth of information that Matthew used while writing his Gospel account. Luke also mentions Joanna, the wife of the manager of the household of Herod, who was a follower and financial supporter of Jesus (Luke 8:3). It is possible that the details of the visit of the Magi to Herod, the gathering of the chief priests and scribes in his palace and the reaction of Herod after the Magi tricked him, were passed on to Matthew or his associates by Joanna who might have heard about the visit of the Magi from her husband. The words of Luke also indicate that Joanna was an

¹²² Allen, *Matthew*, Lix-xii.

¹²³ Werner George Kummel, *Introduction to the New Testament*, Revised Edition (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1973), 110.

active disciple and was one of the first witnesses and preachers of the Resurrection of Jesus (Luke 24:10).

D. A Summary of Sources Already Identified by Critical Scholars

Alfred Plummer does an excellent job of summarizing various possible sources suggested by Source critical scholars on M materials. He categorizes them into four groups without trying to identify them as written or oral records, thereby acknowledging the possibility of them being oral and or written. They are:

- (i) Collection of utterances by Matthew himself from the records he kept as an eyewitness, direct listener, and companion of Jesus Christ.
- (ii) Logia - which could be identified as hypothetical Q referred to by critical scholars.
- (iii) OT quotations which were a collection of Messianic quotes.
- (iv) Traditions current among first Christians (could include a family member of Jesus from whom some details of the birth narratives came).¹²⁴

Also, Mark can be identified as a fifth source if Markan priority is accepted. In addition to the four sources above and Mark, this research will make a case for the possibility of identifying a sixth source. This research will argue that some of the Jewish priests can be identified as a plausible source of information to Matthew for a large portion of narrative materials in M. A few scholars in the past have already made suggestions about such a possibility. However, more research needs to be done to support this argument. In the next session of this chapter, the author will review the scholarly opinions on the involvement of Jewish priests and scribes in the development of M materials.

¹²⁴ For a detailed discussion of these sources, see: Plummer, *Matthew*, xi. In this list, Plummer does not include Mark as a written source to Matthew. However, Plummer acknowledges that there are others who consider Mark (assumes Markan priority) and Luke (assumes Lukan priority) as possible sources used by Matthew. See, pp. xi-xviii.

8. A Review of Matthean Scholarship on the Role of Jewish Priests in the Development of M Materials¹⁰

i. Report of Jewish Priests Who Converted to the Way

New Testament scholars agree that the Gospel writers used various sources to develop their works. The reality of the existence of multiple sources and their use by Gospel writers is verified by Luke in the first two verses of his Gospel. Luke speaks about the accounts of “servants and eyewitnesses.” Luke refers to multiple accounts in existence. Most scholars see the phrase “servants and eyewitnesses” as referring to the same group of people and take them as referring to the Apostles.

This research will argue that the “eyewitnesses” included the Apostles and other people from other camps by showing that the stories narrated in many of the M narratives were not accessible to the Apostles and that other eyewitnesses probably made reports of those events. The Jewish priests who converted to Christianity might have become direct or indirect informers to Matthew about events that took place on their side. Through the five case studies of different M narratives in chapter three, this dissertation will show evidence of the involvement of Jewish priests in the events narrated by Matthew took place.

In Acts 6:7, Luke says, “The word of God continued to spread, the number of disciples in Jerusalem increased greatly, and a *large group of priests* (italics mine) became obedient to the faith” (NET Bible). The Greek text reads “Καὶ ὁ λόγος τοῦ θεοῦ ἤϋξανεν, καὶ ἐπληθύνετο ὁ ἀριθμὸς τῶν μαθητῶν ἐν Ἱερουσαλὴμ σφόδρα, πολὺς τε ὄχλος τῶν ἱερέων ὑπήκουον τῇ πίστει.” The use of the word ‘πολύς’ (many) with ‘ὄχλος’ (crowd) indicates a large or significant number as πολύς is used as an adjective preceding a noun to indicate the size of the crowd to be great or

large in number.¹²⁵ The number of these converts could have been a few thousand or a few hundred as we know from history that there were around 18000 priests or Levites in Jerusalem alone during the time of Jesus.¹²⁶ Even if one percent of them converted to the Way, that could have been around 180 Jewish priests who might have become Christians and brought some information from the side of the Jewish religious leaders.

Ernst Haenchen points out that there already existed tension between ordinary priests and chief priests during the first century Judaism due to economic imparity between them.¹²⁷ Such an imparity and tension could have helped the separation and conversion of a large number of Jewish priests to the new Way. It is reasonable to think that some of those priests who converted to Christianity after the Resurrection of Jesus lived in Jerusalem and became members of the Matthean community and probably provided some information that was available to them when they were priests in the Jerusalem temple and walked along with other priests who could share some closed-door information that was available to only priests and scribes. Such a possible exchange of information between the Jewish priests who converted to the Way and the Apostles, would explain the words of Matthew that speak about stories that are “still being discussed among the Jews” (Matt 28:15). This research considers that, since the disciples were not direct eyewitnesses to many of the incidents narrated in M, some of the Jewish priests that converted to the Way stand qualified as potential source of eye-witness information that was exclusive to the people in the opposing camp. It is possible that Matthew relied on the information he received

¹²⁵ BDAG, πολύς, 687, 1a, b.

¹²⁶ Ernst Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Commentary* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1971), 254.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 264.

from them to construct some of his special narrative materials. This aspect will be further discussed in chapter three.

ii. Suggestion of Critical Scholars on the Possible Involvement of Jewish Priests in the Development of Narratives

As mentioned above, Plummer and other scholars have listed four possible sources for Matthew's Gospel. They are Utterances collected by Matthew himself,¹²⁸ Logia or Q, Old Testament Scriptures, and a collection of Messianic Passages.¹²⁹ Priests and scribes find frequent mentions in Matthew. The Evangelist uses the phrase "high priests" twenty-five times and the title "scribe/s" twenty-two times, which is more than anyone else in the NT.¹³⁰ It is possible to consider that the details contained in some of the M narratives came from people who were eyewitnesses in the opposition camps as the disciples had no access to such data. Matthew got access to this data later, either after some in the opposing camp converted to the Way or even before their conversion due to the possible influence the Evangelist had in the community of priests and scribes due his likely background as a former priest and/or a scribe. Scholars have pointed out the possibility of Matthew belonging to the priestly clan of Levi.¹³¹ Connections could have also been possible because Matthew's location was Jerusalem and because his ministry was among Jews that included converts from the Jewish priests. Also, it has been

¹²⁸ There is a possibility that this document, put into writing at a later stage, could be referring to the Hebrew Gospel about which Papias mentioned.

¹²⁹ Plummer, *Matthew*, xi. Other scholars who have taken note of similar data and commented on those passages are: Allen, M.D. Goulder, David E. Orton, and David C. Sims. Their works are being discussed in this research.

¹³⁰ Morris, *Matthew*, 38.

¹³¹ W. F. Albright and C. S. Mann, *Matthew: Introduction, Translation, and Notes* (New York: Doubleday, 1971), CLXXVII-CLXXIX, CLXXXIV.

pointed out that Matthew wrote his Gospel targeting Jewish readers, whereas Mark and Luke targeted Graeco-Roman readers outside of Jerusalem.¹³² This could explain why Matthew decided to include some material that were relevant to the Jews while Mark and Luke decided to ignore them.

The suggestion to consider some of the Jewish priest to be a likely source of Matthew, is not an altogether new idea to critical Matthean scholarship. A few scholars have hinted at the possibility of some details in M narratives coming to Matthew from the Jewish priests. Stanley Toussaint pointed out several themes in Matthew that point to a Jewish connection to the Gospel.¹³³ Besides, some scholars have argued that the Gospel must have been written by someone who was thorough with the Jewish Scriptures and their traditions.¹³⁴ Howard W. Clarke¹³⁵ and Plummer¹³⁶ have gone a step further to make a simple suggestion that some of the unique details to the writer of Matthew's Gospel could have come from some of the Jewish priests. However, their suggestion still stands in need of further research.

¹³² Though Luke makes it clear that he wrote to a Greek recipient/s, no such details are found in Mark. However, a number of scholars argue that Mark was written with Latin and Greek readers in mind. Ezra P. Gould argued that "Mark was evidently written for Gentile readers, as it contains explanations of Hebrew terms and customs." See: Ezra P. Gould, *The Gospel According to St. Mark* (New York: Scribner and Sons, 1907), xvii. Tradition supports such view as Clement of Alexandria and Irenaeus mentioned that the Gospel was written in Rome when the church was going through persecution. See: Hooker, *Mark*, 7. William Lane makes three observations to argue that Mark wrote with gentile readers in Rome: 1. Mark uses Latin words in the Gospel. However, this argument is rejected by some who argue that Latin words were used in most parts of the Roman Empire. 2. Mark provides explanations of Aramaic and Hebrew terms, indicating that he wrote to a group of people who would need such explanations. 3. Mark's climax of the Gospel has a Roman centurion making a confession of Jesus's deity. For details see: Lane, *Mark*, 25; Culpepper, *Mark*, 26-29; and John R. Donahue and Daniel J. Harrington, *The Gospel of Mark* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 2002), 41-46.

¹³³ Stanley D. Toussaint, *Behold the King: A Study of Matthew* (Portland, OR: Multnomah Press, 1980), 15.

¹³⁴ Hill, *Matthew*, 41.

¹³⁵ Howard W. Clarke, *The Gospel of Matthew and Its Readers: A Historical Introduction to the First Gospel* (Birmingham: Indiana University Press, 2003), 226.

¹³⁶ Plummer, *Matthew*, 410-411.

Another scholar who suggested a possible connection to some of the Jewish priests as a source of Matthew's Special narratives is Louis A. Barbieri. While scholars agree that the Old Testament records and oral traditions that existed among early Christians were possible sources of Matthew's genealogy, Barbieri seems to have nailed it when he suggested that the temple records could have been a source for Matthew.¹³⁷ If Barbieri is right, it can be assumed that Matthew had access to the temple records through a priest or some priests who became a convert to the Way as recorded by Luke in Acts 6:7.

Brown points out that "there is considerable evidence that written genealogical records of the priestly families were kept in Jerusalem by referring to the claim of Josephus who boasts about his priestly descent, and names his ancestors six generations back and over a span of almost 200 years."¹³⁸ He supports his claim by referring to the public registers in Jerusalem.¹³⁹ If such records existed, Matthew could have accessed it through a priest who was still active in the temple. The records in Acts show that the early Christians continued to be active in the temple

¹³⁷ Louis A. Barbieri Jr., "Matthew," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: New Testament*, eds. John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck (Colorado Springs: Cook Communications, 1983), 13.

¹³⁸ *The Life of Flavius Josephus*, 1: 1-6. Josephus wrote, "The family from which I am derived is not an ignoble one, but hath descended all along from the priests; and as nobility among several people is of a different origin, so with us to be of the sacerdotal dignity, is an indication of the splendor of a family. Now, I am not only sprung from a sacerdotal family in general, but from the first of the twenty-four courses; and as among us there is not only a considerable difference between one family of each course and another, I am of the chief family of that first course also; nay, further, by my mother I am of the royal blood; for the children of Asamoneus, from whom that family was derived, had both the office of the high priesthood, and the dignity of a king, for a long time together. I will accordingly set down my progenitors in order. My grandfather's father was named Simon, with the addition of Psellus: he lived at the same time with that son of Simon the high priest, who first of all the high priests was named Hyrcanus. This Simon Psellus had nine sons, one of whom was Matthias, called Ephlias; he married the daughter of Jonathan the high priest; which Jonathan was the first of the sons of Asamoneus, who was high priest, and was the brother of Simon the high priest also. This Matthias had a son called Matthias Curtus, and that in the first year of the government of Hyrcanus: his son's name was Joseph, born in the ninth year of the reign of Alexandra: his son Matthias was born in the tenth year of the reign of Archelaus; as was I born to Matthias in the first year of the reign of Caius Caesar. I have three sons: Hyrcanus, the eldest, was born in the fourth year of the reign of Vespasian, as was Justus born in the seventh, and Agrippa in the ninth. Thus have I set down the genealogy of my family as I have found it described in the public records..."

¹³⁹ Brown, *Narratives*, 86.

and followed its religious practices even after becoming converts to Christianity. Plummer discusses the possibility of some details about events in the opposition camp coming through the Jewish priests while commenting on the source of the Roman guard passages in M.

Though many scholars, based on a large number of the OT citations (around fifty times) and allusions (around seventy times) to the OT passages found in M materials, argue that the Gospel was written with a Jewish audience in mind, from a Jewish worldview perspective, have avoided focusing on the possibility of a major contribution of Jewish priests or scribes in the composition of M narratives. The author of this research supports the view of Clarke and Plummer that, in all likelihood, one or more Jewish priests were directly or indirectly involved in providing some details on the basis of which Matthew constructed some of his narratives. Since not much work has been done on the role of Jewish priests in developing M narratives, there is a need for research into this area.

Though critical scholars have yet to make serious attempts to look deeper to identify Jewish priests as a possible source of M narratives, a notable amount of research has been made by some scholars to cast the reason for Jewish cultural influence on Matthew and his discourse materials. They did so by pointing to the possibility that Matthew was a former Jewish priest or scribe who left his profession to make a better living as a tax collector before he became a follower of Christ. This aspect needs further discussion as some of the Jewish apocalyptic influence flavors found in M materials, especially the discourse materials, can be attributed to Matthew's possible identity as a former Jewish priest or scribe.

iii. *Critical Scholarship on the Possibility of Identifying Matthew as a Former Jewish Priest or Scribe*

W.F. Albright and C.S. Mann suggested that “Matthew” and “Levi,” mentioned in the list of Apostles found in Mark and Luke, refer to the same individual. They argued that Matthew is the name of the Apostle and Levi is his tribe. According to this view, Matthew could have been a Levite priest who left the priesthood of his clan for a better living conditions as a tax collector.¹⁴⁰ Stonehouse argued that the partial background information about Matthew as a former tax collector is to bring awareness about his profession as a writer.¹⁴¹ R.T. France concedes that Matthew, the tax collector of Capernaum, a Galilean Jew, was possibly a former priest who was bitter against the Jewish leadership of Jerusalem due to the existence of the tension between the Galilean Jews and the Jerusalem Jews.¹⁴² Agreeing with the possibility that Matthew was a scribe by profession, Kilpatrick argues that, “to have reproduced the rabbinic coloring in the materials, he would have to be himself an expert in rabbinical lore. He alone mentions the Christian scribe with approval. If he held such a position, it would account for his assuming the task of writing a new Gospel for his community.”¹⁴³ This research affirms a similar view and argues that Matthew’s professional background alone can adequately account for the Jewish apocalyptic influence on M materials.

David Orton, while making an argument for Matthew being a scribe of the Jewish apocalyptic tradition by profession, points out that while not all scribes in the Qumran

¹⁴⁰ Albright and Mann, *Matthew*, CLXXVII-CLXXIX, CLXXXIV.

¹⁴¹ Ned B Stonehouse, *Origins of the Synoptic Gospels: Some Basic Questions* (Grand Rapids: WB Eerdmans, 1963), 20.

¹⁴² R.T. France, *Matthew: Evangelist & Teacher* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 1989), 72-73.

¹⁴³ Kilpatrick, *Origins*, 137.

community were from the priestly background, most of the scribes were from the priestly background.¹⁴⁴ Julius Wellhausen refers to Mishnah to argue that the Sanhedrin consisted of only scribes who came from various sects. They could be priests or non-priests, but they had to be a scribe to be considered for membership in the Sanhedrin.¹⁴⁵ If some of these arguments are true, that would help one explain the special connection that Matthew, a former scribe from a Levite family, possibly had with some Jewish priests to get closed-door information that was privy to the priests but is revealed by Matthew in his Gospel.¹⁴⁶

Viljoen Francois made an interesting argument to identify Matthew as a scribe based on the social setting found in some of the narratives in Matthew. He suggested that “the conflicts in the first Gospel between good scribes and bad scribes should be credited to a local scenario. He proposed that “Matthew should be regarded as a scribe who was in conflict with other scribes (teachers of the Law) in a village community.”¹⁴⁷ A detailed discussion will be made below to cement further the argument that Matthew was probably a former Jewish scribe who was trained to be a scribe of the kingdom of heaven after he became a disciple of Jesus.

¹⁴⁴ David E. Orton, *The Understanding Scribe: Matthew and the Apocalyptic Ideal* (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic Press, 1989), 125.

¹⁴⁵ Julius Wellhausen, *The Pharisees and the Sadducees: An Examination of Internal Jewish history* (Macon, Georgia: Mercer University Press, 2001), 26. According to Wellhausen, even the High Priest, who chaired the Sanhedrin had to be a scribe by training so that he could fulfill the role of an educated person who could read and write.

¹⁴⁶ This argument will be supported by the findings of the case studies in chapter three of this dissertation.

¹⁴⁷ Francois Viljoen, “The Matthean Community within a Jewish Religious Society,” *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 72 (4), a 3418, 6.

9. A Review of Matthean Scholarship on the Role of Scribes in the Development of M Materials

A good amount of research has been done on the possible involvement of a scribe or scribes in developing M materials. Matthean scholars have pointed out two possibilities that make a case for a rabbinical or scribal involvement in the compilation of M materials. The first one is that Matthew himself was a rabbi¹⁴⁸ or a scribe who stands in the apocalyptic tradition of scribes in Jewish literature.¹⁴⁹ One can be quick to see that this idea is similar to the argument mentioned above that Matthew was possibly a former priest. The second one is that other scribe/s or rabbi/s assisted Matthew in developing the M materials. This research will try to summarize the scholarly views representing these two views but argue that the influence could be attributed to Matthew's professional identity as a scribe. Orton has pointed to the interpretive style of Matthean materials and the organization of the narrative materials at the disposal of the Evangelist to argue that Matthew the Apostle was the author of the Gospel and that he had sympathy and concern for scribes.¹⁵⁰ B.J. Syiemlieh agrees with this position as he points out that Matthew is the only Evangelist who mentions about a scribe who volunteered to follow Jesus wherever he goes (18:19).¹⁵¹ The sympathy expressed towards the scribe in M seems to be due to the affinity Matthew had for some of his own peers.

¹⁴⁸ There are some arguments forwarded by some scholars that the use of the title rabbi in New Testament is an anachronism as it came to popular use only after the destruction of the Jerusalem temple in AD 70, and that the title was unknown during the time of Jesus. However, Albright and Mann refute such a minimalist view by showing that the term is applied to Jesus no fewer than fourteen times in the Gospels and that there were other rabbis that were highly regarded during the time of NT writings. See, Albright and Mann, *Matthew*, CXXXIX.

¹⁴⁹ For a detailed discussion of the apocalyptic concept of Jewish scribes, see: Orton, *The Understanding Scribe*, 39-136.

¹⁵⁰ Orton, *The Understanding Scribe*, 18.

¹⁵¹ B.J. Syiemlieh, "Portrait of a Christian Scribe (Matthew 13:52)." *The Asia journal of theology*. 20, no. 1 (2006): 63.

10. A Review of the Scholarly Views on Identifying Matthew as a Converted Rabbi or Scribe

As shown above, critical scholars have tried to see a connection between the profession of Matthew, a learned man before he became a disciple of Jesus, and his role among the Apostles after his conversion. Citing Matthew's fluency in Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek; and the deep Jewish cultural and theological views reflected in the Gospel, it is argued that "Such a Gospel could have been written only by someone well versed by personal experience in the culture and concerns of rabbinic Judaism, who was possibly a converted rabbi."¹⁵²

Ben Witherington shows the scribal character of Matthean writings and argues that the Evangelist be called "the First (Christian) Scribe."¹⁵³ However, Witherington does not consider Matthew the Apostle to be the author of the Gospel as he suggests that the work was probably done by "later Christian scribes."¹⁵⁴ On the other hand, not all scholars agree on the attitude of the author of the Gospel towards scribes as the author pictures them in a bad light and a good light in the same account. It is possible that Matthew was a convert from a scribal background and was unhappy about the clan that opposed him but was still appreciative of the good works the good scribes did and saw a significant role for them in the church also (Matt 13:52).¹⁵⁵

¹⁵² France, *Matthew: Evangelist & Teacher*, 69.

¹⁵³ Ben Witherington III, *Matthew* (Macon, Georgia: Smyth & Helwys Publishing, 2006), 8.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 6.

¹⁵⁵ Kim Paffenroth, "Scribes," in *Eerdmans dictionary of the Bible*, eds. D. N. Freedman, A. C. Myers, & A. B. Beck (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 2000), 1173. Paffenroth says "Matthew's depiction of the scribes is at once the most negative and the most positive in the NT. On the one hand, probably due to the opposition his own community was experiencing from Jewish officials, Matthew views the Jewish scribes as corrupt and false, having Jesus attack them with the refrain, "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!" (Matt. 23). But while he may view the current interpreters of the law as misguided (Matt. 23:16), Matthew still accepts their legitimacy and authority (vv. 2–3). Also, Matthew does not believe that Jesus has come to abolish the old laws and institutions, but rather to fulfill and complete them, giving them their proper authority and place (Matt. 5:17). Matthew therefore believes that there will still be scribes in the new Christian community, and they will continue their function of

Hill holds a similar view when he says that “the writer of Matthew is regarded as being a Jewish Christian who also had at his disposal rabbinic knowledge.”¹⁵⁶ Goulder pointed to the consistent patterns in redactional works of Matthew in the Special materials to argue for a possible sympathetic approach to the scribes to argue that Matthew was probably a converted scribe.¹⁵⁷ Goulder makes a comparison of Markan references to scribes and then surveys the Matthean passages on scribes to argue that Matthew, as opposed to Mark, is very sympathetic to the scribes in his plain “omission or change of their name in two-thirds of the hostile Markan references.”¹⁵⁸ Hence, it is argued that the positive attitude towards scribes in Matthew is due to his own identity as a converted scribe who still is lenient to his professional clan.

Critical scholars have paid attention to other passages in M materials to see rabbinic connections in their authorship. Frederick Dale Bruner sees a rabbinic connection or thought or influence in referring to the work of the Holy Spirit recorded by the evangelist during the birth of Jesus Christ. He argues that the Matthean narrative on the birth of the Messiah has similarities to the work of the Holy Spirit in the creation passage in Genesis.¹⁵⁹ While discussing the fulfillment

making the past traditions relevant and alive to believers, preserving them as precious treasures (Matt. 13:52; cf. 23:34).

¹⁵⁶ Hill, *Matthew*, 40.

¹⁵⁷ Goulder. *Midrash and Lection in Matthew*, 5.

¹⁵⁸ Goulder argues out of the twenty-one references to “scribes” in Mark, nineteen of them are hostile (see p.13). Of the nineteen hostile references, six are retained by Matthew. They are: 9:3, 15:1, 16:21, 20:18, 26:57, and 27:41. Another six are dropped, by Matthew. A different six are glossed or altered by Matthew. Goulder argues that, “Each omission or gloss either lessen the blackness of the scribal image, or contrasts their scribes with (presumably) ours.” *Ibid.*, 13-15.

¹⁵⁹ Frederick Dale Bruner, *The Christbook: A Historical/Theological Commentary, Matthew 1-12* (Waco, TX: Word Books: 1987), 20-21.

theme of Matthew, Leopold Sabourin also suggested that the circle of scribes might have influenced Matthew in picking that theme as the main theme for his account.¹⁶⁰

Brown holds that Matthew was a former scribe from the sect of Pharisees. He showed that “the Evangelist seems to have had good control of Hebrew, was a Greek-speaking Jewish Christian with a good command over the details of the Law (5:17-18), held respect for the authority of the scribes and the Pharisees (23:2), and at the same time maintained a fierce hostility toward scribes and Pharisees who were opposed to Jesus.”¹⁶¹ Brown argued that the above-mentioned skills and characteristics of the Evangelist displayed in his narratives would be explicable only if he was a scribe of the Pharisee party who had come to believe in Jesus.¹⁶²

There is a common agreement among scholars that Matthew 13:52 is a self-attestation of the author.¹⁶³ Matthew 13:52 in Greek reads “Διὰ τοῦτο πᾶς γραμματεὺς μαθητευθεὶς τῆ βασιλείᾳ τῶν οὐρανῶν ὁμοίως ἐστὶν ἀνθρώπῳ οἰκοδεσπότη ὅστις ἐκβάλλει ἐκ τοῦ θησαυροῦ αὐτοῦ καινὰ καὶ παλαιά.” The author of the Gospel seems to have used a wordplay as the word ‘μαθητευθεὶς’ is similar to the name of the author (Μαθθαῖος). Many scholars, for valid reasons, contend that the author presents himself as a good example of the scribe mentioned in Matt 13:52.

Brown also agrees with this view when he points to the possibility that Jesus’ prediction of praise-worthy role of the scribe “who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven,” in Matt 13:52 may be an autobiographical” statement added by the Evangelist who identified himself as

¹⁶⁰ Sabourin, *Matthew*, 45.

¹⁶¹ Brown, *Narratives*, 46.

¹⁶² Ibid.

¹⁶³ Brown, 46.

a former scribe by training.¹⁶⁴ Orton also agrees with this view when he says that the verse is a “cryptic signature alluding to the author or his (scribal) community.”¹⁶⁵ Orton points out to the possibility that the word ‘μαθητευθεις’ in 13:52 can be seen as a signature of Μαθθαῖος, as similar signature patterns are found in John—the beloved disciple, and in Mark—the enigmatic young man.¹⁶⁶ Critical scholars who agree with John’s signature and Mark’s signature in their Gospel accounts, see no problem in seeing Matt 13:52 in the same category.¹⁶⁷

While ‘μαθητες’ is a common word used by all Gospel writers (261 times), it may be noted that the verb ‘μαθητευθεις’ is used only four times in the entire New Testament, and three of them are in Matthew (13:52; 27:57; 28:19) and one is in Acts (14:21). It is possible that Matthew chose to use the form to insert his name as a trained scribe in his literary piece. The only other use of the term by Luke in Acts 14:21 (μαθητευθεις) could be ascribed to the influence of Matthean use in oral or written tradition that existed before Acts was written.¹⁶⁸ Matthew seems to have picked the word ‘μαθητευθεις’ intentionally as a signature of his identity and also to affirm his time with Jesus as a learner who puts his time and effort to receive

¹⁶⁴ Brown, *Narratives*, 46.

¹⁶⁵ Orton, *The Understanding Scribe*, 138.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 165.

¹⁶⁷ References in Mark 14:51-52 and John 20:4 are considered to be auto-biographical signatures of authors. John does not name the “other disciple” who was with Peter. Similarly, Mark, in a passage that is unique to him (14:51-52), do not mention the name of the young man. A number of scholars, however, argue that the passage in in Mark 14:51-52 is not auto-biographical. To see arguments in favor and against the view, see: Hendricksen, *Matthew*, 599-602. One cannot be sure if authors would make their name obscure in ancient writings. However, it could be seen as a possible pattern in the canonical Gospels.

¹⁶⁸ TDNT, “μαθητεύω,” 1a-c; (The root word indicates an intentional commitment by a person to use the mind and experience to learn something from a master. The relationship is of “a direct dependence that cannot be dissolved” and could be intellectual in nature even when the disciple is not physically present with the master. For a detailed explanation of the use of the word in NT, see TDNT, 441-461.

intellectual knowledge and thereby establish an inseparable relationship with Jesus to whom he has direct access.

Anthony J. Saldarini argues that in 13:52, the Evangelist is probably speaking about Christian scribes in his community.¹⁶⁹ John Markley also argues that the scribe in 13:52 refers to the Matthean community of disciples.¹⁷⁰ He points out that the apocalyptic tradition of Enoch and Ezekiel could have influenced Matthean understanding of Jesus's disciples being trained as scribes. To support his argument, Markley cites the examples of I Enoch 1:2, which speaks about Enoch as a man whose eyes are opened, to whom vision and words are given and who understands what he saw and heard, and Ezekiel 40:4, 15-16 that speak about seeing and hearing what God is revealing and then fixing the heart to understand the things revealed.¹⁷¹ However, the arguments of Saldarini and Markley does not seem to come from the text as the mention of the scribe and the pronouns used in the same verse to refer to the scribe, are all in singular, indicating that the author was referring to a specific individual in 13:52 and not to a community of scribes. However, the possibility of a team of scribes who converted from Judaism to the Way working with Matthew as a team in developing the Gospel According to Matthew, cannot be ruled out as a possible scenario.

The role of scribes, as described in the Bible, also points to some connection with the role of Matthew as a tax collector before he became a disciple of Jesus. Aaron M. Gale shows that, in

¹⁶⁹ Anthony J. Saldarini, *Pharisees, Scribes, and Sadducees in Palestinian Society* (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans, 1988), 57.

¹⁷⁰ John Markley, *Peter - Apocalyptic Seer: The Influence of the Apocalyptic Genre on Matthew's portrayal of Peter* (Tubingen, Germany: Mohr Siebeck, 2013), 179-180.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 172-173, 179. Markley shows that the knowledge and understanding the disciples are given are exclusive in nature as it relates to the kingdom of heaven about which they have some new revelation that were not revealed to the prophets who came before them.

the Hebrew Bible, the office of scribe is connected to finance and administration and argues that during the time of the New Testament, the title “scribe” was used to refer to the secretary of the council. Gale cites Acts 19:35 to show that the title is used to refer to the town clerk.¹⁷² He also contends that the scribes slowly became interpreters of the Scripture and later on evolved into rabbis and as the priests focused on the rituals of the temple, the scribes focused on the other pillar of their religion—which is the Torah.¹⁷³ Gale further contends that Matthew or the Matthean community of disciples and scribes stand in the line of prophets and scribes in the past as recipient of exclusive knowledge of mysteries so that they would preach the mysteries of the kingdom to the future generations.¹⁷⁴

The discussion above has shown that Matthew could have been a priest and or a scribe before he became a tax collector. He probably continued to practice his scribal skills after he became a disciple of Jesus by taking notes. This research, based on the discussion above, considers the mention of ‘μαθητευθεις’ in Matt 13:52 to be an autobiographical signature of Matthew, who identified himself as a scribe trained for the eschatological kingdom of heaven. If Matthew was indeed a former Jewish priest and scribe, the Jewish apocalyptic influence in M dialogues, discussed in detail below, can be attributed to Matthew’s professional background alone.

¹⁷² Aaron M. Gale, *Redefining Ancient Borders: The Jewish Scribal Framework of Matthew’s Gospel* (New York: T&T Clark, 2005), 88.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, 89.

¹⁷⁴ Markley, *Peter - Apocalyptic Seer*, 80.

11. A Review of Rabbinic Influence on M Materials

i. *Language and Style*

Dibelius has pointed out that rabbinic influence was popular before and during the time of Jesus and that the way the Evangelist tells stories and parables shows a clear effect of the rabbinic pattern.¹⁷⁵ Similarly, Gale has argued that the formation of the rabbinic style of communication was in development since a few centuries before the time of the New Testament writers. Gale contends that “The rabbinic texts represent teachings that were in existence centuries before they were formally recorded ... The New Testament writers merely used this existing compendium of Jewish knowledge and incorporated it into their own texts.”¹⁷⁶ However, Gale seems to make a biased comment when he suggests that Matthew used the rabbinic teachings contemporary to his times and incorporated them into his Gospel; and contends that the story of the ‘Virgin birth’ is one of such stories incorporated from rabbinic traditions.¹⁷⁷ However, Gale does not explain why the story of the Virgin birth cannot be based on the story told by Mary, the mother of Jesus, especially since we have information about the Jewish community of that time was aware of it during the public ministry of Jesus.

Based on the way the Evangelist has written his account, Goulder has pointed out that the use of imagination, rhythm, and language point to the possibility of the Evangelist being influenced by the style of writings found in Midrash.¹⁷⁸ According to Goulder’s view, what we have in the Gospel According to Matthew may not be bare facts but a Gospel account with an

¹⁷⁵ For a detailed discussion, see: Dibelius, *From Tradition to Gospel*, 133-151.

¹⁷⁶ Gale, *Redefining Ancient Borders*, 8-9, 12.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 9-10.

¹⁷⁸ Goulder, *Midrash and Lection in Matthew*, 6-7.

added commentary that incorporates fulfillment comments and quotations as explanations. That means Matthew was not just writing down facts as he saw or heard them but was adding his own interpretations and explanations to them. In other words, he was putting flesh and blood on the structural bones of facts. Differing from Goulder's opinion, Richard A. Burridge argued that the Matthean account should be seen as an ancient biography and showed enough evidence to prove that the genre is similar to Graeco-Roman ancient biographies.¹⁷⁹ Burridge's view seems to be on reasonable grounds due to the biographical details provided in the Gospel.

Also, considerable attention has been given to the style of Matthean materials that show the possible involvement of a highly trained scribe. Luz says that the Evangelist employs a special skill in working with signals and anticipations to make one hope for what is to come by expressing the meaning of the whole context in advance and sensitizing his readers to what will be told later.¹⁸⁰ Goulder argued that "Matthew shows himself to be a Targumist in small ways and large by carefully choosing the textual form he is going to cite, and by including references to the Targum and thereby combines one scripture with another as he writes his own interpretation into Scripture."¹⁸¹ One has to agree with the views of Goulder and Luz as it is evident that Matthew used Old Testament passages to construct the fulfillment passages as a

¹⁷⁹ Burridge counters the argument of Form critics that the Gospels are non-biographical. Burridge compares the genre of Matthew to argue that it belongs, not to modern biographies, but to ancient Greco-Roman biographies. For a summary of Burridge's arguments, see: Daniel M. Gurtner, Joel Willitts, and Richard A. Burridge, eds. *Jesus, Matthew's Gospel and Early Christianity: Studies in Memory of Graham N. Stanton* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2013), 5-22. Accessed July 10, 2023. ProQuest Ebook Central.

¹⁸⁰ Ulrich Luz, *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus: Teilband Mt 1-7* (Zurich: Benziger Verlag, 1983), 23. Luz wrote, "Eine besondere Kunst des Matthäus besteht im Arbeiten mit - Signalene und Antizipationen, die Kommendes vorwegnehmen, den Sinn des ganzen Zusammenhangs vorweg andeuten und den Leser für später Erzähltes sensibilisieren."

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 128.

commentary or explanation throughout his account. However, the comments should probably be limited to the fulfillment passages and minor editorial comments in some other passages.

ii. Worldview

The worldview reflected in the Gospel According to Matthew is shown to be similar to the worldview held by rabbis of that time. While some similarities can be found in any New Testament writings to rabbinical writings due to the Jewish background of all New Testament writers who addressed Jesus as “Rabbi,” Keener has pointed out that the resemblance of the rabbinic worldview in Matthean writings can be found to be stronger than in any of the other New Testament writings.¹⁸² Orton points out that Matthew held a worldview in which he saw himself as a scribe in the apocalyptic tradition who had a divinely given authority based on revelation and inspiration.¹⁸³ This research has already discussed the self-identity of Matthew, who in all likelihood, saw himself as a scribe trained for the kingdom of heaven.

Similarities have been shown to exist between the beliefs and practices of the Qumran community and the Matthean community. While agreeing that such similarities do exist, Gundry points to a major difference between the worldview of the hermeneutics seen in the Qumran writings and the Matthean writings. According to Gundry, the Qumran community saw themselves in the process of fulfillment, whereas the Evangelist in Matthean narratives believed that prophecies had already reached fulfillment.¹⁸⁴ Therefore, despite the similarity, Matthean writings seems to maintain their own literary uniqueness with respect to the worldview that is affirmed by them.

¹⁸² Keener, *Matthew*, 33.

¹⁸³ Orton, *The Understanding Scribe*, 168.

¹⁸⁴ Gundry, *The Use of the Old Testament in St. Matthew's Gospel*, 205.

However, there are other points where Matthew seems to stand in continuation with the apocalyptic tradition of the Qumran community and the apocalyptic tradition that pre-dates the Qumran community. The author of this dissertation will show in the session below that Matthew was influenced by the Jewish apocalyptic concept of ‘scribe’ and that he seems to have considered himself to be a ‘scribe’ standing in the tradition of other apocalyptic scribes.

iii. Formulas

Scholars have drawn attention to the frequency of ‘number formulas’ used in the Gospel according to Matthew to show a rabbinic influence that can be found behind such passages. Luz has pointed out that Matthean language, in general is “formulaic to a high degree” and that there are numerous phrases or single words that are repeated.¹⁸⁵ Albright and Mann argue that Matthew uses a rabbinic pattern of using number formulas in the Jewish oral tradition as found in Proverbs, something faithfully followed by Matthew. Some of the examples are:

Two demoniacs in 8:28, two blind man in 9:27, 20:30, two false witnesses in 26:60, three temptations in 4:1-11, three examples of righteousness in 6:1-18, three prohibitions in 6:19-7:6, three injunctions in 7:7-20, three healings together in 8:1-15, three miracles demonstrating the authority of Jesus in 8:23-9:8, another three restorations in 9:18-34, threefold fear nots in 10:26, 28, 31, and a threefold answer to questions on fasting, interwoven with three complaints of the Pharisees in 9:1-17, warnings against three types of persons unworthy of Jesus in 10:37-37, three sayings about little ones in 18:6, 10, 14, three parables on sowing in 18:1-32), three warnings 23:43-25:30), and three prophetic parables (21: 28-22:14).¹⁸⁶

Matthew’s style of quoting Old Testament passages to connect to events in the life of Jesus is in line with the style of first-century Jewish hermeneutics and is indebted to the approaches used by scholars in the Qumran community. O. Lamar Cope argues that Matthew

¹⁸⁵ Luz, *Teliband 1-7*, 18. Luz’s original comment is: “Die matthäische Sprache ist in hohem Maße formelhaft. Es gibt zahlreiche Wendungen oder einzelne Wörter, die sich wiederholen.”

¹⁸⁶ Albright and Mann, *Matthew*, Lvii-Lviii. A more detailed list can be found in these pages.

took the traditions that were already existing among the Jewish sect about Messiah and applied them to the events in the life of Jesus and organized the materials in his possession to create a Gospel that is innovative in its organization of materials.¹⁸⁷ Orton suggests that Matthew “is not innovative in his narration, but is creative in his redaction.”¹⁸⁸ As a scribe well-versed in Hebrew and Greek, Matthew seems to have used the LXX and the MT when he quotes and also probably used other varying textual readings.¹⁸⁹ Orton’s view assumes that Matthew did not invent his stories but added flavor to his details.

Grant has pointed out two critical aspects of the Matthean language. He shows that out of the 1690 vocabularies used by Matthew, 112 are unique to him, and out of those unique ones, seventy-six of them can be found in the LXX.¹⁹⁰ He also argues that the Evangelist has rabbinic influence in the manner in which he portrays Jesus through the use of the fulfillment theme.¹⁹¹ Grant shows that though Matthew depended on the LXX, he maintained his unique style in the wording of his Gospel account.

*iv. Repeated and Favorable Mentions of ‘Scribes’ as Opposed to Unfavorable
Markan Account*

Orton has done a good study to discuss the treatment of ‘scribes,’ or at least some scribes, in a better light, by Matthew, as he surveys all twenty-two references to scribes in Matthew. He also shows that the words of Matthew that speak about the likening of scribes with the Pharisees,

¹⁸⁷ Cope, *Matthew*, 125.

¹⁸⁸ Orton, *The Understanding Scribe*, 169.

¹⁸⁹ Gundry, *The Use of the Old Testament in St. Matthew’s Gospel*, 89. Gundry shows that the formula citations range from the purely Septuagint to the wholly non-Septuagint, including mixed-text form.

¹⁹⁰ Grant, *A Historical Introduction to the New Testament*, 128.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 129.

priests, and elders are due to Markan influence.¹⁹² He argues that in M materials, the scribes perse never stand alone as opponents to Jesus. Still, “they are tainted by the company they keep and not on their own account.”¹⁹³ Orton seems to make a sound argument based on a thorough discussion of the verses in Matthew speaking about scribes.

Orton goes on to differentiate between two kinds of scribes. The first group belongs to the Pharisaic group and is shown in a negative light by Matthew,¹⁹⁴ while the second group of independent scribes is cast in a positive light by Matthew. Orton argues that it is the Pharisaic scribes that are attacked in the Matthean writings.¹⁹⁵ Orton also shows that Matthew omits the term “scribe” eleven times from Markan materials as he was probably embarrassed by the term.¹⁹⁶ In a similar manner, J. Andrew Overman also shows that there are some positive comments about scribes in Matthew. At the same time, there are also mentions of some good and bad scribes ‘their scribes’ in 7:28, ‘sent scribes’ in 23:24, and ‘scribe trained for the kingdom of heaven’ in 13:52. He concludes that the office and functions of the scribe were developing in Matthew’s setting as there were good scribes and bad scribes. The scribes of the kingdom are shown to be parallel to the scribes of the Pharisees that lead people astray from the kingdom of

¹⁹² Michael J. Cook, *Mark’s Treatment of the Jewish Leaders* (Leiden, Netherlands: E.J. Brill, 1978), 21. Cook argues that Matthew is fully dependent on the use of ‘scribe’ and also seems to be perplexed by the use as there is a confusion between the terms ‘Pharisees’ and ‘scribes. Though Cook claims that Matthew is dependent on Mark, Mark himself is not sure about the difference between the two as both the groups are identical in Mark’s narratives.

¹⁹³ Orton, *The Understanding Scribe*, 28.

¹⁹⁴ As discussed above, Francois discuss the possibility that Matthew was a scribe in a village setting where he was in conflict with other scribes in his own village but was respectful to other noble scribes elsewhere. See: Viljoen, *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies*, 6.

¹⁹⁵ Orton, 27.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 29.

God.¹⁹⁷ Similarly, Matthew 23:2-3 is shown as an example to suggest that scribes are placed in a respectable light since Jesus is quoted praising scribes—“The scribes and Pharisees sit on Moses’ seat; therefore, do whatever they teach you and follow it...” Gale argues that Matthew acknowledges the authoritative and scholarly nature of scribes and edits the text of Mark by omitting hard words about them to soften the image of scribes.¹⁹⁸ Orton also suggests that Matthew tries to picture views of two kinds of scribes—the one belonging to the Pharisaic group that is opposed to Jesus, and the other ones identified as rightful interpreters of the Law and are compared to Jesus who stands superior to them.¹⁹⁹

Matthew also intentionally edited his materials to show scribes in a better light as opposed to Pharisees and chief priests, who are frequently shown to be united in their opposition to Jesus. Saldarini shows that Matthew has “the chief priests and scribes” as a united team only three times (2:3; 20:18; 21:15) and “the chief priests, scribes, and elders” as a united team only one time (16:21) as opposed to several such occurrences in Mark.²⁰⁰ Out of these four cases in which scribes are shown to be in another company, the first one (2:3) is a neutral case where they are present with the rest of the Sanhedrin at the King’s court in response to King Herod’s invitation. Moreover, the scribes are shown to be in a respectable position in society as they know about the prophecies about the place where Messiah would be born. However, Orton has suggested that Matthew identifies scribes here as forces aligned with the evil party of Herod.²⁰¹

¹⁹⁷ J. Andrew Overman, *Matthew’s Gospel and Formative Judaism: The Social World of the Matthean Community* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1955), 117.

¹⁹⁸ Gale, *Redefining Ancient Borders*, 99.

¹⁹⁹ Orton, *The Understanding Scribe*, 35.

²⁰⁰ Saldarini, *Pharisees, Scribes, and Sadducees*, 57.

²⁰¹ Orton, 30.

However, such a conclusion comes from reading into the text as they are just responding to a query from the king and the Magi.

The second one (20:18) is a prediction made by Jesus about the betrayal and condemnation to death by the chief priests and scribes. In this case, the primary role is ascribed to the chief priests, as they are mentioned first, while the scribes play a supportive role in the process of passing a judgement on Jesus. However, when the actual plot takes place (26:3), Matthew probably omitted the scribes from the group to avoid embarrassment to his clan or because the scribes were actually not a party in the plot.

In the third case (21:15), the chief priests and scribes are shown to be indignant at Jesus when people shout “Hosanna to the Son of David” in the temple area. It seems as if the scribes in Jerusalem chose to side with the powers of the day in casting their votes with the Jewish chief priests and against Jesus. Similarly, the only time Matthew has “the elders, chief priests, and scribes” together (16:21), they are shown to be united in their stand against Jesus, who predicts about his trial and death in Jerusalem.

Matthew mentions “scribes” alone in five places (7:29; 8:19; 9:3; 13:52; 17:10). The first one (7:29) shows Jesus as a better teacher who teaches with authority compared to the scribes. There is nothing necessarily derogatory in the comment about scribes here other than the purpose of comparison. The second reference is in 8:19, where a scribe comes and expresses his desire to follow Jesus. Jesus tells about his tough living condition. Matthew does not say if the scribe did follow Jesus or not after hearing his words. One can only see that there are good scribes or teachers who would accept Jesus’s teaching and would commit to follow him as their teacher. In that sense, Jesus is leading a team of scribes. The third mention of “scribes” (9:3) is interesting. Jesus returns to his own town and publicly forgives a paralyzed man. The scribes who heard him

say this think in their heart, “this fellow is blaspheming.” In verse 4, Matthew says that Jesus knew their thoughts, questioned them, and went to heal the man, and the crowd responded in awe. Matthew does not say anything negative about the scribes after the healing takes place. Instead, he seems to put the scribes along with the crowd that is in awe at Jesus’s words and deeds.

The fourth mention of “scribes” is worth paying extra attention to as it is unique to Matthew. In 13:52, Matthew has Jesus saying, “Therefore every teacher of the law who has become a disciple in the kingdom of heaven is like the owner of a house who brings out of his storeroom new treasures as well as old.” Saldarini argues that the ‘scribe’ mentioned here is put in a positive light as Jesus speaks positively about him as someone who has accepted to follow him as a disciple.²⁰² Matthew makes the following things clear to his readers.²⁰³ First of all, the scribe in the verse is a good scribe who was willing to humble himself to leave his status as a teacher of the Law and become a disciple of Jesus, which involved a stepping down of the social status in those days. Second, now he has become a scribe of the kingdom of heaven. Third, he has old and new treasures in his storehouses. It is possible that the phrase “the old and new treasures” could be referring to some source materials or insights that Matthew had but, other Gospel writers possibly did not have.²⁰⁴

The fifth and last reference of Matthew to “scribes” as a group standing alone is in 17:10. In fact, the scribes are not actively involved in this conversation between Jesus and his disciples.

²⁰² Saldarini, *Pharisees, Scribes, and Sadducees*, 159.

²⁰³ Orton, *The Understanding Scribe*, 36.

²⁰⁴ Lenski comments: “Things new and Old” are by no means only new and old comparisons from nature and the life of man but truths, some new, not known and taught before, others old, long known and often taught, yet the former resting on the latter, hence the two are mentioned in this order.” See: R.C.H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Matthew’s Gospel* (Minneapolis, MN: 1964), 551.

The disciples asked Jesus a question about the opinion of the scribes about the expected second coming of Elijah. The scribes are not present in the scene. Jesus actually validates the claims of scribes, and hence Matthew has shown to the readers that the scribes were right in their interpretation of scriptures on the prophecies about Elijah.

Moreover, Matthew presents the good scribes and bad scribes contrasted in chapter 23. In 23:27-32 Jesus rebukes those scribes who have aligned with the Pharisees in their interpretation of the Law and their pattern of living. However, in 23:34, Matthew presents good scribes as he records a prediction made by Jesus that mentions scribes and prophets being active in ministry. According to Matthew, Jesus also sends scribes along with prophets and sages. Saldarini argues that Matthew sees the leadership of the church as consisting of prophets, sages, and scribes; and that the office of scribe remains an important one during the time of Matthew.²⁰⁵

Similarly, Matthew is shown to have dropped the role of scribes in passion narratives. Saldarini argues that Matthew drops scribes from the passion narratives to show that the scribes were focused on the matters of teaching and, therefore, less involved in politics; and that they were not crying for the blood of Jesus as the chief priests and the elders were.²⁰⁶ The editorial work of Matthew seems to be very intentional to guard scribes against negative opinion in the minds of his readers as he drops the mention of scribes in the passion narratives and adds Pharisees to the chief priests as active opponents of Jesus. Saldarini concludes that “the scribes are omitted, and the Pharisees are added to the passages in which there is a confrontation with Jesus. The Pharisees are seen by Matthew as more active opponents of Jesus than the scribes.”²⁰⁷

²⁰⁵ Saldarini, *Pharisees, Scribes, and Sadducees*, 160.

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 160-161.

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

Orton looks at the eleven omissions of ‘scribes’ from Q in Matthean account which speaks about the scribes opposed to Jesus. According to Orton, it is an intentional editorial work by Matthew, who tried to “exculpate the scribes from complicity.”²⁰⁸ The following aspects are important in understanding the kind of scribal influence reflected in M materials:

a. Matthew was Assisted by Other Scribes or Rabbis

Even if Matthew was not a former rabbi or a former scribe before he started following Jesus, Earlie Ellis has pointed out that the writings of Matthew exhibit characteristics of rabbinic or scribal influence in various ways, possibly by a team of rabbis led by a leader of the project. Based on Matt 13:52 and 23:34, which speak about the possible involvement of co-workers or contributors that included prophets, wise men, and teachers of righteousness, Ellis argues that a Qumran tradition of wise men working together on a literary project can be discerned in the development of Matthean writings.²⁰⁹ Ellis cites the example of Qumran communities, where each group was led by a charismatic leader who was assisted by wise men who could teach.²¹⁰

Luz points out the possibility of the existence of Christian scribes during the time of Jesus or when writing the Gospel. He argues that the mention of “their scribes” in 7:29 without mentioning “their Pharisees,” anywhere in the Gospel, is an indication that there were scribes who were part of both sides. Therefore, he argues that 13:52 refers to a group of Christian scribes as opposed to “their scribes.”²¹¹ However, such a view, based on an argument from silence, assumes that the compilation of Matthew’s Gospel was a collective effort in which Matthew

²⁰⁸ Orton, *The Understanding Scribe*, 26.

²⁰⁹ Earlie Ellis, *The Making of the New Testament* (Boston: Brill Academic, 2002), 354.

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹¹ Luz, *Matthew*, 44.

played the leading role of a rabbi and was assisted by his colleagues or followers who were teachers in the Matthean community. As mentioned above, the unique vocabulary and style of Matthew and his well-planned narrative structure, indicate that the work was not the product of a collective effort, but was, in all likelihood, the work of an individual whose characteristics are evident in the Gospel account.

b. Matthean Scribe in the Light of Jewish Apocalyptic Tradition

Goulder, citing the importance ascribed to the role of scribes, especially in the eschatological writings of Matthew, points to the possible influence of the concept of scribe in Jewish apocalyptic literature.²¹² Traditionally, Ezra has been considered the founder of the scribal movement in Judaism. Citing the significance of the role Ezra played as a teacher of the community in religious matters, Orton argues that Ezra was a priest and scribe who was professionally trained as a writer and interpreter of mysteries.²¹³ Based on some of the references found in the first and the second Maccabees,²¹⁴ Orton points out that, by the second century BC, there existed a large number of scribes in Israel.²¹⁵ 1 Maccabees 7 indicates that the scribes were an influential group in Israel by this time and wielded some political power and moral status to negotiate terms between rival political and religious groups and were also taking sides in the appointment of priests. 2 Macc 6:18 speaks highly about Eleazar, the foremost of all the scribes during his day, who remained loyal to the Laws of Moses and thereby invited death on himself during the persecution that followed the abomination of the temple.

²¹² Goulder, *Midrash and Lexicon in Matthew*, 115.

²¹³ Orton, *The Understanding Scribe*, 42.

²¹⁴ The references cited by Orton are: συναγωγή γραμματέων' or 'gathering of scribes' in 1 Macc 7:12, and 'Ελεάζαρος τις τῶν πρωτευόντων γραμματέων' or 'Eleazar, one of the prominent scribes' in 2 Macc 6:18.

²¹⁵ Orton, 40.

As mentioned above, the scribal movement in Israel had begun with Ezra, who trained disciples as scribes. However, scribes of later times, seeking greater importance in Judaism, seem to have ascribed the origin of scribal office to Enoch and Moses.²¹⁶ Markley points out the importance of the concept of ‘seer’ in apocalyptic writings. A seer could be receiving revelation from God in different forms, which might include visions, dialogues, revelations, etc.²¹⁷ Moses fits such a description very well as he received information about the past events from the time of creation through hearing an audible voice, vision, revelation, and was able to speak about the coming of a special prophet in the future.

As argued by some major critical scholars, if Matthew wrote his Gospel in the pattern of the Pentateuch, with five major divisions,²¹⁸ a reader can see that Matthew saw himself standing in the tradition of Moses with access to God to receive direct revelation as Moses did. Such a view can account for some unique information about supernatural events found in Matthew but not available to other Gospel writers. Markley points out that “claims of exclusive revelation, to which others had no access, could be seen as a pattern of apocalyptic writings.”²¹⁹ The seer stood in a special relationship and received a secret vision or revelation, and Matthew seems to have considered himself and his colleagues, as recipients of exclusive or secret knowledge as he recorded some exclusive narrative.²²⁰ However, though Matthew can be seen as one standing in

²¹⁶ Orton, *The Understanding Scribe*, 41-43.

²¹⁷ Markley, *Peter - Apocalyptic Seer*, 22.

²¹⁸ Albright and Mann, *Matthew*, Liv-Lvii. Though Albright and Mann disagree the suggestion of B. W. Bacon that Matthew’s Gospel was shaped after the Pentateuch with five divisions, they see such a five-fold division based on the development of Christological ideas presented by Matthew with no connection to the Pentateuch.

²¹⁹ Markley, 42.

²²⁰ Orton, 176.

the tradition of Moses or other apocalyptic seers, it will not satisfy the critical mind of scholars who want to see historical evidence for some of the events reported by Matthew.

Orton shows that the wisdom literature also promoted the concept of scribes as men with wisdom and possible status of inspiration.²²¹ He argues that the concept of a scribe in wisdom literature as someone with theological and philosophical knowledge had “pervasive influence on Matthew as he considered himself as a scribe trained by Jesus, his rabbi.”²²² Orton argued that, by the time rabbinic views are put into writing, the role of scribe is equated with the role of prophets. “The Targum of Jonathan²²³ to Isaiah equates scribes to prophets as it translates “false prophet” in Isa 9:15 as “false scribe.”²²⁴ This indicates that a scribe could see himself as a prophet when he wrote down something to his community.

Orton also points to the possible influence of the words of Matthew about the “scribe trained for the kingdom of heaven” as the concept of the “ideal scribe” found in the writings of Ben Sira, the famous second-century scribe. Sirach 38:24 not only uses the word ‘γραμματέως’ for scribe just as Matthew used it, but also equates the scribe’s role with the role of wise men. Orton also points out the description of the ideal scribe in Sirach 39:1-11 which speaks about seeking to understand and explain the wisdom of ancients, prophets, parables, and proverbs by devoting himself to his Lord. The concept seems to echo in Matthew’s words as he speaks about the scribe trained to bring out ancient and new treasures from his storehouses (13:52).²²⁵

²²¹ Orton, *The Understanding Scribe*, 48-49.

²²² *Ibid.*, 49-50.

²²³ Though written in second century AD, the writings reflect existing Jewish worldview.

²²⁴ Orton, 55.

²²⁵ *Ibid.*, 67.

Similarly, in the same passage, Ben Sira saw the activities of travel, teaching, and understanding (39:4-9)²²⁶ as roles of the ideal scribe. Matthew seems to have similar expectations for himself and the scribes of the Matthean community when he says that the disciples of Jesus are sent as prophets, sages, and scribes (23:34). Matthean understanding of scribal role seems to be a replication of the role of the ideal scribe in Sirach. In Sirach and Matthew, the ideal scribe is the one who is trained, seeks to understand wisdom and the Scriptures.²²⁷ Moreover, the ideal scribe is given special insights, travels, teaches, and brings out wisdom from the past and new insights.²²⁸

Orton also points to the self-understanding of the author of the book of Enoch as a scribe as he writes apocalyptic passages and suggests that Matthew also probably saw himself as someone standing in the tradition of Enoch as he writes passages of similar nature and considers himself as a scribe who is inspired.²²⁹ 4 Ezra also has a concept of scribe that is similar to the one

²²⁶ Sirach 39:4-9 "ἀνὰ μέσον μεγιστάνων ὑπηρετήσῃ καὶ ἔναντι ἡγουμένων ὀφθήσεται ἐν γῆ ἄλλοτρίων ἐθνῶν διελεύσεται ἀγαθὰ γὰρ καὶ κακὰ ἐν ἀνθρώποις ἐπέειπεν τὴν καρδίαν αὐτοῦ ἐπιδώσει ὀρθρίσαι πρὸς κύριον τὸν ποιήσαντα αὐτὸν καὶ ἔναντι ὑψίστου δεηθήσεται καὶ ἀνοίξει στόμα αὐτοῦ ἐν προσευχῇ καὶ περὶ τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν αὐτοῦ δεηθήσεται ἔάν κύριος ὁ μέγας θελήσῃ πνεύματι συνέσεως ἐμπλησθήσεται αὐτὸς ἀνομβρήσει ῥήματα σοφίας αὐτοῦ καὶ ἐν προσευχῇ ἐξομολογήσεται κυρίῳ αὐτὸς κατευθυνεῖ βουλήν αὐτοῦ καὶ ἐπιστήμην καὶ ἐν τοῖς ἀποκρύφοις αὐτοῦ διανοηθήσεται αὐτὸς ἐκφανεῖ παιδείαν διδασκαλίας αὐτοῦ καὶ ἐν νόμῳ διαθήκης κυρίου καυχῆσεται αἰνέσουσιν τὴν σύνεσιν αὐτοῦ πολλοὶ καὶ ἕως τοῦ αἰῶνος οὐκ ἐξαλειφθήσεται οὐκ ἀποστήσεται τὸ μνημόσυνον αὐτοῦ καὶ τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ ζήσεται εἰς γενεὰς γενεῶν." GNT translates the passage as follows: "Great people call on him for his services, and he is seen in the company of rulers. He travels to foreign lands in his efforts to learn about human good and evil. It is his practice to get up early and pray aloud to the Lord his Creator, asking the Most High to forgive his sins. Then, if the great Lord is willing, he will be filled with understanding. He will pour out a stream of wise sayings, and give thanks to the Lord in prayer. He will have knowledge to share and good advice to give, as well as insight into the Lord's secrets. He will demonstrate his learning in what he teaches, and his pride will be in the Lord's Law and covenant. He will be widely praised for his wisdom, and it will never be lost, because people for generations to come will remember him."

²²⁷ Orton, *The Understanding Scribe*, 75.

²²⁸ Ibid.

²²⁹ Ibid., 78-83. For a thorough discussion of similarities between the understanding about scribe in Enoch and scribe in Matthew, please see, pp. 83-95.

echoed in Matthew 13:52.²³⁰ 4 Ezra 12:37 says “write all these things that have been in a book; and you shall teach them to the wise among your people, whose hearts you know are able to comprehend and keep these secrets.” Witherington is one scholar who disagrees with Orton on his argument for an apocalyptic scribal influence on Matthew. He argues that Matthew stands in the scribal tradition of those who “weigh, assess, and arrange” his teaching and materials as opposed to a scribe who merely records some information that he hears.²³¹ However, it is possible that Matthew could have seen himself as an apocalyptic scribe who also was careful in his role to weigh, assess and arrange what he heard from his sources. Witherington, without any reasons, assumes that all apocalyptic scribes were mere hearers and recorders.

12. A Summary of the Literature Review

The review in this chapter listed significant M materials and showed that they can be divided into two categories—namely, narratives and discourses. The literature review showed that critical scholars are divided on their opinion about the historicity of the narrative materials in M as some of those passages seem legendary or fictional. While some consider that M narratives are fictional, others consider the materials to be quasi-historical, and others consider them to be historically reliable. Scholars have also pointed out that the genre of Matthew should be considered as one that follows Midrashim. Therefore, one should not be looking for the content of Matthew to be mere records of historical data. He has creatively added his comments through the fulfillment theme and OT quotations. The author of this research considers the possibility of

²³⁰ Orton, *The Understanding Scribe*, 104.

²³¹ Witherington, *Matthew*, 8-9.

Midrashic influence on the literary style of Matthew in writing the Gospel as an ancient biography. Burrige seems to be right in his argument that the Matthean account should be seen as “an ancient biography because its genre is similar to Graeco-Roman ancient biographies.”²³² Though it may not be possible to prove the historicity of all M narratives, it seems that what Matthew reported were based on eye-witness accounts that he considered to be reliable and worth reporting.

One important matter that needs to be resolved is identifying a possible source that Matthew used, especially when reporting events that occurred when Matthew or other disciples were not present. The review has shown that while scholars have pointed to the possibility of Matthew being a converted priest, and/or a scribe, who was well-versed in Jewish apocalyptic writings and used his literary awareness to flavor the special dialogue materials, not much research has been done on the possibility of some Jewish priests or scribes being involved in the development of M narratives as a source to Matthew.

A detailed discussion of Matt 13:52 and other passages on scribes in Matthew indicates that Matthew saw himself as a ‘seer’ in the apocalyptic tradition and would have possibly relied on special revelation and other sources mentioned above—personal notes, memory, oral tradition, and written sources, for the information that only he reports. However, the discussion above shows that critical scholars of Matthean studies agree that some apocalyptic scribal involvement can be found in the work of Matthew. The research has shown that this influence could be attributed to Matthew’s professional background as a scribe who probably took notes when he walked with Jesus and did not have to depend on others to write down the M discourses.

²³² Burrige, *Jesus, Matthew's Gospel and Early Christianity*, 5-22.

On the other hand, the research will argue that Matthew was dependent on others when he developed the special narrative materials and that there are reasonable evidence to identify some of the Jewish priests as a source of a large number of M narratives.

The review also showed that most scholars agree that the Evangelist was an expert in Hebrew variants, Greek and Aramaic. The discussion also has shown that a few critical scholars like Barbieri, Clarke, and Plummer have pointed out the possibility of the involvement of Jewish priests in the development of M narratives that describe ancestry and events that took place in the opposition camp.

In chapter two, this research will show how a large number of discourse materials and a couple of narrative passages in M were influenced by the theology and eschatology of canonical and non-canonical Jewish Apocalyptic literature. The goal is to show that the discourse materials in M did not need a special source other than the notes Matthew and some of his peers might have taken. However, in addition to the hypothetical Q and Mark, Matthew might have used the Old Testament Scriptures and Jewish non-canonical apocalyptic writings from which he could draw words and thoughts. As a former scribe, Matthew would have used the existing Jewish literature in his storehouse (13:52) to give an apocalyptic flavor to the discourse materials and a couple of narrative passages. On the other hand, in chapter three, the author will move on to do five case studies on selected narrative passages from M narrative passages to argue that some Jewish priests can be identified as likely sources of a number of M narrative passages.

Chapter Two

Influence of Canonical and non-Canonical Jewish Apocalyptic Literature on M Materials

1. Introduction

There is a general agreement among most Matthean scholars about the Jewish influence on Matthew's Gospel in relation to its language, themes, arrangement²³³ of narratives, etc. Matthew's allusions to Old Testament passages are a well-researched and well-demonstrated aspect of Matthean scholarship.²³⁴ Hence, this chapter will not deal with the Gospel in its entirety or with the M materials in its entirety as the research tries to assess the influence of canonical and non-canonical Jewish apocalyptic literature on M materials. This research in this chapter will limit the discussion primarily to the discourse materials in M and will also make brief discussions of a couple of small narrative passages that have a strong apocalyptic flavor.

Matthew hails from the intertestamental period. Any serious study of the New Testament books cannot ignore the literary and theological backgrounds of their writers, as the language and thoughts of writers cannot be separated from the time and culture in which they lived.²³⁵ Any writing that stands disconnected from its time and culture will look like an alien and anachronistic thought. Hill points out that "The Jewish Christianity evidenced by the Gospel

²³³ Bacon has argued that the Gospel can be divided into five books following the pattern of the Pentateuch. For details, see: Benjamin W. Bacon, *Studies in Matthew* (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1930), 165-261.

²³⁴ For details, see: Stanley D. Toussaint, *Behold the King: A Study of Matthew* (Portland, OR: Multnomah Press, 1980), 15-18.

²³⁵ George W.E. Nickelsburg, *Jewish Literature between the Bible and the Mishnah: A Historical and Literary Introduction*, Second Edition (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005), 2.

account of Matthew is a Christianity which has just severed connection with the Jewish communities, but which expresses itself in forms and categories borrowed from Judaism.”²³⁶ One should keep in mind that the severing of connections to the past is a process and not an instant action. Ideas from the past will be carried on for a while, and Matthew’s Gospel is a good example of that. The material discussed in this chapter will be shown to be deeply immersed in the messianic hope, theology, angelology, and eschatology of the canonical and non-canonical writings, especially the apocalyptic writings from the intertestamental period. As mentioned above, this research considers that such an influence can be attributed to the likely professional background of Matthew himself as a Jewish scribe, who perhaps saw himself as an eschatological Christian scribe after he became a disciple of Jesus, the rabbi (Matt 13:52).

2. Matthew as a Bridge between the OT and the NT

Irrespective of differing views on Markan priority and Matthean priority, most scholars agree that Matthew’s Gospel stands better in providing continuity to the Old Testament as a link to the rest of the New Testament as the Evangelist tries to connect most of the events in his account look connected to one or more of the Old Testament passages. Through the fulfillment theme, the Evangelist sees and wants his readers to see that the prophecies and messianic hopes of the Old Testament have become a reality in the life and works of Jesus. Such a bridge helps provide a sense of unity between the Old Testament writings and the New Testament writings as one continuum or related story that speaks about the salvific plan of God being actualized in and through the life and works of Jesus Christ.

²³⁶ David Hill, *The Gospel of Matthew* (Grand Rapids: WM B Eerdmans, 1972), 41.

Scholars have pointed out that the role of Matthew in providing a continuum to the Old Testament is unmatched in other New Testament writings. Despite the probability that Matthew was not the first Gospel account to be written, Scroggie provides a reason for placing Matthew as the first Gospel in the New Testament canon because of its profound connection with Jewish literature, popular themes, and thoughts. He argues that:

Though Matthew was not the first to be written of the canonical Gospels, it is placed first because of its relation to the Old Testament. More than any other of the Gospels, Matthew's account is allied with the Hebrew Scriptures in theme and tone; their subjects are its subjects, the Messiah, Israel, the law, the Kingdom, and Prophecy. Jewish ideas and themes characterize the whole record. Its witness would not have impressed either the Roman, for whom Mark wrote, or the Greek, for whom Luke wrote, but to the Jews, its significance would be inescapable.²³⁷

Scroggie is not alone in seeing a direct indebtedness of M materials to the Jewish literature that existed before the writing of the Gospel. Because of its literary features and cultural aspects, Goulder argues that Matthew's Gospel is closer to Jewish literature and thoughts than Luke, the only other Gospel with a genealogy that links Jesus to Jewish roots. Goulder wrote, "Matthew, it would seem, lived in a bilingual or trilingual milieu, was familiar with Jewish traditions, had much more interest in and familiarity with the OT than Luke, and knew the OT both in Greek and Hebrew."²³⁸

Various aspects of the Jewish nature of the Matthean writings have also been pointed out by a few other scholars due to the literary features found in the Gospel. It has been shown that "Much of Matthew's Special materials, including redactional materials, contain a distinctively Jewish flavor" employed by someone who was a member of the Jewish community with the

²³⁷ William Graham Scroggie, *A Guide to the Gospels* (London: Pickering & Inglis, 1948), 248.

²³⁸ M.D. Goulder, *Midrash and Lection in Matthew* (London: ISPCK, 1974), 123-127.

capability of handling the Hebrew language to handle its literature.²³⁹ Toussaint points out a few aspects of M materials to support a similar view. He shows that the term ‘kingdom of heaven,’ is a distinctly Jewish term that occurs only in Matthew’s Gospel and is found in no other Gospel.²⁴⁰ He further cements his view by adding that themes like, ‘Righteous,’ ‘righteousness,’ ‘Son of Man,’ ‘Law, Sabbath,’ ‘Temple,’ ‘David,’ ‘the Messiah,’ ‘fulfillment of prophecies,’ etc., are supportive of Jewish nature of Matthew’s Gospel.²⁴¹

Commenting on the influence of the intertestamental period on the writers of the New Testament writings, James H. Charlesworth suggests that the most crucial aspect of studying the New Testament has to relate to the facts and perceptions during the pre-seventy Judaism.²⁴² Charlesworth is correct because, while readers are usually familiar with quotations and allusions in the New Testament that can be traced to Jewish canonical writings due to their familiarity, the connections with non-canonical writings need more research as they are not as popular as the canonical books. Therefore, while we will consider a few examples of Matthean connections to the Jewish canonical writings, the major thrust of this research will be its links to the non-canonical Jewish apocalyptic literature that developed during the intertestamental period in which the author of the Gospel lived and wrote to a community that lived in the same religio-cultural setting.

²³⁹ W.D. Davies and Dale C. Allison Jr., *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint Matthew, Vol 1* (Edinburgh: T& T Clark, 1988), 33, 58.

²⁴⁰ Toussaint, *Behold the King*, 16.

²⁴¹ Ibid. Scholars have pointed out that the term ‘Son of Man’ is used in Mark also due to the Jewish influence on him. However, a substantial number of terms mentioned by Matthew, as shown by Toussaint, indicate a higher level of influence in Matthean writings.

²⁴² James H. Charlesworth, *Jesus within Judaism* (New York: Doubleday, 1988), 9.

However, not all scholars agree that Matthew was well-versed in Hebrew literature to be affected by a large-scale influence on his writings. There are a few scholars who have questioned the expertise of the Evangelist in handling the Hebrew language. Clarke and Strecker argued that the author of the Gospel, according to Matthew, knew only the LXX. However, their argument was shown to be unfounded by Davies and Allison based on the following details from the Matthean writings to show that the author of the Gospel was fluent in Hebrew. They are:²⁴³

- i. Matthew preferred a form of *sema* that stands close to the MT.
- ii. Several Matthean texts stand closer to Jewish tradition or interpretation than the Markan and Lukan Parallels.
- iii. Matthew and Luke dealt in very different ways with the allusions in Mark and Q. Matthew generally preserved and expanded. Luke often omitted and shortened.
- iv. Matthew often brought his sources closer into line with the OT.
- v. Matthew's redactional explanations or changes of allusions and his redactional allusions frequently depart from LXX and often agree with the MT.
- vi. Some of the allusions unique to Matthew but has a non-allusive parallel in Mark and Luke show agreement with the MT or Jewish tradition.²⁴⁴

3. The Genealogy of Jesus

Unlike the other Synoptic Gospels, Matthew begins his account by placing Jesus as the Messiah born as a descendent of Abraham through the line of David. He achieves two goals through such an introduction to the account of Jesus's family lineage. Matthew presents Jesus as a seed of Abraham who is the father of all Jews, and also traces the lineage through the line of King David with the primary purpose of presenting Jesus as the messianic king who would inherit the everlasting Davidic throne.²⁴⁵ It is evident that the Jews of the intertestamental period expected Messiah to be a king, a fact reiterated by Matthean account when he retells the story of

²⁴³ Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 33.

²⁴⁴ For a more detailed discussion of some of these literary features, see: *Ibid.*, 33, 73-96.

²⁴⁵ Toussaint, *Behold the King*, 17-18.

the Magi who came looking for the king of the Jews, which can be seen as an apologetic move employed right from the beginning of Matthew's account²⁴⁶ as he develops his Gospel on that foundation—the expectation of the Messiah by the Jewish people.

Besides the reference to Abraham, who is considered the father of all Jews, the genealogy presented by Matthew lists several other names mentioned in the Old Testament writings. He begins with the names of the patriarchs mentioned in the Book of Genesis. Also, he makes actual and possible allusions to the characters in Genesis who have prominent roles in the apocalyptic literature of the intertestamental times. Scholars have pointed out that the use of the phrase ‘Βίβλος γενέσεως’ by Matthew as the opening phrase of his Gospel account (1:1), is identical to the phrase found exactly as it is in Gen. 2:4 and 5:1 in the LXX, the popular Old Testament version during the time of Matthew.²⁴⁷ Brown says that Matthew probably drew information for his genealogy from Genesis and the rest of the Old Testament Scriptures as long as they were available to trace the ancestry of Jesus all the way back to Abraham, while he was indebted to other sources for information only if that was not available in the Jewish canonical writings.”²⁴⁸ Brown's argument seems to be based on the assumption that the Hebrew Bible was the primary source of Matthew for developing the Genealogy of Jesus. However, this research has already mentioned Barbieri's suggestion that Matthew, in addition to other sources, might have also used genealogical records that were available in the temple to develop the genealogy of Jesus.²⁴⁹ If

²⁴⁶ Scroggie, *A Guide to the Gospels*, 255.

²⁴⁷ Frederick Dale Bruner, *The Christbook: A Historical/Theological Commentary, Matthew 1-12* (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1987), 1.

²⁴⁸ For a full treatment of the phrase “Βίβλος γενέσεως” and allusions, please see: Jeannine K. Brown, “Genesis in Matthews Gospel,” in *Genesis in the New Testament*, eds. Martin J. J. Menken and Steve Moyise (New York: Bloomsbury, 2012), 42-59.

²⁴⁹ Louis A. Barbieri Jr., “Matthew,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: New Testament*, eds. John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck (Colorado Springs: Cook Communications, 1983), 13.

Matthew was developing a genealogy by starting with the most recent family lineage to trace it all the way back to Abraham, it is likely that Matthew began with the details available from Jesus's family and then with the records available in the Jerusalem temple and finally with the details available from the Old Testament about the royal lineage of kings who hailed from the descendants of patriarchs. A discussion of how biographical details are traced "from the most recent to the oldest or working backwards"²⁵⁰ will be discussed below.

4. Possible Influence a Qumran Document on the Fulfillment Theme

As the Evangelist starts with a genealogy of Jesus that traces back to Abraham through many other Old Testament characters and as he employs a fulfillment theme quoting Old Testament Scriptures, one can immediately sense a considerable influence of the theological background of the Evangelist on his thoughts and on his way of writing. There can be no doubt that "both Matthew and his Gospel were influenced by their historical, geographical, cultural and social contexts."²⁵¹ In addition to the possibility of mere influence of Jewish canonical and non-canonical thoughts and ideas on the Evangelist, a suggestion has been made about the possibility of a Qumran document becoming a direct source material that can be called as a fifth type of source used by Matthew.²⁵² G. Earnest Wright pointed to the similarity between Matthew and a document found at Qumran known as the writings of the "*Teacher of Righteousness*" which

²⁵⁰ Raymond E. Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah: A Commentary on the Infancy Narratives in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke* (New York: Doubleday, 1993), 26.

²⁵¹ David Sim C., *Apocalyptic Eschatology in the Gospel of Matthew* (Cambridge: Cambridge University press, 1996), 19.

²⁵² G Earnest Wright, *Biblical Archaeology* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1957), 234.

refers to the Old Testament passages to show that some prophecies made by the sages were being fulfilled in the Qumran community at that time.²⁵³

Some of these writings are shown to have lists of Old Testament proof texts or collections of “Messianic passages and other allusions, which they perceived to refer to the Messiah. It has been long observed that the author of the Gospel of Matthew must have had such list because he is very interested in showing how at every point the events of Jesus’ life fulfilled the Old Testament expectations.”²⁵⁴ While one might question the possibility of Matthew using such a document as a source, it is likely that Matthew used at least the pattern or the idea of the “*Teacher of Righteousness*” in seeing the Old Testament predictions being fulfilled in Jesus’s life and independently or with dependence on a document that was available to him, quoted some of the Old Testament sayings that were believed to be messianic by a Jewish sect of his time.

Thirteen times, Matthew says that Jesus performed some act “that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet” and provides a passage from one or more of the Old Testament Scriptures “as if Jesus did some of the things to fulfill and Old Testament prophecy.”²⁵⁵ However, we do not see Jesus making any claim that he was doing something to fulfill a prophecy. Nevertheless, Matthew seems to make such an impression in the mind of his readers as soon as he starts telling about the birth of Jesus in 1:22. Wright pointed out that, many of the Qumran documents deal with interpreting “prophecies, explaining how some of those prophecies had been fulfilled in the recent history of their sect, how some were being fulfilled in

²⁵³ David E. Aune, *Prophecy in Early Christianity and the Ancient Mediterranean World* (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans, 1983), 132. “The Teacher of Righteousness” was a generic title for the founder of Qumran community and his successors. The community began somewhere during the second half of the second century and was destroyed by the Romans during the Jewish revolt between AD 66-73. Some followers believed that he was an eschatological figure (p.341).

²⁵⁴ Wright, *Biblical Archaeology*, 234.

²⁵⁵ Toussaint, *Behold the King*, 17.

their own day, and how still others were soon to be fulfilled in the near future.”²⁵⁶ It is possible that Matthew was familiar with such literary works and might have used the same literary pattern in an impressive manner to make a case for the messiahship of Jesus in his Gospel as he wrote to a community that held a deterministic worldview and believed that the messianic prophecies in the Jewish Scriptures would come true.²⁵⁷ Moreover, even if the Evangelist was using some of the passages interpreted to be messianic by the Qumran community, it would mean that he was making the best use of the belief system of some of the Jews at that point of time in history to make a case for believing in Jesus in the light of all evidence available from all possible sources.

In spite of agreeing that the Qumran literature influenced the writer or redactors of the Gospel, Miller holds a negative view of the genuineness of the fulfillment theme employed by the Evangelist or redactors. He feels that the approach seems to be a very artificial defense of the faith of the Evangelist or redactors who seem to be setting up stories or narratives to fit the proposal that Jesus was the Messiah.²⁵⁸ Miller believes that some of these narratives were altered to suit the fulfillment theme by the redactors of the Gospel following the pattern of Qumran literature and Targums by methods of awkward pairing and making-up of stories.²⁵⁹ However, a reader has to keep in mind that Matthew is writing after Jesus had proved his Messiahship through his death and the Resurrection. Matthew does not say that Jesus fulfilled certain prophecies to prove that he was the Messiah. Rather, Matthew shows that those prophecies were fulfilled in Jesus because Jesus is the Messiah. According to Matthew, prophecies would be

²⁵⁶ Wright, *Biblical Archaeology*, 234.

²⁵⁷ Sim, *Apocalyptic Eschatology in the Gospel of Matthew*, 87-88.

²⁵⁸ Robert J. Miller, *Helping Jesus Fulfill Prophecy* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2016), 65.

²⁵⁹ For a full treatment of the fulfillment theme as a pattern found in Qumran literature, Targums, Josephus, and Matthew, see: *Ibid.*, 65-155.

fulfilled, and the messianic prophecies were being fulfilled at that time because Jesus was indeed the Messiah.

Also, Gundry argues that the New Testament writers do not exploit the whole corpus of Messianic predictions²⁶⁰ in the OT, indicating that the evangelists were not looking at possible Old Testament passages to develop an artificial fulfillment scenario. Gundry also argues that some of the passages cited by Matthew as the fulfillment of a prophecy in the Old Testament would have never been thought of as being messianic (e.g., Hos 11:1; Jere 31:15) unless cited by Matthew.²⁶¹ Hence, Gundry argues that Matthew is citing from memory and tradition instead of looking at the OT for fulfillment themes or texts.²⁶² Gundry considers memory to be historical and tradition to be oral. Gundry's arguments above seem to be a sound one.

Critical scholars have noted that, despite the similarities employed by the Evangelist in using the fulfillment theme as a device to support his faith, there is a clear distinction that can be seen between the use of the fulfillment theme in Qumran writings and the Matthean account. It has been shown that "while 'the Peshar Method' of the Qumran community involved a selection of a prophetic text followed by an exegesis to show connection to events of their time, the Evangelist composes a narrative first and then inserts at a certain point in the story a quote to

²⁶⁰ Gundry, *Use of the Old Testament in St. Matthew's Gospel: With Special Reference to the Messianic Hope*, (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 1967), 194. Gundry further shows that, there are many other passages and themes in the Old Testament that could be easily shown to be fulfilled in Christ by the evangelists. Based on those passages and the pattern seen in Matthew, Gundry makes the following three arguments: (i) The use of prophecy is determined by a true historical memory of the Evangelist, (ii) the looseness with which many Matthean citations from the OT are appended indicate that the direction is from tradition to prophecy, not vice-versa, (iii) and that the concentration of quotations in Mt 1 and 2, the nativity narrative show that OT prophecy was the source of much of the nativity tradition.

²⁶¹ Ibid., 195.

²⁶² Ibid.

argue that an Old Testament prophecy has been fulfilled in the life of Jesus.”²⁶³ In contrast, Matthew does not seem to engage in exegetical works of the prophetic passages he cites, nor does he begin his narration with a verse or passage from the Old Testament.

Therefore, while we can see that the Evangelist was possibly indebted to the Qumran writings for the idea of fulfillment as a theme or a “fulfillment document,” he is not merely copying them but is making use of the idea to create his literary device in which he blends his facts with prophecies to make a new, impressive, and arresting style of narration to persuade the skeptics and to convince the members of his community. Moreover, even if Matthew used a source like a “*fulfillment document*” from the Qumran community, it only shows that the Jewish community, or at least the Qumran sect, considered the passages quoted by Matthew to be messianic, making his interpretation of the Old Testament passages more authentic with the Jewish theological beliefs and practices of a Jewish religious sect of that time.

5. Similar Literary Features in Jewish Writings and M Materials

Some literary features that are unique to Matthew have roots in Jewish canonical writings. Scholars have pointed out that the writer of the Gospel “has the instinct for Hebrew Parallelism and Hebrew elaboration, and his thought and general style are Hebraistic . . .”²⁶⁴ It has been pointed out that Matthew’s use of “then, at that time” reflects the Jewish character of the book, as it is shown to be a repeated phrase that occurs ninety times in Matthew. In contrast, it is

²⁶³ Leopold Sabourin, *The Gospel According to St Matthew, Vol.1* (Bombay, India: St Paul Publication, 1982), 43-44.

²⁶⁴ A. T. Robertson, *A Grammar of the New Testament in the Light of Historical Research* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1934), 119.

found only six times in Mark, fourteen times in Luke, and ten times in John. Pointing to the substantial number of cases in which this phrase is repeated, Henry Clarence Thiessen argues that the use of “then, at that time” in the Matthean writing proves its Jewish character as it is written by someone who thinks in Hebrew or Aramaic²⁶⁵ and follows its style of writing. Thiessen’s argument seems to be well-grounded.

6. Abundance of Quotes and Allusions from Canonical Jewish Literature

Scholars have pointed out that there are up to 129 Old Testament passages that are directly or indirectly referred to in Matthew’s Gospel.²⁶⁶ In comparison, it may be noted that Mark has only thirty-four and Luke, in spite of being lengthier than Matthew in content, has only forty-five Old Testament quotations.²⁶⁷ While fifty-three of the Matthean quotes are direct citations, seventy-six are allusions to well-known Old Testament passages. The use of quotations in Matthew is shown to be an apologetic tool used by Matthew to engage Jewish believers to see the reason to believe in Jesus from a Jewish worldview point.²⁶⁸ Matthew’s primary readers seem to be Jewish people, and he used their Scriptures as the medium to share the Gospel.

In contrast to the habit of Matthew frequently quoting one or more of the Old Testament passages as proof of his faith or proposition that Jesus is the expected Messiah, Mark and Luke seem to have used different strategies as they did not have to deal with Jewish theological

²⁶⁵ Henry Clarence Thiessen, *Introduction to the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: WB Eerdmans, 1987), 139.

²⁶⁶ Scroggie, *A Guide to the Gospels*, 270.

²⁶⁷ For a detailed list of Old Testament quotations in Mark and Luke, see: Robert G. Bratcher, *Old Testament Quotations in the New Testament*, Revised edition (New York: United Bible Societies, 1961), 11-22.

²⁶⁸ Scroggie, 270.

expectations necessarily nor had to deal with Jewish objections and denial compared to Matthew and his community that was still engaging the Jewish community and its polemic. That kind of approach seems to be absent in the accounts of Mark and Luke due to the particular Jewish orientation of Matthew's Gospel, something Mark and Luke considered unimportant for their Greek readers.²⁶⁹ Keener supports such a view when he says that "The Gospels themselves vary in levels of audience expectation."²⁷⁰ He also holds that, the Gospel writers, following the style of ancient biographies, felt free to abridge and expand the materials where they wanted.²⁷¹ However, Keener cautions that, while acknowledging the possibility of Matthew "expanding elements of his tradition's story of Jesus, not much should be seen in that as Matthew was more interested in interpreting tradition than creating it."²⁷²

7. Similarities between the Dreams in Genesis and in M Materials

There are repeated incidents of dreams in the birth narratives of Jesus recorded in Matthew chapter two. The focus on the dreams of Joseph, the earthly father of Jesus, as recorded in Matthew, is somewhat similar to the experience of Joseph's story in the Book of Genesis, which speaks about the active involvement of God in the life of Joseph through repeated dreams in his own life and the lives of people around him. It has been shown that the non-canonical

²⁶⁹ Ernest De Witt Burton, "The Purpose and Plan of the Gospel of Matthew, III, The Purpose with Which the Evangelist Wrote," in *The Biblical World*, vol. 11, no. 2 (JSTOR, 1898), 91–101. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3136889>. Accessed 14 Dec. 2022, 92-94.

²⁷⁰ Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 17.

²⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 18, 34.

²⁷² *Ibid.*, 22.

Jewish literature has given some prominence to the figure of Joseph, who is alluded to by name in a number of them (Sir 49:15; 1 Macc 2:53; Jubilees chapters 39-43; and Ws 10:13-14). These records probably prompted Matthew to mention the dreams of Joseph in the birth narratives of Jesus to show parallel allusions to help the readers see a continuity of God's active involvement in the history of mankind through the incarnation of Jesus.²⁷³ While the non-canonical books make mention of the importance of Joseph in different ways, the words in the Book of Sirach deserves special attention as it claims a unique status for Joseph in comparison to the rest of humanity. Sir 49:15a says that "No one else like Joseph has ever been born." Matthew, as he tells the story of Jesus who is greater than Joseph, probably mentions similar involvement of God again in the history of mankind through dreams as in the times of Joseph to tell his readers that someone greater than Joseph is born.²⁷⁴

8. Jewish Cultural Practices Resembled in M Materials

The cultural setting that a reader encounters in the Matthean account is Jewish. After providing a genealogy of Jesus, the plot shifts quickly to the expectation of Messiah among the Jews and the rest of the world. The Evangelist then engages his readers with the Jewish religious leaders and scholars and then, through their mouth, introduces them to the Old Testament prophecies that are messianic and speaks about their fulfillment. It is hard for a reader to disconnect the story of Matthew from the Old Testament or the Judaistic settings in which it is narrated. This undeniable fact is put well by Henry Nickelsburg, who says that,

²⁷³ Henry Wansbrough, "The Infancy Stories of the Gospels since Raymond E. Brown," in *New Perspectives on the Nativity*, ed. Jeremy Corley (New York: T&T Clark, 2009), 8.

²⁷⁴ *Sirach* 49:15 says, "No one else like Joseph has ever been born; even his bones were honored."

“The seed bed of the church was first century Judaism. As Jews, Jesus of Nazareth, and his disciples breathed this religious and cultural environment and spoke its idiom . . . Indeed, the very early church was messianic movement within the bosom of Judaism, and fundamental aspects of its early history are intelligible only when viewed against the rejection of its Messiah . . .”²⁷⁵

The story of incarnation and the rest of the events that followed in the life of Jesus would make sense only in the context of the Old Testament prophecies and the messianic expectations of the Jews who lived before and during the time of the Evangelist. One has to remember that most of the events recorded in the Gospels took place in the intertestamental times before the New Covenant and the Church was established.

9. Apocalyptic Themes and Influence

Besides other literary and thematic styles of Matthew’s Gospel, scholars have pointed out a special influence of Jewish apocalyptic²⁷⁶ writings on M materials. The influence seems stronger on the special Matthean materials than on Mark and Luke. Among the canonical Gospels, the account of Matthew is shown to be unique in its frequent display of apocalyptic elements.²⁷⁷ Due to the greater influence of apocalyptic ideas in it, Matthew’s Gospel has been

²⁷⁵ Nickelsburg, *Jewish Literature between the Bible and the Mishnah*, 2.

²⁷⁶ Sim, *Apocalyptic Eschatology in the Gospel of Matthew*, 32. Sim defines apocalyptic genre as “a revelatory literature with a narrative framework, in which a revelation is mediated by an otherworldly being to a human recipient, disclosing a transcendent reality which is both temporal, insofar as it envisages eschatological salvation, and spatial insofar as it involves another, supernatural world.”

²⁷⁷ Davies and Allison point about a paradigm shift in New Testament Scholarship after the discovery of the Qumran Scrolls. Scholars before the discovery of Qumran Scrolls tried to see parallels between Graeco-Roman literature about kings and heroes and the birth of Jesus in which the Magi is mentioned. However, modern scholarship started focusing on Jewish backgrounds since the discovery of Qumran Scrolls. Since then, attention has been drawn to the Old Testament Prophecies for background information. See: Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 230-231.

called “the Apocalyptic Gospel” and Matthew has been called “the most apocalyptic of all the evangelists.”²⁷⁸

Matthew opens his story by telling about the celestial involvement of a star, angels, and dreams in the birth of Jesus. He concludes his account with stories of earthquakes, resurrections, angelic appearances, and post-resurrection appearances followed by ascension. In addition, some of the discourse materials in Matthew contain strong apocalyptic themes and ideas that had already become a part of the Jewish belief system of the day, as seen in the intertestamental non-canonical literature. It has been argued that “Matthew not only belonged to an apocalyptic school of thought but also, in some cases, added new apocalyptic meaning to his source materials.”²⁷⁹ The discussion on Matt 13:52 in chapter two has shown that Matthew might have seen himself as an apocalyptic scribe.

A couple of issues need to be addressed concerning the influence of Jewish apocalyptic writings on M materials. Are the apocalyptic sayings in M materials the words of Jesus or the words of Matthew? If Jesus originally spoke the words recorded in M, Matthew was just a recorder, and the influence was on Jesus. However, if Matthew put his own words and thoughts into it, one can assume that the Jewish apocalyptic writings influenced Matthew. However, it is also possible that both Jesus and Matthew used the appropriate words and thoughts in Jewish apocalyptic writings. It is possible that Jesus originally spoke the words. An influence can still be seen on Matthean thought because the author of the Gospel decided to choose content that had more apocalyptic flavor than other canonical Gospel writers.

²⁷⁸ Kristian Bendoraitis, *Apocalypticism, Angels, and Matthew in Jewish Apocalyptic Tradition and the Shaping of the New Testament Thought*, eds. Reynolds Benjamin E. and Loren T. Stuckenburg (Augsburg, MN: Fortress Press, 2017), 31.

²⁷⁹ Sim, *Apocalyptic Eschatology in the Gospel of Matthew*, 34.

In any case, Jesus and Matthew were not disconnected from the thoughts and beliefs of the Jewish people of their times. They might have used the ideas presented in Jewish apocalyptic literature to communicate to people of their time by relating to thoughts and ideas expressed in their religious literature. Since the M materials have such a connection with the apocalyptic literature of the canonical and non-canonical writings of Jews, this research must take a closer look at such influence on the content of some of the M discourse materials.

i. Theology of the Son of Man

The title “Son of Man” is not unique to Matthew. The use is common in Mark’s account also. However, Mark cannot account for all the titles used in Matthew’s work. The term is found fourteen times in Mark. Matthew retains all of them and in addition, uses them in nineteen other places to make the total thirty-three. The abundant use of the title could be because the author saw a significance to the phrase used in the past with messianic connotations as foretold in the prophecy of Daniel (7:13) regarding “the Son of Man who comes on the clouds of heaven.” Daniel is considered the earliest of apocalyptic writings.²⁸⁰ Therefore, the use of Daniel had become popular in the messianic ideas and the apocalyptic writings of Jews during the intertestamental times and Matthew seems to have followed the same pattern.

A passage found in 1 Enoch further elaborates on the understanding of the Son of Man and his divinity as the writer speaks about the Son of Man as the one in whom all treasures are hidden and in whom righteousness dwells (1 Enoch 46:2).²⁸¹ The Son of Man is identified as the Messiah in 1 Enoch 48:2, 10 which says that he will shine as the “light of the nations” when all

²⁸⁰ Aune, *Prophecy in Early Christianity*, 108.

²⁸¹ 1 *Enoch* 46:2 says, “He answered and said to me, this is the Son of man, to whom righteousness belongs; with whom righteousness has dwelt; and who will reveal all the treasures of that which is concealed...” (Ethiopic Parallel Translation).

people on the earth experiences “peace.” 1 Enoch 48:4 makes it very clear that Messiah will be worshipped and glorified by all people on the earth.²⁸² In comparison, Matthew shows that Jesus was worshipped by the Magi when he was a baby and that the disciples worshipped him after the Resurrection.

In a Jewish cultural context, it is a leap of worldview for Matthew to speak about offering genuine worship to a child. Matthew could have been influenced and encouraged here to make such a giant theological or Christological leap. 1 Enoch says that “All who dwell on earth shall fall down and worship before him, and will praise and bless and celebrate with song of the Lord of the Spirits” (1 Enoch 48:4). Hence, the idea of Messiah being worthy of worship is not a strictly post-incarnation or post-resurrection concept. Matthew tells his readers that the Son of Man who deserves worship has arrived in the incarnation of Jesus, and that they are now welcome to worship him as foretold in the prophecies of Daniel and Enoch and as done by the wise men from the east who had responded positively to the revelation that was given to them.

However, in Matthew’s eschatology, when the Son of Man is shown to be sitting on the throne of His glory, he seems to be reminding his readers through the words of both Daniel and Enoch, not just one of them. Nevertheless, David Sim draws our attention to point out that the cluster of two ideas mentioned in Matt 19:28 and 25:31, namely, Jesus as “the Son of Man” presiding over the judgement on his throne of glory, is attested nowhere else in early Christianity. He argues that the striking similarity could be due to the influence of the writings of Enoch alone on Matthew through an oral tradition or a written document that got into the hands

²⁸² 1 *Enoch* 48:4 reads: “He shall be the hope of those whose hearts are troubled. All, who dwell on earth, shall fall down and worship before him; shall bless and glorify him.” (Ethiopic Parallel Translation).

of Matthew.²⁸³ However, Sim might be making an unjustifiable argument here, as most of ‘the Son of Man’ themes found in Matthew could be traced to the writings of Daniel also. It is likely that Matthew was influenced by the canonical writings of Daniel and non-canonical writings of Enoch when he used the title in his Gospel account. Moreover, Mark informs us that Jesus did use the title for himself. However, the abundance of use in Matthew points to a greater influence.

ii. *Theology of the Son of David*

The title “Son of David” was another popular identity ascribed to the expected Messiah in canonical and non-canonical Jewish writings. Matthew seems to have used this title and the title “Son of Man.” Scholars have tried to link the miracles recorded in Matthew chapters 8 and 9 to draw a connection with the description of the priestly role of Messiah in addition to the royal role mentioned in Psalms of Solomon 17. This would mean that Matthew was intentional in picturing Jesus as a priest in addition to being the King of the Jews. Psalms of Solomon 17, written in the first century BC, contains the most extensive pre-Christian Jewish description of the “Son of David” who was expected to assume power in Jerusalem (17:1-20, 21-25, 26-29, and 30-31).²⁸⁴ The use of the term “Son of David” in this Psalm is said to be the first pre-Christian use (vs 21) for the Messiah as it gives a detailed account on the social setting that necessitates the entry of the Messiah into the world and also describes the character of the Messiah.²⁸⁵ It has been pointed out that this Psalm also describes the priestly nature of the Son of David in addition to his

²⁸³ Sim, *Apocalyptic Eschatology in the Gospel of Matthew*, 119-20.

²⁸⁴ Johannes Tromp, “The Davidic Messiah in Jewish Eschatology of the First Century BCE,” in *Restoration: Old Testament, Jewish, and Christian Perspectives*, ed. James M. Scott (Boston: Brill, 2001), 190.

²⁸⁵ Danny Zacharias, “The Son of David in Psalms of Solomon 17,” in *Non-Canonical Religious Texts in Early Judaism and Early Christianity*, eds. Lee Martin McDonald and James Charlesworth (New York: T&T Clark, 2012), 71.

kingship and speaks about the miraculous works he would perform as a priest.²⁸⁶ However, accepting such a view would mean that Matthew was sure about the priestly role of Messiah but was hesitant to mention it in his Gospel in a clear manner. Therefore, it is less likely that Matthew tried to cast Jesus with a dual messianic role in his work.

Nevertheless, Danny Zacharias sees an influence of the dual role concept of the Messiah in the theology of Matthew. He calls the miracles recorded in Matthew 8-9 “a series of rapid-fire miracles”—healing of a leper in 8:1-4, the Centurion’s servant in 8:5-13, and Peter’s mother-in-law in 8:14-16, the stilling of the storm in 8:23-27, the healing of the two demoniacs in 8:28-34, and the healing of the paralytic in 9:2-8.”²⁸⁷ Zacharias suggests that the notion of Jesus being identified as the king and the priest in the New Testament could be because of the influence of Psalms of Solomon 17 that speaks about the dual role of the Son of David which sets up a messianic expectation of not only a strong king but also someone who performs miracles and leads people into righteousness as God’s anointed priest. Zacharias seems to be reading into the text as he tries to force the dual nature of the Messiah as a hidden theme in Matthew. Moreover, such a view seems unfitting to the style of Matthew, who sees himself as a scribe who explains hidden things instead of hiding things that were already revealed. If Matthew wanted to portray Jesus as the Royal Priest, he could have stated it in unambiguous language instead of trying to make it obscure to his readers.

²⁸⁶ Zacharias, *The Son of David*, 82-83.

²⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 85.

iii. *Angelology*

a. Angels as Mediators

The mention of angels and their involvement in the history of mankind can be found all through the Matthean account, starting with the birth narratives and ending with the post-resurrection narratives. As mentioned above, angels also play an active role in the age to come, as per the eschatological passages in Matthew. Angels are integral to apocalyptic literature as they function as revelatory mediums between God and men. Frequent angelic visits are recorded in the apocalyptic writings of Daniel (8:15-16), Ezra (4 Ezra 4:11) and Enoch (1 Enoch 21:5; 27:2; 33:3; 72:1; 74:2; 75:3-4; 78:10; 79:6; 80:1; 82:7). “The frequency with which Matthew has incorporated angels from his sources reveals he is interested in these traditions . . . (Matt 13:41, 49; 18:10; 25:31-46; 26:53; 28:2-10).”²⁸⁸ Starting with the birth narratives (Matt 1:18-2:23), Matthew draws on the traditions of an angelic mediator to reveal God’s plan in Jesus’s early life.

As mentioned above, in Matthew, we see an angel of the Lord making frequent visits to Joseph to provide dreams—once before the birth of Jesus to prepare Joseph’s heart (1:20-21 and then twice after the birth of Jesus to protect Jesus through warning and guidance (2:13; 19-20).²⁸⁹ It has been pointed out that, it is not only in the birth narratives but also in the Resurrection narrative, “Matthew has chosen an angelic mediator to convey the divine origin and significance of this message worthy of all the apocalyptic color intimated with his references to angels.”²⁹⁰ Angelic activity can also be seen during the life of Jesus in providing comfort and support as

²⁸⁸ Sim, *Apocalyptic Eschatology in the Gospel of Matthew*, 38-39.

²⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 44-45.

²⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 48.

mentioned by Matthew in the temptation passage (4:11) and the words of Jesus regarding the availability of such supports whenever he requests it (26:53).

Besides, Matt 18:10 is a notable Matthean passage that speaks about angels in heaven as representatives of people on the earth. Matthew 18:10 says, “See that you do not despise one of these little ones. For I tell you that their angels in heaven always see the face of my Father in heaven.” There are mentions of interceding angels in the Book of Jubilees that speak about “guardian angels” with different degrees of power as protectors of individuals on the earth. Jubilees 35:17 speaks about the angel of Jacob being more powerful than the angel of Esau to protect them. Similarly, Plummer has tried to draw a connection between Tobit 12:15 that speaks about angels that stand in the presence of God and angels that minister to people.²⁹¹ It is possible Matthew 18:10 was influenced by the passage in the books of Jubilees and Tobit that became part of the cultural and theological belief system of Jews during the time of Matthew.

b. Angels as Warriors

The Old Testament accounts of wars show the role of angels as warriors. In Matt 26:53, Jesus asks the disciples, “Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father, and he will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels?” Like the concept of the guardian or protecting angels, as shown in the birth narratives, Matthew also seems to draw on a tradition that portrays angels as warriors. Besides the accounts found in the Old Testament passages that speak about the role of angels in destroying the enemies of Israel, there are Jewish traditions of angels participating in an apocalyptic war recorded in a Qumran scroll known as *The Scroll of the War of the Sons of Light Against the Sons of Darkness* (10:3-5; 12:7-9; 13:10). Similarly, 2 Baruch

²⁹¹ Alfred Plummer, *An Exegetical Commentary on The Gospel According to S. Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1982), 251.

51:11 speaks about all the armies of the angels standing ready to execute God's command.²⁹²

Hence, the words of Jesus, recorded by Matthew, conforms the belief system of the Jews of the day; and Matthew seems to be unapologetic about identifying with those beliefs reflected in Jewish apocalyptic writings.

iv. *Eschatological Ideas of Heaven, Rewards and Punishment*

The eschatological ideas in M materials also come under heavy influence from the canonical and non-canonical Jewish apocalyptic writings. Sim argues that “one of the more recognizable aspects of Matthew's work is the demonstrated “relationship between the Son of Man and the angels at the Parousia and judgment . . . Matthew alone demonstrates this concept like no other Gospel writer (13:41, 49; 16:27; 24:30; 25:31).”²⁹³ The first reference to the angels and the Son of Man in the context of eschatology is in the two uniquely Matthean discourses that contain two parables—the Parable of the Weeds (Matt 13:24-30, 36-43) and the Parable of the Net (Matt 13:47-50).

It has been pointed out that various traditions in which angels are depicted as gathering, separating, and punishing existed in intertestamental writings. For example, Sim cites the example of divine control portrayed through the agency of angels, obediently gathering and binding the wicked in 1 Enoch 1:9; 10:4-20; 1 Enoch 38; 45; 53:3-4; 54:2; 56; 88; and 90:21-24.²⁹⁴ In the same manner, the Epistle of Enoch, speaking about the final judgment, describes angels as “descending to the hidden places to gather into one place all those who have given aid to sin” (1 Enoch 100:4).

²⁹² Sim, *Apocalyptic Eschatology in the Gospel of Matthew*, 46-7.

²⁹³ *Ibid.*, 39.

²⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 40.

Angels are also pictured as recorders, and those exacting punishments, guaranteeing that the sins of the wicked will not go unpunished (1 Enoch 41:1; 61:8; 89:59-63; 90:20; 99:3; 100:10). Similarly, in Matt 13:39, 40, 49, 24:3, and 28:20, the reapers in the age to come are angels. Sim points out that “the heavily apocalyptic-eschatological materials in Matt 13:36-43 and 49-50 that speak about the burning of weed and casting away of wicked into the furnace of fire, have parallels in the wider apocalyptic-eschatological tradition of intertestamental writings in 1 Enoch and 4 Ezra.”²⁹⁵ 1 Enoch 54:6 names a few angels who act on behalf of God on the Day of Judgment; 98:3 speaks about the furnace of fire as the destination for the wicked, and 4 Ezra 7:36 speaks about the pit of torment or furnace of hell for the wicked as opposed to the place of rest or paradise for the righteous. Allen argues that the eschatological views mentioned in Matthew seem to be due to the Jewish background of the editor and the influence of Jewish apocalyptic literature on his thinking, that can be traced to passages that speak about the consummation of the world described in the Apocalypse of Baruch 13:3, 83:7;²⁹⁶ Dan 12:13; and Enoch 16:1.²⁹⁷

v. *Eschatological Ideas on Human Nature Compared to Angelic Nature*

There is an interesting observation made by Sim that the people of the intertestamental period believed that they would have angelic bodies in post-resurrection life. Matt 22:30a says that “For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage but are *like* (italics mine) angels in heaven” (NET). The equivocal nature of the word ‘like’ has prompted a notion

²⁹⁵ Sim, *Apocalyptic Eschatology in the Gospel of Matthew*, 40.

²⁹⁶ *Apocalypse of Baruch* 13:3 speaks about “the consummation of the times” and 83:7 speaks about “the consummation of the age when all will be judged.”

²⁹⁷ Willoughby C. Allen, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to S. Matthew*, Third Edition (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1912), 153. *Enoch* 16:1 speaks about the great consummation of the great world when the impious will be destroyed.

that Matthew is using the word here to mean identical nature. Sim seems to make an extreme interpretation when he writes that, “Matthew is adamant that in the new age, the righteous will become angels (Matt 22:30) who can see God, an angelic privilege mentioned in Matt 5:8 and 18:10).”²⁹⁸

However, it is hard for anyone to see anything so conclusive in the statement of Matthew, as the word ‘like,’ in all probability, is used as a simile. One has to pay attention to other similar uses in Matthean writings. Matt 13:43 says that the righteous will shine ‘like’ the sun. If one follows Sim’s reasoning, he or she will have to conclude that a righteous individual will be a sun or a star in the eschaton. Sim seems to go too far with his argument in considering a simile to be an equating word. Sim also tries to see a textual connection between Daniel 12:3,²⁹⁹ which says that “Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever.” The phrase “will be like” probably does not mean identical nature. Similar statements, like ‘man is created in the likeness of God’ or ‘we will be like Christ,’ do not mean man will be God or man will be Christ in his identity. Sim’s argument does not consider the fact that language is not univocal, and literature uses figures of speech like similes and metaphors. Probably, the word ‘like’ was used in 22:30 to show similar nature instead of identical nature.

10. Sermon on the Mount and its Roots in Intertestamental Writings

Many of the discourse statements in the Sermon on the Mount are unique to Matthew, and scholars have shown the strong influence of intertestamental thought and writings on those

²⁹⁸ Sim, *Apocalyptic Eschatology in the Gospel of Matthew*, 142.

²⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

sayings. This research will look at some of the important phrases and terms in the Sermon on the Mount to cite the connections they may have with Jewish literature.

i. “They shall see God.”

Matt 5:8 says, “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.” Philo, the famous Jewish philosopher who lived a few years before Jesus’s incarnation, is said to have contended that life’s aim is God’s vision, a thought that was probably influenced by the story of Moses, who is known to have seen God.³⁰⁰ It is possible that Matthew, while reflecting on these words, as an educated Jew, would have been aware of the words and thoughts of Philo. Also, if Matthew saw himself as a seer in the tradition of Moses as he wrote these words, in his mind, he must have been reflecting on the experience of Moses recorded in Exodus 33:17-23.

ii. “Peacemakers”

Matt 5:9 says, “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called the sons of God.” It is argued that the term “peacemakers” is pre-Matthean, as can be seen in 2 Enoch 52:11-15,³⁰¹ which says that “happy will be those who love peace, have peace in their heart and speak it with their tongue, which has an action that results in peace or making peace. Similarly, the phrase ‘υιοι θεου’ (sons of God), as found in Matthew, is shown to be attributed to the influence of both canonical and non-canonical literature that use the phrase in Genesis 6:1 and Job 1:6 which is identical to the use in the LXX. Davies also points to Psalms of Solomon 17:20 as a possible source of influence on Matthew as the Psalmist speaks about the Israelites, as beloved, “are called children of God.”³⁰² The references mentioned above shows that the concept of people

³⁰⁰ Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 457.

³⁰¹ *Ibid.*

³⁰² *Ibid.*, 459.

being addressed as the sons of God and the expectation of them playing an active role as the sons of God in peace-making can be found to exist in the Jewish literature that existed before the writing of Matthew's Gospel. Jesus and Matthew would have used words and phrases that were familiar to their listeners as they were already used in their religious literature, especially when the words and thoughts were consistent with the teachings of the Hebrew Scriptures.

iii. "God as the Father"

Addressing God as the 'Father' does not seem to be very new to the times of the NT as per the evidence from the intertestamental writings. Matt 5:16 addresses God as the 'Father' of human beings. Sim points out that the practice of addressing God as 'Father' had become common as the use can be found in the Book of Wisdom, Ecclesiasticus, Tobith, Jubilee, and in 3 Maccabees.³⁰³ God is addressed as "Father" in the book of Wisdom (2:16). Similarly, in Ecclesiasticus 23:1 and 4, God is addressed as "the Father." Tobith 14:4 addresses God as "the eternal Father of mankind." Also, in Jubilee 1:24, God is addressed as the "Father" and people are called "the children of God." In 3 Mac 5:7, we see a statement that "God will be called the Father of Jews." Hence addressing God as the Father of mankind was not a new concept to the Jewish readers during the time of Matthew. Moreover, Jesus addressed God as the Father, which could be seen as the primary influence on Matthew. One is free to think that when Jesus addressed God as Father, Jesus was not using a new idea but was utilizing a concept that was already existing in the worldview represented in Jewish religious literature.

³⁰³ Allen, *Matthew*, 44.

iv. “Let your yes be yes and no be no”

Matt 5:33-37 is shown to be identical to Enoch 49:1 in its entirety.³⁰⁴ The Book of the Secrets of Enoch 49:1-4 says that “For I swear to you, my children; but I will not swear by a single oath, neither by heaven, nor by earth, nor by any other creature which God made. God said, there is no swearing in Me, nor injustice which God made. If there is no truth in men, let them swear by a word, yea, yea, or nay, nay.” This principle was probably made popular by Philo, who quoted it, making it a popular moral principle of Jewish thought and standard of ethics in communication before the time of Jesus.³⁰⁵ Matthew’s words (5:33-37) read:

“Again, you have heard that it was said to an older generation, “*Do not break an oath, but fulfill your vows to the Lord.*” But I say to you, do not take oaths at all—not by heaven, because it is the throne of God, not by earth because it is his footstool, and not by Jerusalem, because it is the city of the great King. Do not take an oath by your head because you are not able to make one hair white or black. Let your word be ‘Yes, yes’ or ‘No, no.’”

While a word-to-word agreement cannot be seen for the whole passage between Matthew and Enoch, one can hardly fail to see that the principle is essentially the same. Moreover, Jesus is quoted as saying to the crowd that this was something they had already heard as being told to an older generation, indicating that the saying already existed in the Jewish tradition or literature and that the saying contained an accepted standard of ethics during his day. Moral laws are based on God’s moral nature and, one cannot be surprised that Jesus used the revelation already given to humanity. Some scholars have tried to see the non-Jewish influence on this passage due to

³⁰⁴ Allen, Matthew, 44.

³⁰⁵ Ibid., 53.

literary evidence of an aversion to oaths in Graeco-Roman culture.³⁰⁶ However, it is more likely that the Jewish thought influenced Jesus and Matthew.

11. Other M Materials with Significant Connections to Jewish Writings

i. Identity of John the Baptist as Elijah

There was an expectation among Jews during the time of Jesus about the second coming of Elijah, the prophet as a forerunner to the Messiah. A communication based on that expectation can be found in John 1:21, where the Jewish priests asked John the Baptist if he was Elijah. This expectation could have been based on the prophecy recorded in Malachi, the last of the Jewish canonical books. Matt 11:14 says, “And if you are willing to accept it, he is the Elijah who was to come.” The statement about Elijah follows an Old Testament quote in 11:10 from Mal 3:1 that spoke about sending a messenger as a forerunner. Malachi does not say that the forerunner mentioned in 3:1 was talking about Elijah. Nowhere in the Jewish canonical writings can one find any reference linking Elijah with the forerunner of the Messiah. It is possible that people were looking for the second coming of Elijah based on the prophecy in Malachi 4:5 that speaks about the second coming of Elijah before the dreadful Day of the Lord, but not as a forerunner to the Messiah in his first coming.

However, Matthew makes a connection between John the Baptist and Elijah. He presents Jesus identifying John the Baptist as the expected Elijah who comes as forerunner to the Messiah in 11:14. Allen contends that Matthew probably got the idea due to the influence of non-

³⁰⁶ Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 535. Scholars in the past, before the spread of the third quest for the historical Jesus, used to pay undue attention to Graeco-Roman religious and cultural influences on such texts at the expense of over-looking the influence of Jewish non-canonical literature. For a detailed discussion of ‘oaths’ in Jewish traditions and in Graeco-Roman culture, see pp. 532-538.

canonical Jewish writing known as Ecclesiasticus. Ecclesiasticus 48:11 speaks about Elijah turning the heart of people to the Son through his preaching. This verse may have made an impact in the mind of Jews who lived during the intertestamental period to think that Elijah would come before the appearance of the Messiah. They would have connected the prophecy of Malachi 3:1 with the words of Ecclesiasticus.³⁰⁷ Since no other OT passage connects Elijah to be a forerunner of the Messiah, it is possible to think that Matthean thought about the second coming of Elijah was influenced by the words of Ecclesiasticus. However, it should be noted that Matthew is recording the words of Jesus. If Jesus did say that “He was the Elijah who was to come,” the influence on Matthew should be seen as an indirect one. Nevertheless, an apocalyptic influence can be seen on Matthew as he decided to include the conversation in his account.

ii. “Come unto me those who are weary.”

Matt 11:28-30 speaks about rest for the weary and the easiness of the yoke of the Messiah. It is possible that the words of Isaiah the prophet in 14:3, speaking about “the relief from suffering and turmoil that will be unleashed on the Day of the Lord,” lies in the background of the words of Matthew. Another possible connection is to the words of Jeremiah the prophet in 31:2, which says that “The people who survive the sword will find favor in the wilderness; I will come to give rest to Israel;” and 31:25, which says that “I will refresh the weary and satisfy the faint.” Jeremiah 6:16 also speaks about a path to find rest for his soul. Similarly, Isa 40:27-31 speak about the strength of the Lord to those who are weary and tired.

Allen, however, sees a stronger connection to a non-canonical passage in Sirach 51:23-27 which speaks about hard work, yoke, and rest. According to Allen, in Matt 11:28-30 “there is an

³⁰⁷ Allen, *Matthew*, 118.

undoubted dependence” on the words of Sirach.³⁰⁸ Rather than trying to pinpoint one source of information or influence on Matthew, what sounds more reasonable is that the Evangelist was aware of the hope of rest from hard work in the Jewish expectations of the Messiah. He must have been influenced by a popular hope prevalent among Jews based on the mention of such a hope in more than one of the sources mentioned above. Instead of being limited to just one source, Matthew might have been influenced by the words of Isaiah, Jeremiah, and possibly Sirach and because of the expectations the Evangelist himself held.

iii. “*Gates of Hades*”

Matt 16:18 speaks about the gates of Hades as a physical place. The concept of understanding hell as a physical place seems to be influenced by the Jewish belief system preceding Matthew, as reflected in canonical and non-canonical Jewish literature. Isa 38:10 speaks about “the gates of Sheol,” Job 17:16 speaks about “the barred gates of Death,” Job 38:17 speaks about “the gates of Death and gates of deepest darkness,” Ps 9:13 speaks about “the gates of Death,” Ps 107:18 speaks about the “gates of Death,” Ws 16:13 speaks about someone brought back from the “brink of Death,” and Psalms of Solomon 16:2 speaks about the “gates of Hades.”³⁰⁹ It is evident that Matthew, based on the Jewish literature that existed before him, probably understood ‘hell’ to be a physical place since such an idea was popular in the Jewish literature. In any case, Matthean worldview seems to consider hell as a real place. Because Matthew 5:29 speaks about the danger of fire in hell, 5:30 says that the whole body will be thrown into hell, 10:28 speaks about hell being a place where the soul and body of the wicked will go, 18:9 speaks about hell being a place of fire, and 23:33 speaks about hell being the

³⁰⁸ Allen, *Matthew*, 146.

³⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 176.

destination for the punishment of the wicked.³¹⁰ Again, one has to keep in mind that, if Matthew was quoting the words of Jesus, the Evangelist was rather influenced by Jesus's view of hell.

iv. *“Keys of the Kingdom”*

The mention of the phrase “the key of the house of David” in Matt 16:19 seems to have connection with the prophecy of Isa 22:22. A prediction was made by Isaiah about the giving of “the key of the house of David” to Eliakim as he was expected to be appointed the royal steward with “the key of the house of David.”³¹¹ Leopold Sabourin claims that “in biblical and Jewish usage, for someone to give the keys to another means to bestow authority on the recipient by the giver;”³¹² and argues that, based on the Messianic expectations, Matthew also considered the prophecy of Isaiah to have messianic connotations.

v. *Church Discipline*

Some scholars have pointed out that Matthew 18:15-20 indicates that the Evangelist already had a developed notion of the Church and is dealing with issues of advanced structure in a community that is advanced in Christian living. It is shown that the Evangelist is the only one to use the word ‘ecclesia’ in a technical sense to refer to the founding of the Church in 16:18-19 and 28:19-20.³¹³ The instructions on discipline given in 18:15-20 seem to be addressed to a community that has existed for a while and is dealing with disciplinary issues that need to be addressed in an ongoing manner. However, such a view assumes that Jesus did not speak the words to a group of people during his earthly ministry but was the making of the Evangelist.

³¹⁰ Moreover, the concept of hell seems to be frequent in Matthew as Matthew has seven references to ‘hell’ and one reference to ‘hades,’ whereas Mark has only three, followed by two in Luke, and none in John.

³¹¹ Sabourin. *Matthew*, 677.

³¹² Ibid.

³¹³ Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), 9-11.

Allen feels that the source behind the passage is of Jewish nature as the end of verse 16 seems to be based on Deut 19:15.³¹⁴

Scholars strongly disagree with the intended recipients of the words mentioned in the passage. Plummer argues that the instructions in the passage were originally given to the Jewish community, which can be called the Jewish ecclesia, by Jesus. However, the principles are applicable to the Church even though the Christian church did not exist when Jesus originally spoke these words.³¹⁵ Albert and Mann argue that the Messiah always had a messianic community, and the words were originally addressed to that community.³¹⁶ Jeffery A. Gibbs argues that “it is a potentially serious and misleading error” to label these verses as directly addressing issues of church disciplines though they can be used to address issues of churches.³¹⁷ Nevertheless, Sabourin argues that the passage has its origin in the ‘Sitz im Leben’ of the Matthean community that necessitated the composition of the instructions.³¹⁸ Allen thinks that the passage is addressed to the Christian community and argues for Jewish literary influence on the passage by showing that vs. 20 is very similar to the actual words of Avot 3:2, a second century BC work, which says that, “But two who sit and exchange words of Torah, the Divine Presence rests amongst them.”³¹⁹

³¹⁴ Allen, *Matthew*, 198.

³¹⁵ Plummer, *Matthew*, 233.

³¹⁶ W. F. Albright and C. S. Mann, *Matthew: Introduction, Translation, and Notes* (New York: Doubleday, 1971), 195.

³¹⁷ Jeffery A. Gibbs, *Matthew 11:2-20:34* (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing, 2010), 916.

³¹⁸ Sabourin, *Matthew*, 721.

³¹⁹ Allen, 199.

A balanced view can be inferred if one considers that Jesus spoke these words to a Jewish community before the establishment of the church. This view will satisfy the *Sitz im Leben* when Jesus actually spoke the words to his community, and the Evangelist then, as he writes at a later stage, responds to the needs of his community as he decides to include the saying in his account. Such a view meets the demands of the ‘*Sitz im Leben*’ of Matthew and his community while upholding the actual setting in which Jesus originally spoke the words to a group of people. Moreover, the principles apply to the ecclesia as Jesus spoke these words to his followers. The views of Plummer and Sabourin do not need to be mutually exclusive unless one holds that Jesus did not really speak those words and that the Evangelist or the redactor is responsible for the fictitious composition of the passage.

vi. *“Some of who became Eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven.”*

Matthew 19:12 quotes the words of Jesus that speak about “some of who became eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven.” Jesus originally spoke the words in a pre-Christian or pre-church era. Therefore, it is obvious that these words cannot be referring to Christians of the early church. Allen points out that the group of people referred to in this context might be referring to the Essenes who had renounced marriage and, therefore, can be identified as people who made themselves eunuchs.³²⁰ Matthew likely included the statement in his work as he understood the meaning of it in the context in which Jesus said it, and the listeners understood it as well without any ambiguity. Had it not been the case, the writer would have attempted to provide an explanation to help his readers understand his words. To the readers of Matthew, it would have been easier to decipher the meaning of the sentence as they required no further

³²⁰ Allen, *Matthew*, 206.

explanation because of their familiarity with various beliefs and practices among various Jewish sects of their time.

vii. *“The first will be last and the last will be first.”*

Matthew 20:1-16 speaks about the workers in the vineyard who are given the same wage even though the number of hours they put to work are different. The parable hints that the reward is based on grace, as people will share equality in the kingdom of heaven. The parable has some similarities to the non-canonical book of 2 Esther 5:41-43, which speaks about people being placed into a ring structure so there will be no difference between the first and the last. Similarly, Baruch 30:2 says that “the first will rejoice and the last will not be grieved.”³²¹ Hence, the concept of equality in the kingdom of heaven and rewards being based on grace were not novel concepts presented by Jesus or Matthew but were ideas derived from the Jewish hope of blissfulness in the kingdom of heaven as described in their religious literature.

viii. *“Everyone who falls into this stone.”*

The mention of the stone in Matt 21:44 seems to have some theological connotations drawn from the mention of stone in Isa 8:14-15, Dan 2:34, and 44-45.³²² Isaiah’s words about “the stone that makes many to stumble” seem to be resounding in the words of Matthew. Daniel also wrote about a special stone that destroys man’s symbols of power. The Matthean passage may stand well-grounded on both the Old Testament passages from Isaiah and Daniel. The readers of Matthew, who were familiar with the writings of both the prophets, would have immediately made the connection to the words of Isaiah and Daniel when they read Matt 21:44.

³²¹ Allen, *Matthew*, 214.

³²² *Ibid.*, 206.

ix. *“Many are called, but few are chosen.”*

The phrase “Many are called, but few are chosen” in Matt 22:14 has a striking resemblance to 4 Ezra 8:3, which says that “Many have been created, but few will be saved,” a statement that underlines the deterministic worldview that existed before Matthew wrote the Gospel.³²³ The concept of choosing for eternal purposes are evident in the book of Genesis that speaks about the calling of Abraham. Jesus affirmed that principle, and Matthew included it in his Gospel account because he was aware of the affirmation made by Jesus and it also seems likely that he was familiar with the words of 4 Ezra 8:3.

x. *“Appearance of the sign of the Son of Man in heaven”*

Matt 24:30-35 speak about a time in the future when a sign of the Son of Man will reappear in heaven just as it happened during his incarnation. The reference seems to be influenced by the prophetic words of Dan 7:13-14 that speak about an eschatological event that will be given as a sign.³²⁴ Daniel prophesied about the Son of Man coming on the clouds and all people on the earth submitting to him as he reigns in his everlasting kingdom. Since the writings of Daniel were a canonical book, and because Daniel was considered to be the first authoritative apocalyptic book, it is possible that Matthew felt free to use some terms, phrases, and ideas used in it as he wrote down his words of Jesus with an apocalyptic flavor.

xi. *“Thirty pieces of silver”*

While Mark has no information on the number of coins that were paid by the Jewish religious leaders to Judas for betraying Jesus, Matthew precisely mentions the number in 26:15-17 to be precisely thirty pieces of silver. The amount is said to be the traditional purchase price

³²³ Sim, *Apocalyptic Eschatology in the Gospel of Matthew*, 87.

³²⁴ Allen, *Matthew*, 258-259.

of a slave in those times.³²⁵ Matthew does not say anything about the source of his information. Allen feels that Matthew quotes the number from Zech 11:13.³²⁶ However, such a view would assume that there are no other options for Matthew to have received the details about the price of betrayal. This research will deal with the passage of betrayal price in detail in the next chapter as the author of this research tries to identify the possible source of such details to Matthew. In any case, Matthew connects the betrayal price to the prophecy of Zechariah. Matthew seems to have the prophecy of Zechariah in mind as he writes and expects the readers to make a connection to the words of Zechariah that were familiar to them as they read another fulfillment idea presented in the Matthean account of Jesus.

xii. "Dream of Pilate's wife"

Matt 27:19 speaks about a dream experienced by the wife of Pilate, the Roman governor, during the arrest and trial of Jesus. As the Roman governor, Pilate was the only one who had the power to execute someone in Jerusalem during that time. The dream is a continuation of the pattern shown during the birth narratives in Matthew. Matthew seems to be showing the supernatural involvement of God in history through dreams during the birth of Jesus and during his trial, as God has done in history in the past. Though the story might make some scholars skeptical, there was nothing new in the pattern to Matthew's mind and to his readers. Their history and worldview accepted such events as somewhat normal yet special interventions of God in the affairs of mankind. Likely, Matthew was informed about this by someone who worked in Pilate's house or court or by one of the Jewish chief priests who was present with Pilate when the news of the dream was brought to him from his wife (Matt 27:19).

³²⁵ Allen, Matthew, 316.

³²⁶ Ibid., 269.

xiii. *“He trusts in God, let God rescue him.”*

Matthew 27:43 quotes the Sanhedrin’s words about the claim that Jesus is said to have made earlier that he is “the Son of God.” The Sanhedrin mocks him by suggesting that he should save himself by coming down from the cross (vs.42). The words of the Sanhedrin seem to be influenced by Ws 2:18, which says that, “If the righteous man is God’s son, he will help him, and will deliver him from the hand of his adversaries.”³²⁷ The Sanhedrin consisted of people capable of reading, and it is possible to assume that their opinion was influenced by words already recorded in a book that claimed to contain words of wisdom.

xiv. *The Resurrection of the Saints*

Matthew 27:51-53 speak about some extraordinary events during the death of Jesus Christ. While the birth of the Messiah resulted in a celestial revelation, his death resulted in an earthquake. The contrast doesn’t end there. While his birth resulted in the death of some children at the hands of Herod, his death resulted in ‘life again’ or resurrection for some of the saints who were dead. Belief in bodily resurrection was part of the faith system of a majority of Jews during and before the time of Matthew. Senior points to the repeated use of ‘καὶ’ in 27:51-52 and argues that the passage existed earlier as a poem,³²⁸ which Matthew might have quoted from his memory or a written source. To further his argument, Senior shows that verse 53 breaks the poetic style, and Matthew resumes writing in his own words in his own style.³²⁹ 2 Baruch 30:1-2 has a Messianic prediction that is strikingly similar to the report of Matthew. Baruch says,

³²⁷ Allen, *Matthew*, 294.

³²⁸ Donald Senior, “Revisiting Matthew’s Special Material in the Passion Narrative.” *Ephemerides theologicae Lovanienses: commentarii de re theologica et canonica* / 70, no. 4 (1994), 419. The Greek version of Matthew 27:51-52 reads, “Καὶ ἰδοὺ τὸ καταπέτασμα τοῦ ναοῦ ἐσχίσθη ἀπ’ ἄνωθεν ἕως κάτω εἰς δύο, καὶ ἡ γῆ ἐσεισθη, καὶ αἱ πέτραι ἐσχίσθησαν.”

³²⁹ Senior, *Revisiting Matthew’s Special Material*, 419.

“And it will happen after these things when the time of the appearance of the Anointed One has been fulfilled, and He returns with splendor, then all who sleep in the hope of Him will rise. And it will happen at that time that those treasuries will be opened in which the number of the souls of the righteous were kept, and they will go out, and the multitudes of the souls will appear.”

We can see that Matthew agrees with almost everything in the prediction made by Baruch: the time of the Messiah was fulfilled, treasuries were opened, the saints were risen, and they appeared to many people after the Messiah returned in splendor by gaining victory over the death. If one supposes that Matthew was not reporting a true event, it is possible to consider that this was the work of a redactor who was enthused by reading 2 Baruch 30:1-2 and added the passage in Matthew’s Gospel. Sim argues that the mention of the opening of tombs is dependent on Ezekiel 37:12-13 which says, “I am going to open your graves and bring you from them.”³³⁰ Again, irrespective of whether Matthew depends on Baruch or Ezekiel, or both, what one can see is that the Evangelist is not presenting an alien idea to his readers. Alan Culpepper argued that Zech 14:4-5 is in the mind of Matthew as he uses the phrase “the holy ones” used only here in Matthew instead of the phrase “the righteous ones,” which is used seventeen times in Matthew.³³¹ According to him, the language of Matthew in this passage does not belong to history but to the apocalyptic worldview of Ezekiel, Zechariah, and Matthew.³³² However, Timothy Wardle argues that Matthew probably had Isa 52:1-2 in mind when he wrote this passage. He contends that since around half of Matthew’s formula, quotations are from the book of Isaiah, his “influence as a source text on Matthew is unparalleled,”³³³ and therefore, this

³³⁰ Sim, *Apocalyptic Eschatology in the Gospel of Matthew*, 110-1.

³³¹ Culpepper R. Alan, *Matthew: A Commentary* (Louisville, KY: 2021), 565.

³³² *Ibid.*, 566.

³³³ Timothy Wardle, “Resurrection and the Holy City: Matthew’s Use of Isaiah in 27:51-53.” *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 78, no. 4 (2016): 671. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/26647441>.

passage also can be seen as influenced by Matthew's favorite prophet. However, the argument seems to be weak as Matthew seems to have freely quoted materials from other sources in various places of his Gospel.

Licona calls the passage a "weird fragment."³³⁴ He feels that "the words of Matthew sprang from the influence of eschatological Jewish texts and thoughts."³³⁵ He also suggested that the story of the resurrection of the saints was somehow connected to the Gospel of Peter (10:39-42) which speaks about Jesus emerging from the tomb carried by two angels accompanied by the saints who were redeemed from the hell (cf., 1 Pet 3:18-19, 4:6).³³⁶ On a positive note, he argued that, "the earthquake that preceded the resurrection, which was also reported by the other two Synoptics and was attested by Thallus, the secular historian, can explain four of the six phenomena mentioned by Matthew—(i) tearing of the temple veil, (ii) earthquake, (iii) rocks splitting, (iv) and opening of the tombs."³³⁷ Ronald Troxel argued that Matthew created the story of the resurrection of the saints based on the apocalyptic words found in 1 Enoch 93:6 which says that "visions of the Holy Ones accompany the gift of the Torah."³³⁸ According to Troxel,

³³⁴ Michael R. Licona, *The Resurrection of Jesus: A New Historiographical Approach* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2010), 527.

³³⁵ *Ibid.*, 552.

³³⁶ *Ibid.*, 551.

³³⁷ *Ibid.* Licona also quotes the words of Quadratus between 111 and 138 AD about some of the people raised by Jesus being alive during his time. However, Licona suggests that Quadratus might have written about those who were raised by Jesus during his earthy ministry on the earth.

³³⁸ Ronald L. Troxel, Matt 27:51-4 Reconsidered: It's Role in the Passion Narrative, Meaning and Origin. *New Testament Studies*, 01/2002, Volume 48, Issue 1. 30. Troxel has an extremely negative view about the reliability of the passage. He wrote, "This passage has long attracted attention due to its idiosyncrasy. Not only is its story of the resurrection and appearance of saints unique to Matthew, but it also stands isolated within the first Gospel; since the revived saints appear nowhere in the remainder of the book. Moreover, the motif of resurrection accompanying the death of Jesus is provocative, as is marked by the awkward report that only 'after his resurrection they came out of the tombs, entered the Holy City and appeared to many.'"

Matthew was motivated to write this story “not to infuse Jesus’s death with eschatological significance, but to provoke the centurion’s acclamation of Jesus as the ‘Son of God’ at the climax of the crucifixion narrative.”³³⁹ However, Kilpatrick argued that the passage about the resurrection of the saints was initially associated with the Resurrection stories and was probably moved to the passage about the death at a later stage.³⁴⁰ Another possibility is that the passage was a post-Matthean addition by a redactor.³⁴¹ If the story was not part of the original text, it is possible that a redactor, influenced by the writings of Baruch, added the story at a later stage.

However, predictions about similar events were already made by Jewish prophets before Matthew. For a Jewish believer, such events were expected to happen. Hence, what Matthew recorded is not the product of some wild imagination, at least not of his own imagination, as his words rely on the canonical and non-canonical Jewish literature that were already popular among his readers who held a worldview that accepted the possibility of such miracles, including the possible resurrection of the saints. Hagner feels that the passage is ‘substantially reliable’ and suggests that the “tradition of the resurrection of the saints would have stemmed from some tombs in the area opened by the earthquake.”³⁴² Arguing for the reliability of the report, Hagner holds that “the burden of proof is on the questioners.”³⁴³ The events recorded by Matthew might sound fictional to a 20th-century reader, but not to the readers of Matthew’s time and loci as they

³³⁹ Troxel, *Matt 27:51-4 Reconsidered*, 30.

³⁴⁰ G.D. Kilpatrick, *The Origins of the Gospel According to St. Matthew* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1946), 47.

³⁴¹ For a detailed discussion of this view, see: Joel, Archer, The Saints of Matthew 27: Why Do they Linger in their Tombs? *Journal for the Study of the New Testament*, 44(4), (2022), 477–495. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0142064X221079358>.

³⁴² Donald A. Hagner, *Matthew 14-28. Word Biblical Commentary 33B* (Dallas: Word Books, 1995), 851.

³⁴³ Donald A. Hagner, *Matthew, 1-13. Word Biblical Commentary 33A* (Dallas: Word Books, 1993), 25.

believed in the possibility of bodily resurrection and expected it to happen. Moreover, the idea of the resurrection of the dead is not new in the Gospels. All Gospel writers affirm that Jesus had already raised a number of dead people during his public ministry. NT Wright, while conceding that the historicity of such events can't be proven based on a single source,³⁴⁴ argues that “a sheer rational dismissal of such a possibility is also unsatisfactory as some things happen in history though they are very unlikely to have happened, this could be one of them.”³⁴⁵

Moreover, a possible connection can be seen between the instructions in Numbers 19:11-13 to those who come in touch with dead bodies. Such people would remain unclean if they were not sprinkled with water of cleansing on the third day and on the seventh day. It is possible to think that the resurrected saints went to “the holy city” and met with the priests in the holy city to be cleansed by the sprinkling of water.³⁴⁶ If so, the information about them would have come from some of the Jewish priests who performed the ceremony of cleansing and later on converted to Christianity.

xv. *The Appearance of the Angels.*

Matthew 28:2-4 speak about the angels' appearance with words remarkably similar to descriptions of angels in some of the Jewish apocalyptic literature. Matthew says that his appearance was like lightning, and his robes were white. Guards saw him, and they became like

³⁴⁴ N. T. Wright does not seem to give much weight to a possible second source with regard to the passage in the Epistle to the Hebrews that speaks about some of “the women having received their dead ones back.”

³⁴⁵ N.T. Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003), 636.

³⁴⁶ Licona discusses the possibility of these resurrections being spiritual or symbolic as opposed to physical resurrection that involves a body. For a detailed discussion of various hypothesis on these ideas, see, Licona, *Resurrection*, 523-610. However, a physical resurrection seems to be in the mind of the Evangelist as he wrote this passage for the following reasons: the resurrected saints remain in the tomb until Jesus resurrected; they go to the holy city after the resurrection of Jesus probably to cleanse themselves with the sprinkling of water by the Jewish priests in the premises of the Jerusalem temple.

dead men. ‘Light’ is shown to be a popular symbol common to all Jewish literature. Similarly, ‘white’ is a color with holiness and supernatural significance. Both concepts are shown to appear frequently in Jewish apocalyptic literature, where they characterize their order of being: (1) God, (2) angels or other exalted/heavenly figures, or (3) happily resurrected humanity, as opposed to those who are raised to “shame and everlasting contempt (Dan 12:2).³⁴⁷

Dan 10:6 speaks about a vision in which he sees a man whose appearance is like lightening. Isa 1:18 speaks about a whiteness that could be whiter than snow. Secrets of Enoch 1:6 speaks about the appearance of two men who were shining like the sun and whose hands were whiter than snow. Enoch 106:2 speaks about the child of Melchizedek, whose body was white as snow at birth. Since Matthew was not present at the Resurrection scene, we can assume that this is probably not an eye-witness account of Matthew. The descriptions of the angel by Matthew would have been influenced by Jewish canonical and non-canonical writings about angels and visions of special beings.³⁴⁸

However, one cannot overlook the possibility that one or more of the guards gave the details of the event to someone over time, and it became an oral tradition from which Matthew drew his details. Matthew tells us that the guards shared the details with the Jewish chief priests. It is also possible that one or some of those priests eventually passed on the information to someone else, and eventually it found its way to Matthew’s ears, who wrote it down in his Gospel. The report of the guards and the source of those details to Matthew will be discussed again in detail in a case study in chapter three.

³⁴⁷ Sim, *Apocalyptic Eschatology in the Gospel of Matthew*, 26.

³⁴⁸ Allen, *Matthew*, 301.

xvi. "All authority in heaven and on earth"

Matt 28:18 records the claim of Jesus about all authority in heaven and on earth given to him. The words seem to be very identical to the prophecy of Daniel 7:14.³⁴⁹ Daniel speaks about the authority of the Son of God to be eternal as his kingdom would never pass away. Though similar words on authority can be found in Mark, this passage should be considered unique to Matthew, keeping in mind the persuasive argument for the shorter ending of Mark. The redactor of Mark 16:9ff would have borrowed the words from Matthew when he expanded the last chapter of Mark.

12. A Summary

The research above has considered the influence of Jewish canonical and non-canonical literature on several discourse materials in M and a few narrative passages. Citing scholarly opinions and evidence from Jewish literature written before Matthew's Gospel, this research has shown that Matthew is heavily indebted to Jewish thoughts and ideas in Jewish apocalyptic literature that existed before his time. The research above has shown that major themes in Matthew, like 'the Son of Man,' and 'the Son of God,' in M have deep roots in the apocalyptic writings of Judaism. The research has also shown that Matthew heavily depends on Jewish literature to understand 'heaven,' 'hell,' 'angelology,' 'dreams,' 'eschatology,' etc. Matthew stands immersed in canonical and non-canonical Jewish writings and is in tune with the cultural belief system of the society in which it was written. Though some of the events reported in M materials might seem to be legendary for a critical mind today, most of what Matthew wrote was

³⁴⁹ Allen, *Matthew*, 305.

shown to be acceptable to the readers of his time as the events and sayings would have been considered reasonable and coherent to the worldview of that time. However, as mentioned earlier, that does not prove that the writings of Matthew were based on historical facts.

The naming of Matthew as the most apocalyptic of all Gospel writers and his work as the most apocalyptic Gospel stand justified due to the many themes in Matthew that are identical to the ones found in the Jewish apocalyptic literature. Matthew's deep awareness of the Jewish apocalyptic writings, points to the possibility that Matthew was a trained scribe or priest who left his profession to take up the job of a tax collector before he became a disciple of Jesus. As shown in the discussions above, the high flavor of apocalyptic ideas in M materials could be attributed to Matthew's own professional identity as a scribe or former priest, to possible editorial involvement of Christian scribes from the Matthean community, or to the involvement of some Jewish priests who converted to the Way and helped Matthew with some source materials and ideas. The five case studies of narrative passages from M materials in the next chapter will try to show that some of the Jewish priests can be identified as possible sources of details contained in those passages based on internal and circumstantial evidence.

Chapter Three

Case Studies on Selected M Narrative Passages to Identify Some of the Jewish Priests as a Likely Source of M Narratives

1. Introduction

The research in this chapter will employ tools of Source Criticism, Form Criticism, Literary Criticism, Narrative Criticism, and Lower Criticism to examine five narrative passages unique to Matthew. The goal of this research is two-fold. The first goal is to show evidence to argue that most M narratives that describe events in settings where Jesus and his disciples were absent were likely based on reports from one or more of the Jewish chief priests. The case studies will show that, though the scribes and elders also stand as possible sources, the Jewish chief priests are better positioned to be the candidates than the scribes and elders. This will be done by demonstrating that the Jewish priests were present in all the passages being examined, while the scribes and elders were present only in some of them. The Jewish high priests and chief priests were known to be a powerful group during the time when the events of the New Testament took place. Bruce shows that the high priests and chief priests came from wealthy families of the same clan and that they made appointments to the offices of the treasurer of the temple and the captain of the temple guards by exercising the power they held, which was out of proportion compared to the rest of the Jewish priests.³⁵⁰

The second goal is to make a few points to strengthen the argument for the historical reliability of the narratives by identifying their possible source and doing some exegetical studies

³⁵⁰ Frederick F. Bruce, *New Testament History* (New York: Doubleday, 1971), 67.

to glean insights that might strengthen the reliability of the narratives. While identifying the source does not guarantee that the reports were based on historical facts, it brings some credibility to Matthew, who is accused by some critical scholars for allegedly cooking up some imaginative stories to support his case. Identifying a possible source will show that Matthew was writing down things that were reported to him as facts by his sources. It is historical in the sense that the reporting really took place. Matthew might have taken those reports at face value when he wrote down the Gospel. The five passages selected for case studies are: (1) the Magi passage (2:1-12), (2) the plot against Jesus by the chief priests and the fixing up of the price of betrayal with Judas (26:3-5, 14-16), (3) the return of the blood-money by Judas (27:3-7), (4) the guards at the tomb and the Roman seal (27:62-65), and (5) the reports of the guards (28:2-4 and 11-15).

The first of these passages, as stated in chapter one, is considered to be mythological³⁵¹ by some critical scholars due to its legendary nature involving a star and the Magi.³⁵² The second and third passages are alleged to contain fictional elements produced by the imagination of the Evangelist. The fourth and fifth passages are known to be preemptive apologetic fictions of the Evangelist to counter the earliest and popular Jewish objection to the Resurrection and

³⁵¹ Willoughby C. Allen, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to S. Matthew*, Third Edition (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1912), 18-19. Allen reacts to the argument of Usener who contends that, “In the birth narratives, we unquestionably enter the circle of pagan ideas,” and that “the idea is quite foreign to Judaism” (*Encycl. Bib.* iii. 3350). The view is rejected by Allen who shows that supernatural aspects in relation to the expectation of the coming of Messiah had been in the interests of Jewish Messianic speculation before the Christian era as it can be found in Isa 7:14 and Mic 5:3, and certainly in the Alexandrian Jewish interpretation of Isa 7:14 as represented in the LXX.

³⁵² Raymond E. Brown. *The Birth of the Messiah: A Commentary on the Infancy Narratives in Matthew and Luke* (New York: Image Books, 1979), 25-26. Brown shows that “The infancy narratives have been a prime target for rationalistic scoffing. The frequent angelic appearances, the virginal conception, a marvelous star guiding magi from the east, a child prodigiously endowed with wisdom—to many these are patently legendary themes. In part, such a judgement reflects a general incredulity about the supernatural and the miraculous, an incredulity that is often just as unscientific as the credulity it replaced; but in part it reflects the observations of critical scholarship on historical problems in the infancy narratives.

explanation for the empty tomb—that the body of Jesus was stolen by his disciples when the Roman guards were asleep.

On the other side, some conservative critical scholars have argued for the historical reliability of these passages. This research will look at arguments from both sides, weigh them, and analyze the text to identify linguistic features, including special words, narrative patterns, and internal evidence pointing to the source of information and historical reliability. The discussion will also pay attention to the narrative structure carefully and beautifully employed by the Evangelist at the beginning and the end of the Gospel showing comparisons and contrasts, indicating that the entire work is the product of a single mind, thereby refuting the argument that the M narratives are the work produced by later redactors. By pointing to the unity and purpose in the narrative structure of M materials, the research aims to affirm the scholarly view that the argument for single authorship of the Gospel is stronger than the argument for multiple authors or redactors. However, this research will not refute the possibility of minor redactional or editorial comments at a later stage. If one considers some of the narrative passages in M are the works of redactors of later time, he or she will be forced to believe that the entire narrative structure and its content was the work of a single redactor in order to account for the unity and purpose displayed in those materials.

2. Case Study One: The Visit of the Magi (Matt 2:1-12)

The Magi passage includes angelic interferences and astrological supernatural events. Therefore, as discussed in chapter one, some critical scholars consider this passage legendary or mythological. However, conservative scholars have shown that there is nothing legendary in the appearance of a star as such events do not necessarily require supernatural interventions, because

God being omnipotent, is fully capable of using a natural phenomenon to fulfill a special purpose.³⁵³ That means, one cannot accuse Matthew of making a myth just because he mentions about the appearance of a star as such things are common in this world. To make it simple, there is nothing mythical about the appearance of a star. What can raise some skepticism in the mind of a critical reader is the relationship between the natural or special phenomenon and the arrival of the Magi in Jerusalem after the birth of Jesus. Though David Hughes shows that the Christian worldview does not require the miraculous appearance of a star, early church fathers like Origen and Augustine believed that the star that appeared was not a pre-existing star but a new star that came into existence.³⁵⁴ An understanding of the events from the historical records show that reports of appearances of special stars during the birth of royals were common in the ANE. Townsend Weaver quoted The Sibylline Oracle III from Egypt and the Fourth Eclogue of Virgil to show that throughout the entire East existed an intense conviction about the hope of a powerful monarch arising from Judea to gain dominion over the world.³⁵⁵ Due to the wide expectation and belief in special occurrences of stars during that time, Hughes argues that, people of Matthew's time would have found no abnormality with the report that a star rose to herald the birth of Jesus, or with the claim that the special star lead the Magi to the newborn King of the Jews.³⁵⁶

³⁵³ David Hughes, *The Star of Bethlehem Mystery* (London: J.M. Dent & Sons, 1979), 195.

³⁵⁴ Ibid.

³⁵⁵ S. Townsend Weaver, *The Biblical Life of Christ: A Standard Biography of Our Lord on the Words of the Gospels According to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John* (Philadelphia: International Press, 1991), 13.

³⁵⁶ Hughes, 196.

Some scholars have suggested that Matthew has drawn an elaborate comparison between the early history of the people of Israel and the account of the Jewish-Christian Messiah. They show that the story has all the characteristic features of a form of Midrash known as Midrash Haggadah.³⁵⁷ However, Hughes shows that such a view assumes that Matthew had invented the story of the Magi coming to Jerusalem and visiting Jesus to pay respect to him. Hughes tried to refute such a theory by arguing that “had Matthew invented a story of the star and the Magi, he would have made it more coherent and plausible for his readers.”³⁵⁸ The session below will engage with some important words and phrases in the passage to see the purpose of Matthew in sharing this story, arguments for the reliability of the story, the narrative plot, and identifying possible sources for the narrative based on internal evidence from the text and based on a coincidental narrative passage found in Luke 8:2-3 about Joanna, the spouse of Herod’s household.

i. An Analysis of Important Words and Phrases in the Passage

Matthew’s story about the visit of the Magi after the birth of Jesus does not find mention in any other canonical Gospels. As shown in chapter one, many critical scholars see this passage as an attempt by Matthew to fill the gap between the birth of Jesus and his public ministry that started with the baptism of Jesus. Davies and Allen quote Osborne’s argument that “the story of the Magi in Matthew 2 borrows from Zoroastrianism.”³⁵⁹ Bruce agrees that legendary elements might have gotten mixed up in the Christian tradition of the star-guided visit. However, he also

³⁵⁷ Hughes, *The Star of Bethlehem Mystery*, 197.

³⁵⁸ Ibid.

³⁵⁹ W.D. Davies and Dale C. Allison Jr., *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint Matthew, Vol I* (Edinburgh: T& T Clark, 1988), 143.

points out that, though the whole system of astrology is subject to doubt, it is possible that God, in his providence, might have used the Jewish expectation of the Messiah and a natural phenomenon in the sky to guide some men to the truth.³⁶⁰ On the other hand, Gundry argues for the reliability of the Matthean account by showing that, when apocryphal writers tried to bridge the gap between the birth and baptism of Jesus by making up fanciful stories about Jesus, the fact that Matthew does not make any such claims or stories, indicates that what he writes regarding his birth is actual history.³⁶¹ However, it is possible for a critical scholar to see some fanciful story in the passage about the visit of the Magi.

Matthew begins the Magi passage by identifying the time of the event that he is reporting. “Τοῦ δὲ” in vs.1 is translated by NET Bible as “after.” This translation is justified as the phrase stands in relation to the following verb γεννηθέντος. Matthew uses the aorist tense of the verb here to indicate that the birth has already taken place, but the duration of time after the birth is not specified. It could be a few weeks, a few months, or a couple of years, as per the estimate that Herod attempted to make (Matt 2:7). Herod gathered details about the appearance of the star from the Magi and based on that data, he ordered children under two years to be killed (Matt 2:16). One thing Matthew emphasizes is that the Magi in the story is not making a prophecy before the birth of Jesus, nor are they arriving before or during the birth of Jesus, but are making an affirmation of a prophecy made long ago by Jewish prophets and are responding to its fulfillment. The use of the aorist tense of the verb γεννηθέντος by Matthew is important to show the difference in the narrative from the usual patterns in legend stories. Legend narratives usually

³⁶⁰ A.B. Bruce, *The Synoptic Gospels* (New York: George H. Doran Co., nd), 70-71.

³⁶¹ Robert Horton Gundry, *The Use of the Old Testament in St. Matthew's Gospel: With Special Reference to the Messianic Hope* (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 1967), 195.

claim special astrological signs before or during the birth of a hero, not after the event. For example, the eighth chapter of *Sefer-ha-Yashar* speaks about the appearance of a star in the night sky at the birth of Abraham.³⁶² Similarly, a story was also reported from post-New Testament period about the appearance of a new star of great magnitude in the heavens at the birth of Alexander Severus who was born around A.D. 222.³⁶³ However, in the case of Jesus, the special sign in the space is happening a little while after the birth of the child. The major intention of the author in telling the story of the visit of the Magi does not seem to place “the focus on the supernatural aspect of the birth,”³⁶⁴ but to pass on the details of a special event in history. Robertson also points out that, according to Matthew, the appearance of the star, like in other legendary stories, is not happening during or at the birth of Jesus to make a case for supernatural origin, but after the birth of Jesus.³⁶⁵

After speaking about the time of the arrival of the Magi to Jerusalem, the first noun Matthew mentions is “Ἰησοῦ.” The name ‘Jesus’ means “Jehovah is my salvation.” Matthew seems to be showing the connection of the child with the role of the Savior of Israel right from the beginning of his Gospel as he is building on the Messianic hope of the Jews and Gentiles³⁶⁶

³⁶² Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 234.

³⁶³ *Ibid.*

³⁶⁴ Archibald Thomas Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament, Vol I* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1930), 14.

³⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶⁶ Christopher Fuller, *New Perspectives on the Nativity*, ed. Jeremy Corley (New York: T&T Clark, 2009), 132. Fuller shows that the “context including the messianic expectation of a descendent of David would arise to rule Israel, widespread interest in astronomy, belief in the relationship between celestial occurrences and human events, documented astral events during the period, the reputation of magi in general among Jews and Gentiles as possessors of special powers, etc. seem fitting to be historical facts during the time of Matthew.

in the following verses. Though the Magi are reported to be in Jerusalem,³⁶⁷ Matthew makes it clear that the birth of Jesus already took place in Bethlehem “of Judea’ or ‘Judah,’ (τῆς Ἰουδαίας). Matthew probably specified the location as the little town Bethlehem in Judea so that his readers may not confuse the place of birth with another Bethlehem that existed in the region of Galilee.³⁶⁸ The specifying of location with geographical details informs us that the author was aware of the minute geographical details of Galilee and Judea and knew about the existence of towns with the same name in both regions and that he intended to be historically accurate as far as it was possible by providing details that were available to him. Hagner shows that the town of Bethlehem has a strong theological connection that Matthew wants to show to his readers, as David was anointed there by Samuel, and it was called the town of David (Luke 2:4, 11).³⁶⁹

However, Gundry makes an interesting argument when he suggests that the word Ἰουδαίας’ has to do with the tribe of Jesus rather than the location of his birth. He argues that the word Ἰουδαίας should be translated as ‘Judah,’ and not ‘Judea’ as Matthew is trying to show the connection of Jesus with the kingly tribe of Judah.³⁷⁰ Nevertheless, this may not be the case as Matthew is speaking about the place where Jesus was born. Specifying the time and location of

³⁶⁷ R.C.H. Lenski. *The Interpretation of St. Matthew's Gospel* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1945), 59. Lenski refers to Josephus (*Antiquities*, XX, 2, 1-5) and points out that King Izates and his mother queen Helene of Adiabene in Babylon had converted to Judaism and had sent large gifts to Jerusalem during a famine there in 40-50 AD; and that Matthew's readers would not be surprised or it would not look to them as incredible to consider that a commission of Magi should come to Jerusalem from Babylon.”

³⁶⁸ Donald, A. Hagner, *Word Biblical Commentary, Vol 33A, Matthew 1-13* (Dallas: Word Books, 1993), 26.

³⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁷⁰ Robert H Gundry, *Matthew: A Commentary on His Handbook for a Mixed Church under Persecution* (Grand Rapids: Michigan, 1994), 29.

birth seems to be what is in the author's mind in this passage rather than the tribe of the child. The Evangelist had already spoken in detail about the tribe of Jesus in his genealogy to show the connection with the tribe of Judah in chapter one. Moreover, the following passage speaks about where Messiah would be born, not what his tribe would be. Hence, based on the context, the preferred translation seems to be "in Bethlehem of Judea."

Differing from the patterns of mythological stories, Matthew goes on to identify the historical time and context in which the birth of Jesus took place, and the Magi arrived in Jerusalem. Citing the historical details and other characteristics in the story, Plummer shows that the differences between the Matthean birth narratives and other mythological stories are more remarkable than the resemblances.³⁷¹ Similarly, Leon Morris points out that "The main outline of the story of Magi is in many respects noteworthy for its historical probability."³⁷² Matthew's use of 'ἐν ἡμέραις Ἡρώδου' (in the days of Herod) specifies the time in human history by mentioning the specific name of the local king. In 2:4, the Evangelist tells us that the Magi informed Herod the Great, about the birth of the Messiah. Merz argues that Herod the Great is an indispensable asset in the typological parallel between Jesus and Moses. Herod, in Matthean narrative, resembles and plays the role of Pharaoh during the time of Moses.³⁷³ The rule of Herod the Great, known for his cruelty, resembles the attitude of Pharaoh during the birth of Moses.³⁷⁴

³⁷¹ Alfred Plummer, *An Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1982), 12.

³⁷² Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew* (Grand Rapids: WB Eerdmans, 1992), 34.

³⁷³ Annette Merz, in "Matthew's Star, Luke's Census, Bethlehem, and the Quest for the Historical Jesus," in *The Star of Bethlehem and the Magi*, eds. Peter Barthel and George Van Kooten (Boston: Brill, 2015), 479.

³⁷⁴ P. P. Levertoff, "The Gospel According to Matthew," in *A New Commentary on Holy Scripture: Including the Apocrypha*, eds. Charles Gore, Henry Leighton Goudge, and Alfred Guillaume (New York: Macmillan, 1945), 132. Levertoff argues that "A passage in Midr. *Rabbah* speaks about Pharaoh's astrologers who predicted that the future redeemer of Israel was being conceived by his mother, and the king ordered that all children henceforth born to be drowned. Therefore, Levertoff argues that "Indeed, it is possible that the story of the Magi is,

The historical setting seems to be a fitting time for Matthew to consider as the time of Messiah's birth.³⁷⁵ The historical details seem to be accurate as Matthew provides more information in the following verses about the death of Herod the Great and the beginning of the rule of one of his children.

Herod ruled from 40 to 4 BC, and therefore, the birth of Jesus would have been before 4 BC and probably sometime between 7 and 4 BC.³⁷⁶ Since Herod was the king of the Jews at the time of the arrival of the Magi, they arrived in Jerusalem expecting to find the child who was born as the messianic king of Jews in the palace of the ruler of that time. Matthew has used the plural form of μάγος (μάγοι) to indicate that there was more than one wise man. The traditional assumption of their number being three seems to be based on the number of the categories of gifts they brought for the child. Though many critical scholars consider the arrival of the Magi in Jerusalem after the birth of Jesus to be fictional, Allen notes that the story, in many respects, is noteworthy for its historical probability. He argues that “the modern theory, that the story is a literary fiction, based only upon legendary motif and folklore analogies violates every probability.”³⁷⁷ He bases his primary argument on the character of the author when he says that “Given the editor's character of this Gospel, it is almost certain that Matthew believed what he was transmitting to be matters of fact. And it is in every respect probable that he was not

at any rate in part, a Christian Midrash rather than authentic history, though the compiler of the Gospel may not have recognized its true character.”

³⁷⁵ Merz, *The Star of Bethlehem and the Magi*, 479.

³⁷⁶ Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, 15.

³⁷⁷ Allen, *Matthew*, 18-19.

altogether mistaken.”³⁷⁸ However, an argument for historicity based on the character of the author may not be very convincing to a skeptical mind that questions the motif of the author.

Historically, the word Magi was used to refer to different kinds of people: (i) It is a term used by the Babylonians, Medes, Persians, and others to describe wise men, teachers, priests, physicians, astrologers, seers, interpreters of dreams, augers, soothsayers, sorcerers etc., (ii) to refer to oriental wise men or astrologers, (iii) or a false prophet and sorcerer (Acts 13:6).³⁷⁹ Though some argue that the wizards were Jews from outside of Judea, it is unlikely because the term is usually not used for Jews unless it is specified, and also because the Evangelist informs us that the Magi, unlike the priests and scribes, were unaware of the oracle of Micah that spoke about the birthplace of the expected Messiah.³⁸⁰

The word “Magoi” was historically used to describe magicians. Philo used the term ‘magos’ to describe Balaam, who made predictions about Israel. Philo called Balaam a gentile wizard from the east who predicted a rising star out of Jacob.³⁸¹ Hagner even sees parallelism between the Balaam narrative in Numbers 24 and the Magi passage in Matthew - there is a threatened king, gentile wizards are affirming the presence of God with Israel, and there was talk of a king connected to a star.³⁸² The location of the rising of the star in the Magi passage, and the geographical details of the wise men are not shared by Matthew to the readers, probably because

³⁷⁸ Allen, *Matthew*, 18-19.

³⁷⁹ Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, 15.

³⁸⁰ Hagner, *Matthew 1-13*, 27.

³⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 25.

³⁸² *Ibid.*

he did not receive that information from his source. Had Matthew been making up a story, he could have easily assigned a location to the Magi.

The direction of their coming is identified as ἀνατολῶν from the root word ἀνατολή - which could mean ‘the direction where sun rises,’ or ‘the east,’ and could refer to Parthia, or Babylon, or Arabia, or Egypt.³⁸³ Matthew doesn’t pinpoint the native place of the Magi probably because his source did not provide those details to Matthew in order to prevent giving any possible credit to a specific group of Gentiles for detecting the birth of the Jewish Messiah by looking at the astrological phenomenon. It would have been difficult for the religious leaders of the Jews to digest that the Gentiles, without special revelation, outsmarted their clan by recognizing the birth of the Messiah in spite of the Jews having a special revelation in their hands. It is also possible that the details about the location of the Magi were withheld so that the credit for the revelation in nature goes to God and not to the wisdom of astrologers of a special location or community. However, Matthew makes it clear that the Magi were already in Jerusalem.³⁸⁴ The verb παραγίνομαι means ‘to be present or to approach.’ The aorist use of the verb indicates that the Magi were already in Jerusalem but were on the move, trying to find the birthplace of the Messiah.³⁸⁵ We are also not informed about the duration of time they had been in Jerusalem before Herod called the Sanhedrin. Matthew probably had a narrative plot in mind as he wrote about an event in Jerusalem that involves the Sanhedrin at the beginning of his

³⁸³ Hagner, *Matthew 1-13*, 27.

³⁸⁴ Allen, *Matthew*, 14. Allen shows that there is nothing to be skeptical about the possibility of the astrologers arriving in Jerusalem based on the following reasons: (1) the messianic hopes were high and wide-spread during this period, ((2) and Magi were drawn to Naples during the birth of Augustus as shown in the inscriptions from Priene and Halicarnassus, and (3) when Alexander was born, Magi prophesied the event by looking at the brilliant constellation that the destroyer of Asia was born.

³⁸⁵ BDAG, παραγίνομαι, 1.

Gospel, and where he describes details about the arrest, the death, and the Resurrection of Jesus. According to Matthew, the first incident worth mentioning after the Messiah's birth occurs in the city of Jerusalem. Towards the end of the Gospel, the plot against Jesus by the leaders also takes place in the same city. Matthew seems to be setting up a narrative plot by specifying the location where the political and religious leaders are coming together against Jesus both during his birth and during his death. Jerusalem has a crucial role in birth narratives and in the passion narratives.

Using the word 'λέγοντες,' the Evangelist presents the Magi as seekers. The present active plural form of 'λέγω,' along with the interrogative ποῦ, indicates that the astrologers are unitedly and actively enquiring. Though the word 'λέγοντες' can be translated as 'saying,' the author of this dissertation prefers to translate the word as 'asking,' as it fits the context better. Matthew makes an interesting point to the readers through this passage—the Gentiles take note of the birth of the Messiah first and bring the good news to the leaders of Jerusalem. Eventually, the message was passed on to the high priests and experts of law.

Similarly, we see that the Gentile soldiers also took the good news of Jesus' Resurrection to the high priests before even the Apostles got wind of it from the women who were still on their way to meet the disciples (Matt 28:11). In the narrative plot of Matthew, both the times, during the incarnation and the Resurrection of Jesus, the religious leaders of Judaism gets the news very early. However, the responses from the Jewish religious leaders during both times are perplexing. In contrast, the Gentile world is presented as one that is positively responding to the expectation of the Messiah, and the Jewish religious leadership is presented as a group that shows apathy, rejection, and antagonism to the news of the great miracles of the Incarnation and the Resurrection. In contrast to their attitude, using the verb "ποῦ" (where) in its interrogative form, the Magi are shown to making active queries about where the Messiah was to be born.

It is also important to note that though the astrologers knew that the Messiah was already born; they did not have a special revelation about where he would be born.³⁸⁶ Thus, it would have been natural for them to go to Jerusalem, the capital of Judea and enquire about the expected birthplace of the Child who was born to be the king of the Jews. Matthew shows that the astrologers' knowledge was limited to what God had revealed to them through a phenomenon in the cosmos. They were bound to depend on the special revelation that was already given to the Jews in the Scriptures to get the whole picture, as the revelation in nature always stands limited in comprehensiveness when compared to the special revelation in the Scripture.

In the early part of his Gospel, by introducing Jesus as “βασιλεὺς τῶν Ἰουδαίων,” through the mouth of the Gentiles, Matthew indicates that Jesus was born as the king of the Jews. He was not born ‘to be a king’ or ‘to become a king,’ but ‘born as the king of the Jews.’ We see a narrative plot and employment of a special Matthean language here as the only other place where Matthew used the term “βασιλεὺς τῶν Ἰουδαίων” again is in the passion narratives in which the phrase comes out again from the mouth of the gentiles (27:11).³⁸⁷ Responding to the opinion of some scholars that the Magi were possibly Jews from outside of Judea, Plummer shows that the term indicates that the astrologers were non-Jews because if they were Jews, they would have said “our king” or “the Messiah.” Instead, they are saying about the king of a third party.³⁸⁸ Matthew also shows that it is the Gentiles who accept Jesus as the king of the Jews while the Jewish leadership rejects to accept Jesus as their Messiah or king.

³⁸⁶ Hagner, *Matthew 1-13*, 27.

³⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 26.

³⁸⁸ Plummer, *Matthew*, 13.

Matthew refers to a special³⁸⁹ star that the Magi saw. Using “τὸν” (his) before the word “ἀστέρᾱ” (star), Matthew indicates that, what the astrologers saw was a special star, pointing to a unique phenomenon that occurred in space. Bruce points out that the use of the word ἀστέρᾱ, not ἀστρόν has significance as ἀστέρᾱ means an individual star. In contrast, ‘ἀστρόν’ means a constellation.³⁹⁰ Toussaint comments that the “The unusual stellar manifestation attests the supernatural character of the person the Magi were seeking.”³⁹¹ A similar narrative description can be seen in the mention of earthquake that happens during the death of Jesus. Matthew informs us that the Magi saw the star as it rose in the east.³⁹² The translation here is subject to contention. The word “ἀνατολῆ” could mean ‘in the east’ or ‘in its rising.’ In vs. 2, unlike in vs 1, the singular form ἀνατολή is used. The singular is typically used for the rising of a star and as such should not be translated “in the east.”³⁹³ “Because of the use of singular form ‘ἀνατολῆ’ and the article in contrast to ἀπὸ ἀνατολῶν in vs. 1, it is probably not referring to a geographical experience like the one in vs.1, but rather about an astronomical one referring to a star, like the one mentioned in vs. 9.”³⁹⁴ So, a preferred translation could be that “the Magi saw the star in its rising or as it rose.”

³⁸⁹ Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 216. Davies comments on some critical scholars’ objection to the historical reliability of the story by arguing that the earlier preaching and writings of Paul do not speak about supernatural events at the birth of Jesus. Allen refutes the argument by pointing out that, the gentiles among whom Paul was ministering had a lot of stories about supernatural births and Paul wanted to avoid the possibility of those people taking the birth of Jesus to be similar to one of those stories and thereby miss the uniqueness of Christ.

³⁹⁰ Bruce, *The Synoptic Gospels*, 70-71.

³⁹¹ Stanley D. Toussaint, *Behold the King: A Study of Matthew* (Portland, OR: Multnomah Press, 1980), 50.

³⁹² Ulrich Luz, *Matthew 1-7: A Commentary*. Translated by James E. Crouch (Augsburg, MN: Fortress Press, 2007). 132. Luz says that “The Chinese have attested the appearance of a comet or nova in 5/4 BCE.”

³⁹³ BDAG, ἀνατολή, 1.

³⁹⁴ *NET Bible*, Note on Matthew 2:2.

Commenting on the worldview of the people of ANE about the influence of stars, Stuckrad says that the ancients believed that “the movements of the stars are directly linked to events on the earth, and that comets and planets indicate the will of the gods.”³⁹⁵ Pliny the Elder wrote that “People’s belief held that stars rose with people.”³⁹⁶ The numerous legends about Abraham teaching astrology to Chaldeans and Egyptians show how widespread the influence of astrological beliefs was among Jews³⁹⁷ and how it might have influenced someone like the Evangelist who wrote the Gospel as he heard the story of the Magi and wrote it down. Mention of Abraham in a later Jewish legend speaks about the astrologers of the wicked king Nimrod, who were able to predict the birth of Abraham to Terah as they spoke about a rising star devouring other stars; and advised Nimrod to slay male children.³⁹⁸ As mentioned earlier, the prophecy of Balaam³⁹⁹ in Num 24:17 stating that “A star will go out of Jacob, a scepter will rise from Israel,” seems to have deep rooted influence in the development of the messianic thinking and expectations as the Balaam passage finds mention in various Dead Sea Scrolls.⁴⁰⁰ Jacobus points out that “the prophecy of Amos seems to be standing on a similar belief system as he

³⁹⁵ Kocku Von Stuckrad, “Stars and Powers: Astrological Thinking in Imperial Politics from the Hasmonian to Bar Kokhba,” in *The Star of Bethlehem and the Magi: Interdisciplinary Perspectives from Experts on the Ancient Near East, the Greco-Roman World, and Modern Astronomy*, eds. Peter Barthel and George Van Kooten (Boston: Brill, 2015), 387.

³⁹⁶ Davies and Allison, *Matthew, Vol. 1.*, 233.

³⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 288.

³⁹⁸ Brown, *Narratives*, 543.

³⁹⁹ Jacobus shows that the “star of Balaam” oracle occurs three times in three Qumran documents (Testimonia, War Scroll, and Damascus Document). For details, see: Helen R. Jacobus, “Balaam’s ‘Stars Oracle’ (Num 24:15-19) in the Dead Sea Scrolls and Bar Kokhba,” in *The Star of Bethlehem and the Magi*, eds. Peter Barthel and George Van Kooten (Boston: Brill, 2015), 399.

⁴⁰⁰ Stuckrad, 389.

speaks about “the star of your god” in 5:26.⁴⁰¹ During the time of the intertestamental period, Hasmonians, who gained autonomy for Judea from the second to the first century BC, had a star as the prominent symbol on their coins, indicating that their belief system had something to do with star and that the Hasmonians possibly saw their own rule as the fulfillment of Balaam’s prophecy.⁴⁰² Gundry sees a clear connection between the prophecy of Balaam (Num 25:17), the prophecy of Amos (5:26), and the words of Matthew as these are the only three places in the entire Bible where the word ‘star’ occurs in its singular form.⁴⁰³ Gundry seems to have a good point here.

Though skepticism runs high about the supernatural phenomenon, it has been shown that the historicity of a special occurrence in space has support from “a conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn in the spring of 7 B.C., an extremely rare occurrence that happens only once in 794 years.”⁴⁰⁴ Mounce points out that, “Since Jupiter was regarded as the sign of Palestine, and the constellation of fishes the sign of the last days, the rare conjunction could only mean that the ruler of the last days would appear in Palestine.”⁴⁰⁵ Though Luz holds a view that considers Matthean story of Magi to be legendary, he also agrees that the “Jupitar-Saturn conjunction that appeared three times in the year 7/6 B.C.E., and was predicated by the Babylonian astronomers, would have been a good fit for Matthew to date Jesus’ birth as it was believed by the Jews that Jupiter is the royal star and that Saturn is the star of the Sabbath.”⁴⁰⁶ Merz points out that, when

⁴⁰¹ Jacobus, *The Star of Bethlehem and the Magi*, 408.

⁴⁰² Stuckrad, *The Star of Bethlehem and the Magi*, 389-390, 392.

⁴⁰³ Gundry, *The Use of the Old Testament*, 128.

⁴⁰⁴ Robert H. Mounce, *Matthew*, (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1895), 13.

⁴⁰⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁶ Luz, *Matthew*, 105.

compared with texts of other ancient heroes, the Matthean narrative seems to contain less legendary descriptions and cautions the critical scholars from the field of historical research to refrain from their tendency to hold an unjustified skepticism towards the biblical text and shun the unwarranted confidence in their method as their work has to depend largely on ancient texts.⁴⁰⁷

Matthew also makes an essential theological point in the Magi passage. He uses the verb “προσκυνῆσαι” in its aorist infinitive form as ‘infinitive of purpose’ to show the reason for the coming of the Magi to Judea. The word ‘προσκυνῆσαι’ means ‘to worship’ or ‘to pay reverence.’ Though the word can be used for paying reverence to human beings, it is usually used to acknowledge that someone is a super-human being.⁴⁰⁸ According to Matthew, the purpose of the coming of the Magi to Judea is not to pay political respect but to worship the child who is the Messiah. Matthew is keen to tell his readers that Jesus was born as the Messiah, the King, worthy to be worshipped even as a child. Jesus did not achieve messiahship or kingship at a later stage in life. He was divine in his birth, even as he became a human child in his Incarnation. In Jesus, God became man, unlike in mythological stories in which heroes become gods. Moreover, as a Jew who held a strict monotheistic view of God, Matthew is making a giant theological leap by showing that Jesus was worthy of being worshipped even at his birth. For a Jew to consider the possibility of a child being worthy of worship is to be seen as a huge theological paradigm shift in the concept of God. According to the Evangelist, Jesus did not achieve legend-hood or

⁴⁰⁷ Merz, *The Star of Bethlehem and the Magi*, 464-467, 479. “Merz also reminds the readers that “Matthew wrote in a cultural climate where possible proofs from scripture and the interpretation of the present in the light of a normative past were extremely common.”

⁴⁰⁸ BDAG, προσκυνέω, 1a.

divinity after performing some miracles or heroic acts during his life. Matthew says that he was worthy of receiving worship even in his birth as a human baby.

Matthew indicates that the arrival of the Magi, asking for the Messiah, caused stress to some people in Jerusalem. The verb “ἐταράχθη” in its aorist, passive, indicative, third person use informs us that the news caused agitation or anxiety in some people, and they were stirred up within themselves. The root word ‘tarasso’ means an ‘inward turmoil.’⁴⁰⁹ Herod was known to be a man who was very obsessed with safeguarding his position even by murdering his own children. The description of Herod by the Evangelist in this passage fits with the character of the man that we know from other historical sources.⁴¹⁰ Matthew used the adjective “πᾶσα,” which means all or whole, to say that the whole of Jerusalem was in turmoil with Herod. The Evangelist probably used the word as a hyperbole to symbolically refer to the king and the entire Sanhedrin as representative of the whole city. At the most, the word πᾶσα could refer to ‘all’ those who came in to direct and indirect contact with the astrologers and the ones who directly or indirectly heard the news they brought.

Herod responds to the news by gathering the “ἀρχιερεῖς” and the “γραμματεῖς.” The title ‘ἀρχιερεύς’ could refer to chief priests or high priests. The use of the title in its plural form of the noun shows that more than one high priests were ministering at the same time, as indicated by Josephus, which could include the ruling high priest, the ones who were deposed, or the head of a priestly family.⁴¹¹ Matthew uses the plural form of the noun with adjective “πάντας” to make it clear to the readers that there were a few high priests or chief priests who were informed of the

⁴⁰⁹ BDAG., ταρασσο, 2.

⁴¹⁰ Josephus, *The Antiquities of the Jews*. XIV, XV, XVI, XVII.

⁴¹¹ BDAG, ἀρχιερευς, 2, a.

news of the birth of the Messiah, just like there were many chief priests to whom the news of the Resurrection was reported (Matt 28) by the Roman guard. Matthew’s use of the phrase “high priests” or “chief priests” is shown to be twenty-five times and the phrase “scribes” twenty-two times, which is way more than any other NT writers.⁴¹² The high priests and chief priests came from the Sadducees group during the time of Herod, and they were expected to be loyal to the Roman government who appointed them. “Scribes” (γραμματεῖς) represented the Pharisees in the Sanhedrin as ‘experts’ in the law of Moses.⁴¹³ Chapter one of this research has already looked at the possible identity of Matthew as a former Jewish priest. The Evangelist presents the scribes in Jerusalem as a united party with the Sadducees at the center of power (Sanhedrin). Gundry shows that the gathering of all chief priests and the teachers of the law represent both the Sadducees and the Pharisees that formed the Sanhedrin with representation from both parties.⁴¹⁴ Thus, both parties are responsible for ignoring the good news brought to them by the wise men from the east through the natural revelation they received in the light of earlier prophecies recorded in the Jewish Scriptures. It is also important to pay attention to all parties involved in the meeting. There are four parties—Herod the King, who is a half-Jew, chief priests of the Jews who are Sadducees; the teachers of the Law, who are Pharisees, and the Magi, who are Gentiles. It is such a diverse group representing the nation and major sects of Judaism. On the other hand, the meeting was not attended by the public. The details of the meeting and the conversation could have come to the public only through someone who was present at the meeting or was informed about it. We will discuss this point in detail below.

⁴¹² Morris, *Matthew*, 38.

⁴¹³ BDAG, γραμματεῖς, 2a.

⁴¹⁴ Gundry, *Matthew*, 28.

Matthew informs the readers that the chief priests and the scribes had the right information from the Scriptures regarding the expected place of the birth of the Messiah. In vs 5, “Βηθλέεμ τῆς Ἰουδαίας” is specified again to differentiate between the town of Bethlehem in Judea and the town of Bethlehem in Galilee. The response of the high priests and scribes is a unanimous one as they state that “it is written” (γέγραπται). The root of the word ‘γέγραπται’ is ‘γράφω,’ which sounds similar to the word used for scribes (γραμματεῖς) and could be a wordplay by the Evangelist to show the importance he ascribes to his scribal peers.

The response of the chief priests and the scribes, “in Bethlehem,” is written as a quotation from the mouth of the Sanhedrin. The Evangelist writes it down as if it was reported or recorded by a hearer who writes it down or reports it to someone else. The report, written or oral, requires an eyewitness who was present in the gathering of the Sanhedrin. No disciple was present at this meeting. Nor was a family member of Jesus involved. The attendees’ details and communication must come from an internal source. Hagner shows that Matthew might have an apologetic purpose in telling this story as Jesus was later known to be the ‘Jesus of Nazareth,’ and people expected the Messiah to come out of Bethlehem. Hence, Matthew tells the story of the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem to connect Jesus with that town to show the fulfillment of the prophecy to support the belief that Jesus is the Messiah.⁴¹⁵ Though Matthew does not claim a fulfillment here, the theme is implied in the prophecy as the child is said to be already born.

While some critical scholars argue that such fulfillment ideas are fictional, Allen shows that “it is irrational to expect the Messiah not to fulfill some of the expectations the people had about the Messiah as the other option would demand that the Messiah contradicts all

⁴¹⁵ Hagner, *Matthew 1-13*, 29.

expectations and does not fulfill any of them.⁴¹⁶ Allen shows that it is illogical and unjustifiable to argue that the Messiah would not fulfill any of the messianic expectations that people held.

Allen puts it so well when he says that:

If that were so, we should be reduced to the unphilosophical position that the Jewish anticipation of a Messiah could never be fulfilled in any of its developments because the supposed realization of these anticipations would always be regarded with suspicion on the ground that anticipation and fulfilment were too closely in agreement. On these lines, the only possible Messiah would be one who contradicted in every respect the ideas which previous generations had formed of Him.⁴¹⁷

Vs. 6 records a quotation from Micah 5:2 and 3. Matthew puts it as if Sanhedrin made the combined quote. The quote slightly differs from the text of the LXX and the MT. But the differences are minor. The blending of two quotes in order to say the same thing with an added emphasis, used to be a practice of rabbis in those days.⁴¹⁸ Since the quote differs from the text of the LXX and the MT, the narrator or the reporter seems to be aware of the variant texts and is capable of using them from variant readings or from memory.

In verse 6, Matthew uses the word “ποιμανεῖ” to describe the kind of leadership that Jesus would display. The use of the word ‘shepherding’ to describe the leadership style of the Messiah seems to be an intentional narrative plot to present Jesus as the Davidic king.⁴¹⁹ Gundry argues that a similar narrative plot can be seen in verse 7 through the special Matthean use of the word λάθρα which is used only one more time by Matthew himself in 1:19 and is found nowhere else in the Synoptic Gospels.⁴²⁰ Gundry sees a parallel use in the passion narratives and argues

⁴¹⁶ Allen, *Matthew*, 19.

⁴¹⁷ Ibid.

⁴¹⁸ Hagner, *Matthew*, 29.

⁴¹⁹ Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids: W B Eerdmans, 2005), 115.

⁴²⁰ Matthew 1:19 speaks about the secret intention of Joseph to divorce Mary due to her pregnancy.

that the word is used as “a preview of the Sanhedrin’s plot to arrest Jesus stealthily and kill him (26:3-5).”⁴²¹ Gundry also shows that the word ἠκριβωσεvis, which means ‘ascertained’ occurs only here in the NT and argues that the passage contains words that are unique to Matthew and therefore, the source should be from one single “collateral material”⁴²² that he is using for developing the narrative.

Herod instructed the Magi to go and then return with specific information about the exact location of the child so that he could also go and worship him. The warning in vs. 12 informs us that the intention of Herod was evil. Josephus confirmed that “Herod was capable, crafty, and cruel,”⁴²³ a truth verified by his actions as he had put to death some of his own children and other family members to protect his throne by annihilating any possible threats or challenges.

The Magi left the palace, and as they went from Jerusalem to Bethlehem, they were led again by the star. Gundry shows that the Magi already knew that they were heading to Bethlehem. Still, the reappearance of the star is to point them to the exact location and to “reemphasize the legitimacy of Jesus’s kingship and the illegitimacy of Herod’s kingship.”⁴²⁴ The appearance of the star brings great joy to the Magi, and they are finally led to the house where the baby was found.⁴²⁵ Matthew uses the phrase “χαρὰν μεγάλην,” which means ‘great joy’ to

⁴²¹ Gundry, *Matthew*, 30.

⁴²² *Ibid.*, 30-31.

⁴²³ Josephus, *The Antiquities of the Jews*. XIV, XV, XVI, XVII.

⁴²⁴ Gundry, 31.

⁴²⁵ Allen, *Matthew*, 14. Allen shows that there are only some elements in the entire narrative that looks like non-historical. He argues that “The main outline of the story of the Magi is in many respects noteworthy for its historical probability. The expectation of a world’s Redeemer, or in Palestine of a Jewish Messiah; the interest of Eastern Magi in these questions; their presence in the west to do homage to the supposed Savior; the inference from Mic 5:1 that Bethlehem was to be His birthplace: all this violates no canon of historical probability. The only detail that has a legendary atmosphere about it is the statement that the star moved before the Magi as they went to Bethlehem, until it stayed over the house where the child lay. This may be due to the Jewish narrator poetically accounting for the fact that the Magi were successful in their search for the child.”

describe their mood. Nolland points out that, “with the hindsight that comes from looking back from the end of Matthew’s story it is probably right to find some foreshadowing, especially in the scale of Magi’s joy . . .”⁴²⁶ A careful narrative plot can be seen here as the same phrase is used in 28:8 to describe the mood of the women after an angel told them about the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. On the other hand, in the narrative plot of Matthew, at the end of the Gospel, we see the Sanhedrin conspiring to hide the news of the Resurrection of the Messiah.

The Magi accomplished the stated purpose of their visit (2:2) by bowing down and worshipping the Messiah. By using the word “προσεκύνησαν” Matthew makes it clear that the Magi did offer worship⁴²⁷ to Jesus. A narrative plot of Matthew can be seen again in the use of the word ‘προσεκύνησαν’ to describe the response of the women and the disciples as they bow down and worship the Resurrected Christ who appeared to them (28:9, 17). Gundry points out that, in the narrative scheme of Matthew, the Magi stand “as prototypes of Jesus’ disciples.”⁴²⁸

The story of the Magi ends as Matthew tells us that they were warned in a dream not to return to Herod and therefore went back to their own land through a different route. The dream contained a warning that had to do with the safety of the child. The dream again reinforces the Jewish apocalyptic influence in the Matthean worldview that believed in divine interventions in human history. Brown speaks about a similar intervention in which God appeared in a dream to Amram, the father of Moses, to tell him that the child about to be born would escape those who

⁴²⁶ Nolland, *Matthew*, 118.

⁴²⁷ Gundry, *Matthew*, 32. Gundry argues that the offer of gold given as a gift “often has to do with offerings to God.” Gundry also sees an OT pattern that Matthew uses here with possible connections to the mentions of gold as a gift to a superior king in Israel (Ps. 72:10-11; Isa 60:2-3, 6). According to Gundry, Jesus is presented as type of Solomon due to possible influence from the apocalyptic literature *Psalms of Solomon* 17:31 which says that “So that nations will come from the ends of the earth to see his glory, bringing as gifts her children who had become quite weak, and to see the glory of the Lord with which God has glorified her.”

⁴²⁸ *Ibid.*

were watching to destroy him.⁴²⁹ Morris points out that the word “χρηματισθέντες” used for warning often “indicates a divine utterance” or “a revelation.”⁴³⁰ As we find no details about the Magi after they returned to their own land through another route, the only possible source of information about the dream and the return through another route is through the ones the Magi met at the house of Jesus. Besides Jesus, they had met Joseph and Mary, and one of them could be the source for the second part of the Magi story (2:11). Commenting on the historical reliability of the Magi story, Keener takes a moderate view when he says, “Given its probable earliness, the story more likely than not preserves a historical core, but with insufficient historical evidence to offer judgment.”⁴³¹

ii. A Discussion to Identify Some of the Jewish Priests and Scribes as Likely Sources of the Story about the Visit of the Magi

As discussed above, had Matthew invented the story from his imagination, he would have made it more plausible with additional details and clarity. For example, Matthew could have mentioned a location from where the Magi came and could have given their number and names. However, even if one grants that the Magi’s visit happened, there remains a question about how Matthew knew about it. As mentioned above, the second part of the visit, informing about the details of the events after they left Jerusalem, could have come from Joseph or Mary. The discussion above showed that there were four groups of people in the palace of Herod when he wanted to find out the place where the Messiah would be born: the Chief priests, scribes, the Magi, and Herod himself. We do not have indication of the disciples of Jesus having any

⁴²⁹ Brown, *Narratives*, 229.

⁴³⁰ Morris, *Matthew*, 41.

⁴³¹ Keener, *Matthew*, 98.

interactions with the Magi after they returned to their land. Hence, we can rule out the possibility of them being a source to Matthew. Herod died in 4 BC. Therefore, he is an unlikely candidate to be a source. That leaves us with the chief priests and elders. As discussed in chapter two of this dissertation, Luke spoke about the conversion of a large number of Jewish priests in Jerusalem to the Way (Acts 6:7). It is possible to think that some of the priests who converted to the Way were aware of the visit of the Magi and the meetings. Some of them could have informed Matthew directly or indirectly. Another possibility is that one of the scribes from the Sanhedrin converted to the Way and passed on the information to Matthew, who was known as a Christian scribe in his community.

One must remember that the Magi passage is the first of Matthean special narratives in which the common factor of Jewish ‘chief priests’ is mentioned. As noted above, the passage contains two quotations from the OT that are put into the mouth of the chief priests and the scribes. If Matthew’s writing was based on an actual report from someone, that person had to report it word for word to Matthew for him to quote it after so many years. No Apostle was present there, and no disciple had access to the meeting. If Matthew got his information from one or more Jewish priests or scribes, we could take the story to be a little more reliable because Matthew based his story on the reports of some people who were likely eyewitnesses of some of the events reported in M narratives.

While considering various possible sources for the details in the Magi Passage, an important point is the time-gap from the original event to the time of writing. In chronological order, the author stands closer to the latest event in the life of Jesus and farther distanced from the early days of Jesus’ life. Brown has pointed to this aspect of biographical details in the Gospel where the author stands distanced from the earlier events. He says that the narrative plot

of Matthew is working backwards. Matthew has seen and witnessed what happened during the public ministry of Jesus and the events of the Passion Week. Having that picture clear in his mind, Matthew arranges the information he gathers as he traces the early days of Jesus. “The Gospels are shown to be “developing backwards—the newest concerning his death and resurrection and the oldest regarding his birth and infancy.”⁴³² Therefore, Matthew, who was not present during the time of the birth of Jesus, had to depend on the testimonies of others. Brown makes a discussion on the possible sources of infancy narratives as:⁴³³

- a. Other Apostles: None of the Apostles were said to be present before the baptism of Jesus. James was not born to be a direct source of information. Moreover, the birth narratives were not part of the early apostolic preaching recorded in Acts, 1 Cor 11:23, and 15:3.
- b. Family and friends of Jesus: Gospel records indicate that the people who were around Jesus knew nothing about extraordinary infancy (Matt 13:53-58; Luke 4:31-32, 36-37).
- c. Joseph: Joseph does not seem to be alive during the ministry of Jesus and could not have been a source of information about the infancy of Jesus to pass it on to the Apostles.
- d. Mary: While chances are high that Mary is the primary source of the infancy narratives in Luke, it is unlikely that she is the source of information to Matthew as she plays a secondary role in it.

Brown concludes that “no corroborating witness can be ascribed” as source or sources for the birth narratives that include the Magi passage.⁴³⁴ Brown ignored to consider the Jewish priests as a possible source. However, a closer study of the passage shows that only a few details about the second half of the visit of the Magi need to come from a different source other than the

⁴³² Brown, *Narratives*, 26.

⁴³³ *Ibid.*, 33.

⁴³⁴ *Ibid.*

Jewish Priests/Scribes. All other information would have come from some Jewish priests or scribes as they met the Magi in person and conversed with them.

Hendricksen points to an important aspect of the story of the visit of the Magi. He says that “the visit of the Magi is an interesting account for the extra information it reveals about the star and for the information it hides about the details of the Magi—like their names and location.”⁴³⁵ It is possible that the Jewish priests withheld such important details due to the possible jealousy in the hearts towards the pagan Magi who had such a knowledge of the times and signs better, compared to the Jewish priests who were supposed to be the ones better positioned to have that. It is possible to assume that the ultimate source of the information to Matthew was likely to be the same—the Jewish priests or scribes. However, the second half of the Magi passage that describes events after they left Jerusalem could have come from Joseph, who shared it before his death, or from Mary, who shared it with Matthew or his associates.

Another candidate identified as a possible source of the first half of the Magi story is Joanna, the wife of Chuza. Luke informs that Chuza was the manager of Herod’s household (Luke 8:3). Joanna was healed of a sickness by Jesus and became an active follower and supporter of Jesus (Luke 8:2-3). Since her husband Chuza was the manager of Herod’s household, it is possible that he was aware of the visit of the Magi and the meeting that took place in Herod’s Palace. It is possible to think that Joanna got information about the visit of the Magi from Chuza and passed on that information to Matthew. However, such a possibility is less likely to be true for the following reason. Chuza was the household manager of Herod the Great’s son, the local ruler during Jesus’s public ministry. For Chuza to be aware of the meeting

⁴³⁵ William Hendricksen, *Exposition of the Gospel According to Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1975), 155.

between Herod, the Sanhedrin and the Magi, Chuza also had to be the manager of Herod the Great. Nevertheless, that is not impossible, as households could keep the same manager even when the head of the household changes.

iii. A Summary of the Case Study on the Narrative about the Magi

Matthew uses his narrative skills to present some extraordinary events towards the beginning of his Gospel, in which the Gentile astrologers identify Jesus as the Jewish Messiah. Still, he is rejected by the Jewish leadership of Herod the King, the chief priests, and scribes. He presents a similar story at the end of the Gospel, where the Gentile Roman guards report the Resurrection of the Messiah, again to be rejected by the religious leaders of Judaism. The Gentiles are shown to be receptive to God's plan and revelation, while the Jewish leadership rejects God's plan and revelation. One can also see an apologetic purpose active in Matthew's words right at the beginning of the Gospel that identify Bethlehem as the birthplace of Jesus, as opposed to Nazareth, with which Jesus used to be identified by common men. Also, by identifying Jesus as the Messiah and King of the Jews right at the birth of Jesus, Matthew shows that Jesus, in his Incarnation, was worthy of being worshipped. Matthew also uses various apologetic ideas like, fulfillment of prophecy, clarification on the place where Jesus was born, historical facts regarding the time of Jesus' birth, and the details of a special revelation in nature given to the eastern astrologers to affirm the divine nature of Jesus.

As shown above, Matthew tells the story of Jesus' birth in relation to real people, in a historical point of time, and in a real place, as opposed to mythological or legendary stories in which historical data is usually lacking and supernatural events are believed to have taken place before or during the birth of a hero. Keener has argued that "biographers intended biographies to be essentially historical works... though they focused more on the virtues of their chosen

protagonists and generally intended their works for less technical audiences.”⁴³⁶ Matthew’s story stands out from myths and legends. It is part of a great narrative game-plan that includes apologetic goals in a similar narrative at the beginning and another one at the end of the Gospel.

The discussion above has also pointed out that the information about the first half of the Magi passage could have come to Matthew only from some members of the Sanhedrin, consisting of the Jewish chief priests and scribes, or from Joanna, the wife of Chuza. It is plausible to assume that the first part of the story, until the departure of the Magi from Jerusalem, came from the chief priests or scribes and the details about events after their departure from Jerusalem came from Mary.⁴³⁷ It is unlikely that Matthew would make-up a story with fictitious elements in His Gospel as it could undermine the reliability of his entire work. The discussion above has shown that, in spite of lacking some specific details, the passage contains a number of historical data and literary features that distinguish it from other myths and legends about heroes of the past.

3. Case Study Two: Secret Meetings to Plot against Jesus (26:3-5, 14-16)

i. A Discussion of the Text

In 26:3, Matthew affirms that Caiaphas was the high priest during the time of the betrayal, arrest and crucifixion of Jesus. That is a piece of information not found in the other Synoptic Gospels. However, there seems to exist a contradiction between this passage and the claim of Luke in Acts 4:6, where he states that Annas was the high priest during that time. The

⁴³⁶ Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 18-19.

⁴³⁷ Though Jesus can be considered as a possible source of information, he would be only an indirect source as he would have been told about the visit of the Magi by his mother Mary.

confusion is probably due to the fact that Annas was deposed as high priest in A.D. 15 and replaced by Caiaphas in A.D. 18. However, Annas did not die until A.D. 36, and until his death, he is said to have retained a great deal of power and influence among the Jews.⁴³⁸ Moreover, John (18:13) agrees with Matthew on Caiaphas being the high priest at this time and also informs that Annas was the father-in-law of Caiaphas. According to Matthew, Caiaphas, the high priest, is hosting the meeting in his house as he leads from the front to plot against Jesus. Annas might have acted as a patriarch of the family or as a political mentor.

Lenski points out that the location of the meeting is crucial. The secret meeting took place at the house of Caiaphas the High Priest and not in the Chanujoth at the south side of the temple court, where such meetings were usually held.⁴³⁹ This implies that the meeting was a secret meeting attended by a closed group of people. Therefore, it can be ascertained that information about this meeting could have come to Matthew only from someone who was part of this meeting.⁴⁴⁰ A factor common to the Magi passage and this passage is the involvement of the chief priests. The elders were also present in the first meeting in which they plotted to arrest and kill Jesus (26:4). However, the scribes were not part of this secret meeting (26:3). Therefore, information about this meeting could have come out only through the priests or elders. However, it is important to keep in mind that the Jewish chief priests seem to be always present in events reported from the opposition camp, whereas the presence of scribes and elders is inconsistent.

⁴³⁸ B. M. Newman, and P. C. Stine, *A Handbook on the Gospel of Matthew* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1992), 790.

⁴³⁹ Lenski. *Matthew*, 1004.

⁴⁴⁰ In this dissertation, whenever similar claim is made, it accepts the possibility of other people who might have got information about the meeting and passed it onto someone and so on, until the news found its way to Matthew. However, the buck stops with the Jewish priests, elders and scribes depending on which group or groups were present in those meetings.

Matt 26:3-5 and 14-16 are not considered strictly unique to Matthew by some critical scholars because Mark⁴⁴¹ and Luke⁴⁴² also mention the scheming in Mk 14:1-2, 10-11, and Luke 22:4-6. However, it can be argued that some of the details in the passage are unique to Matthew because, unlike Mark and Luke, Matthew has given us some specific details regarding the location and attendees of this secret meeting. Though Mark is aware of this meeting, he does not give the details Matthew provides. In addition to the Markan and Lukan narratives, Matthew provides us three unique details about this meeting: (i) The high priest also was involved in the plot to arrest and kill Jesus, (ii) the location of the meeting is identified as the palace of the high priest, and (iii) the high priest who hosted the meeting is identified as Caiaphas.

In addition, verses 14-16 inform us that the betrayal price was fixed to be thirty pieces of silver. Though Mark and Luke agree that money was involved in the deal between the Sanhedrin and Judas, none of them report what the amount was. Matthew alone among the Synoptic writers, had such details which were privy to the chief priests, elders, and Judas. The omission of scribes from this meeting has drawn attention from scholars. Some scholars think that Matthew replaced the scribes with elders in this passage as an intentional move to avoid casting the people of his clan in a negative light.⁴⁴³

⁴⁴¹ Mark 14:1-2 reads “Now the Passover and the Festival of Unleavened Bread were only two days away, and the chief priests and the teachers of the law were scheming to arrest Jesus secretly and kill him. “But not during the festival,” they said, “or the people may riot.” Mark 14:10-11 reads,¹⁰ “Then Judas Iscariot, one of the Twelve, went to the chief priests to betray Jesus to them. They were delighted to hear this and promised to give him money. So he watched for an opportunity to hand him over.” (NIV).

⁴⁴² Luke 24:4-6 reads, “And Judas went to the chief priests and the officers of the temple guard and discussed with them how he might betray Jesus. They were delighted and agreed to give him money. He consented, and watched for an opportunity to hand Jesus over to them when no crowd was present.” (NIV).

⁴⁴³ Morris, *Matthew*, 644. Morris argues that the scribes are not involved in the plotting meetings as the purpose of those meetings had nothing to do with Scriptures or examining of the Scriptures.

In 26:14, Matthew informs that Judas had gone to the chief priests to plot against Jesus. No one from the groups of elders and scribes were present in the second meeting between the chief priests and Judas to plot against Jesus. Matthew has accurate information about the number of coins (thirty) and knows what kinds of coins (silver) were given to Judas as the price of betrayal. It is possible that Matthew had an additional motif in omitting the scribes and elders from this second meeting. Matthew probably wished to narrow down the responsibility of arresting Jesus to the Jewish chief priest and Judas. Since only the chief priests are involved in the meeting with Judas, one or more of those priests might have become a direct or indirect source of information to Matthew. There is a slim possibility that Judas mentioned the meeting and its details, including the betrayal price, to his peers. That doesn't seem likely as Mark and Luke are unaware of any such details. Moreover, none of the other canonical Gospel writers mention about the disciples having any communication with Judas after he betrayed Jesus. Since elders and scribes are not involved in this secret meeting between Judas and the chief priests, the source of information can be reasonably narrowed down to just one group—the Jewish chief priests. Lenski points out that “Matthew alone quotes the words of Judas spoken to the chief priests and the amount of silver fixed as the price for betrayal . . . Matthew also informs that the price of betrayal was weighed out right then and there. . . . The promise and the agreement was carried out then and there as Judas would probably do nothing before receiving the money.”⁴⁴⁴

As mentioned in chapter two, “thirty pieces of silver” is said to be the traditional purchase price of a slave in those days.⁴⁴⁵ Since Matthew does not say anything about the source

⁴⁴⁴ Lenski, *Matthew*, 1012.

⁴⁴⁵ W. F. Albright and C. S. Mann, *Matthew: Introduction, Translation, and Notes* (New York: Doubleday, 1971) *Matthew*, 316.

of his information, Allen feels that Matthew quotes the number from Zech 11:13 to make up another fulfillment narrative.⁴⁴⁶ However, such a view would assume that there are no other options for Matthew to have received details of the betrayal price. Accepting Allen's suggestion would require one to assume that Matthew was trying to fill in the blanks by looking at some passages in the OT that could be connected to the events in the life of Jesus. In any case, one cannot overlook the fact that Matthew saw a connection between the prophecy of Zechariah in 11:13 and the betrayal price the Jewish chief priests paid to Judas. He wanted his readers to see that another specific prophecy got fulfilled in the life of Jesus Christ.

The author of this research also sees a narrative plot between the birth narratives and the passion narratives in which Matthew lists the plots against Jesus by Herod the Great to kill Jesus at the beginning of his life and the one by the Jewish chief priests to kill Jesus towards the end of his public ministry. The religious leaders wanted to accomplish what the political leader had failed to accomplish earlier. One can also see a comparison behind their intention. Herod intended to kill Jesus because he thought his authority was in danger. Matt 26:4 informs that the chief priests and elders intended to arrest and kill Jesus. It is possible that they were motivated to act swiftly to put an end to Jesus's life and ministry after they might have felt that they were losing their authority after Jesus cleansed the Jerusalem temple and spoke about its possible destruction.

ii. A Summary of Plausible Sources

Matthew does not identify his source when he reports about events and communication that took place in the camp opposed to Jesus. There are only two parties in the first meeting

⁴⁴⁶ Allen, *Matthew*, 269.

(26:3-5). They were the chief priests and the elders who were members of the Sanhedrin. Therefore, the only plausible source for the details of the first meeting could be the Jewish chief priests or elders who were present in this meeting. Matthew might have got access to the information directly or indirectly from one or more of them who shared it with Matthew or someone else who eventually passed it on to Matthew.

The participants of the second meeting (Matt 26:14-16) are different from those in the first meeting. The chief priests are still there, and it probably includes the high priest as they make a deal with Judas in which money is involved. The elders, who were part of the first meeting, are not involved in this meeting. As mentioned above, it is not likely that Judas would have leaked out the details about the second meeting. Therefore, it is reasonable to think that one or more of the Jewish chief priests could have been Matthew's direct or indirect source based on whose words he developed the two narratives on the plots to arrest and kill Jesus. If Matthew was not informed directly by some of the priests in the camp opposed to Jesus, the other option is that they shared the information with someone else, and it eventually got to the ears of Matthew. In any case, the buck stops at the Jewish priests, as the original information probably came from some of them.

4. Case Study Three: The Return of the Betrayal Price and the Death of Judas (Matt 27: 3-7)

i. A Discussion of the Passage

Matthew's narrative about the return of the betrayal price is unique as it is not found in other Synoptic Gospels. Therefore, the information in this passage probably came from a special

source. However, Luke seems to have heard the story from someone else who provided a slightly different version of the story. He does not say anything about it in his Gospel but mentions it in the Book of Acts (Acts 1:18-20), where Peter is quoted probably from an early oral tradition among early Christians. However, even at the time of writing Acts, Luke does not seem to have access to the source that Matthew used. According to Matthew, Judas was overcome with remorse,⁴⁴⁷ and he went back to the chief priests and elders;⁴⁴⁸ and asked them to take the money back as he felt that he had betrayed “innocent blood.” Nolland shows that the phrase “innocent blood” is used only here in the NT while it can be found nineteen times in the LXX.⁴⁴⁹ Matthew may be relating to a major theme in the OT as it is found in the LXX. Unlike Luke’s description in Acts, Matthew provides additional details about the exact number of coins and the kind of coins that Judas wanted to return. Judas had not spent any of the money he had taken from the Jewish chief priests. Only the chief priests and elders were present in this meeting with Judas as he offered to return the money (27:4). Matthew states that they refused to take the money of betrayal back and left the burden of what to do with it on Judas himself. They washed their hands off the money of betrayal. In verse 6, Matthew describes why the chief priests would not allow the money to be returned. Nolland argues that the decision of the chief priests to reject the

⁴⁴⁷ L Nortje has argued that Matthew wrote down about the remorse of Judas and his intention to return the betrayal price in order to show the contrast in the attitude of the Jewish chief priests who had no regrets at all about what they had done to Jesus and about what they were doing to Judas. See: L. NORTJÉ, “MATTHEW’S MOTIVE FOR THE COMPOSITION OF THE STORY OF JUDAS’S SUICIDE IN MATTHEW 27:3-10.” *Neotestamentica*, vol. 28, no. 1, 1994, pp. 41–51. *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43048123>. Accessed 4 July 2023.

⁴⁴⁸ Morris, *Matthew*, 694. Morris argues that the phrase “the chief priest and elders,” “standing under one definite article (τοῖς) points to the Sanhedrin, the two groups forming one assembly.”

⁴⁴⁹ Nolland, *Matthew*, 1150.

betrayal price was based on the influence of Deut 23:19.⁴⁵⁰ However, there is nothing in the text of Deut 23:19 that speaks about the money involved in a betrayal.

A closer look at the report of the communication between the chief priests and Judas in Matt 27:4 throws some light to help identify the possible source behind the story. When Judas offered to return the money for betrayal, the chief priests asked, “What is that to us?” Interestingly, the reporter of the story is not saying that they said, “What is it to them.” Though it is not a conclusive argument, it is possible that a Jewish priest, who later changed sides, used the first-person pronoun “ἡμεῖς” (“us”) as the subject of the sentence instead of using the third person pronoun ‘them.’

In addition, Matthew provided another specific piece of information that Mark and Luke do not provide. Matthew says that “Judas threw the money into the temple, left the place, and hanged himself (Matt 27:5). Matthew reports that the chief priests picked up the coins from the temple. Matthew then quotes their statement as words coming from the mouth of the chief priests, “it is against the law to put the money into the treasury.” Since Judas had already left the place after throwing the money, the statement of the priests and the rest of the narrative probably came from someone who was present there, after Judas had left.

On top of that, Matthew had access to another unique piece of information about what was done with the betrayal money. The claim that the priests collected the money that Judas had thrown into the temple, and they bought a plot to bury foreigners (27:7), was a historically verifiable claim. Matthew would have undermined the reliability of his Gospel in his own time by making up a story that contained truth claims that could have been easily shown to be

⁴⁵⁰ Nolland, *Matthew*, 154.

fictional. The story ends with a quote from Zechariah to show a theological connection with the price of betrayal, through which Matthew presents another fulfillment idea. In any case, the information that the money was thrown at the temple, the specific number of coins that were thrown, the kind of money that was thrown, that the chief priests collected the money, and that a piece of land was bought⁴⁵¹ with that money, were insider information that could have come only from someone who was in the camp opposed to Jesus. In this case also, the common factor of likely source narrows down to just one group – the chief priests.

To support the argument for the historical reliability of the passage, Lenski shows that, through the use of the phrase “Until today, the place is called,” the Evangelist is showing that the place still exists and that his claims are verifiable.⁴⁵² However, not all scholars think that the passage is based on historical facts for the following reasons. P. P. Levertoff says that “It is impossible to place any confidence in this striking story for the following reasons:

- i. Mark (14:11) had apparently not learned from St. Peter the sum paid to Judas.

However, this is an argument from silence. Just because Mark did not mention the amount, it does not mean that Mark did not know about it.

- ii. The NT has a second story of the death of Judas in Peter’s message (Acts 1:18, 19).

The author of this dissertation will discuss the two accounts below to show that the two stories are not mutually exclusive.

⁴⁵¹ Morris has pointed out that there is rabbinic authority for the use of ill-gotten gains for public benefit. For a detailed discussion, see: Morris, *Matthew*, 696.

⁴⁵² Lenski, *Matthew*, 1081. Lenski also refers to the use of “until today, the place is called,” to argue the Gospel was written before the destruction of Jerusalem.

iii. Matthew's story is apparently based upon a passage in Zechariah (11:12).⁴⁵³

Nevertheless, Allen disagrees with Levertoff based on some strong linguistic reasons. He shows that the narrative shows some strong signs of the rabbinical method due to the Hebrew or Aramaic original forms of the words used in this section. Allen argues that "The story is clearly one in which existing tradition led to the application of the prophecy . . . It seems, therefore, probable that the narrative formed one of a cycle of Palestinian⁴⁵⁴ traditions known to the editor of the Gospel."⁴⁵⁵ Gundry has pointed out that the use of 'κορβανῶν,' a non-Greek word in verse 6 to refer to 'the temple treasury,' indicates that the author was familiar with a Semitic word that is found to be common in the MT.⁴⁵⁶

Though Gundry admits to the possibility that one could see fiction in the passage, he makes a comparison of the Matthean version and the Lukan version to show that there are historical facts that are the same in both versions but have different perspectives on the events related to Judas.⁴⁵⁷ The differences in the details provided by Matthew and Luke about the death of Judas can be reconciled.⁴⁵⁸ Culpepper shows that both stories have some similarities. Matthew

⁴⁵³ P. P. Levertoff, "The Gospel According to Matthew," in *A New Commentary on Holy Scripture: Including the Apocrypha*, eds. Charles Gore, Henry Leighton Goudge, and Alfred Guillaume (New York: Macmillan, 1945), 200-1. Levertoff also argues that the Evangelist purposefully inserted the amount of betrayal as thirty pieces of silver coin to artificially create an impression of another fulfillment of an OT prophecy in Jesus.

⁴⁵⁴ Allen refers to "Palestinian traditions," as the source of most of the M narratives in which the disciples were not a part of the event. See the entire work on M passages by Allen, *Matthew*.

⁴⁵⁵ Ibid., 288-9. Allen shows that, ἀναχωρεῖν, is used ten times by Matthew while Mark uses it at one place and Luke never uses it. Similarly, the word κορβανῶς seems to be retention of the Hebrew word due to the native language of the speaker.

⁴⁵⁶ Nolland, *Matthew*, 1153.

⁴⁵⁷ Gundry, *Matthew*, 553.

⁴⁵⁸ G. D. Kilpatrick, *The Origins of the Gospel According to St. Matthew* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1946), 46.

says that Judas hanged himself. The priest collected the money and bought the land. Luke tells us that Judas bought the land, fell, and burst open. Both accounts tell us that the money of betrayal was used to pay for the land and that the field was called “the field of blood.” Both traditions can be reconciled as follows: Judas threw the money at the temple courts and went away and hanged himself. Eventually, he fell down and burst open.⁴⁵⁹ The death could be from hanging or the fall. Matthew does not really say if Judas died as a result of hanging. He just says that Judas hanged himself. Luke says Judas is the one who bought the land. Culpepper says that “this could be because the money belonged to Judas and the priests picked up the money and bought a piece of land probably in Judas’s name as they did not want to own anything brought with that money.”⁴⁶⁰

Moreover, one must note that Luke does not quote Peter in Acts 1:18-19. The report is based on his own research. He probably looked at the records to see in whose name the land was bought. There are scholarly articles written to show that the word ‘πρηγής’ in Acts 1:18 is a medical term,⁴⁶¹ indicating that the account originally belongs to the investigation done by Luke the physician. It is possible that Matthew ended his story with the hanging of Judas, and Luke provided some additional information about what happened to Judas after he hanged himself. Keener shows that “the absence of Judas in either Christian or anti-Christian accounts there after confirms that historically he met a speedy end.”⁴⁶²

⁴⁵⁹ Toussaint says that a more probable explanation is that Judas hanged himself over a cliff and the rope or branch of the tree he was using broke. When he fell to the rocks below, he “burst open.” See: Stanley D. Toussaint, “Acts,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, New Testament Edition, Eds. John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck, (Colorado Springs, CO: Victor Books, 2000), 356.

⁴⁶⁰ R. Alan Culpepper, *Matthew: A Commentary* (Louisville, KY: Westminster, 2021), 541.

⁴⁶¹ Ely, F. H. “ON ‘ΠΡΗΓΗΣ ΓΕΝΟΜΕΝΟΣ’ IN ACTS 1 18.” *The Journal of Theological Studies*, vol. 13, no. 50, 1912, pp. 278–85. *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23946849>. Accessed 1 July 2023.

⁴⁶² Keener, *Matthew*, 659.

Moreover, the author of this research would like to point out that if Matthew was not reporting a story presented to him as historical facts, he had no reason to put the Jewish priests in a positive light as observers of the Law with regard to money. The priests are also credited for doing a benevolent action because they used the money to buy a piece of land for burying foreigners. Matthew has consistently put Jewish chief priests in a negative light all through his Gospel account. Had this incident not been true, it is difficult to see why Matthew would render double honor to the Jewish chief priests in this passage as keen observers of the Law and as a benevolent group of people. On the other hand, if some Jewish priests reported the story, one can assume that they provided such details to wash their own hands from the guilt of innocent blood by holding Judas responsible for the betrayal.

ii. A Summary of Plausible Sources

Matthew's narrative about the return of the betrayal money to the temple court is alleged to be fictional by some scholars like Levertoff.⁴⁶³ However, it is possible that Matthew was informed of some of the things that happened in the opposition camp that included some communication between Judas and the chief priests. The details provided by Matthew include the emotional frustration of Judas that led him to throw the betrayal price into the temple courts, the communication between the chief priests and Judas, the gathering of money from the temple courts by the chief priests, a decision-making process to buy a piece of land by the chief priests, and the actual purchase of a piece of land with the money to bury foreigners. Since only the chief priests were involved in the decision making process and were the ones who executed the plans after the departure of Judas from the temple courts, a plausible explanation for the source of this

⁴⁶³ Levertoff, *A New Commentary on Holy Scripture*, 200.

information coming to Matthew seems to be none other than some of the Jewish chief priests who were eye-witnesses or hearers of the story from other eye-witnesses.⁴⁶⁴ In this passage also, the Jewish chief priests can be shown as a likely source to Matthew who believed those reports to be historically accurate and constructed the narrative passage based on those reports.

5. Case Study Four: The Guard at the Tomb and the Roman Seal (Matt 27:62-65)

i. Source-Literary Critical Evaluation of the Passage

The Roman guard passage is strictly ‘M’ because Mark and Luke are silent about any such incident. Moreover, there is no mention of any such event in any of the other three Gospels.⁴⁶⁵ Matthew seems to have an apologetic thrust in placing the story before the narrative on the Resurrection to make a preemptive strike against the “theory of stolen body” that was being spread by the Jewish religious leaders of that time as the best explanation or theory to counter the claim of the Resurrection of Jesus and the existence of the empty tomb. Critical scholars call the Roman guard story a pure fiction,⁴⁶⁶ and even some Christian apologists, in

⁴⁶⁴ Culpepper points to possible allusions to the death of Judas to the hanging of villains in the Hebrew Scriptures by pointing out to the examples of Ahithophel (2 Sam 17:23), Haman (Est 7:10), and Haman’s sons (Est 9:14). Culpepper, *Matthew*, 541.

⁴⁶⁵ Henry Alford, *Alford’s Greek Testament: An Exegetical and Critical Commentary, Vol. 1* (Grand Rapids: Guardian Press, 1976), 300–301. The assumption is that, if the story was true, the three other evangelists would not have passed over so important a testimony to the Resurrection. However, Alford refutes this argument by saying that, “But surely, we cannot argue in this way—for thus every important fact narrated by *one Evangelist alone* must be rejected—e.g. (which stands in much the same relation) the *satisfaction of Thomas* and other such narrations. Till we know much more about the circumstances under which, and the scope with which, each Gospel was compiled, all à priori arguments of this kind are good for nothing.”

⁴⁶⁶ Levertoff, *A New Commentary on Holy Scripture*, 203-4. Levertoff argues that the passage is a Matthean addition looking forward to a defense to the Resurrection passage in 28:2–4, and the narratives in 11–15. He casts doubt on the historicity of the report on three grounds: (i) it is extremely unlikely that the Jewish authorities knew that our Lord had foretold His Resurrection in any sense which could tempt His disciples to steal His Body for a fraudulent purpose, (ii) Pilate hated the priests, and would have been extremely unlikely to accede to such a request, (however, Levertoff overlooks the fact that Pilate gave into their demands to have Jesus crucified) since the high priests, if they wished to guard the tomb, could have got it done themselves with the guards in the possession, and

spite of affirming that the whole Bible is inspired and true, consider the Roman guard passages to be less reliable or less useful and shy away from using it in their arguments for the evidence of the Resurrection of Jesus. For example, a large volume of seven hundred plus pages on *The Resurrection of Jesus* by Licona does not even discuss the Roman guard passages⁴⁶⁷ as he is probably not sure about its historical reliability. NT Wright, who discusses the passage, admits that one should “not argue that the story, in both its parts, is historically true in all aspects.”⁴⁶⁸ Similarly, Lueddemann, in his work on the Resurrection, argues that “The tradition of the bribing of the guards cannot be taken seriously.”⁴⁶⁹

However, the story seems to be based on historical facts, as any such imaginative creativity would have undermined Matthew’s authenticity as a Christian committed to truth, even among his own colleagues and in the Matthean community. Moreover, Matthew is referring to the story of “stealing the body by the disciples,” a rumor that was still prevalent among the Jews at the time when Matthew wrote the Gospel. In addition, Matthew would have been inviting unwanted trouble from Jewish leaders and the Roman government for cooking-up a story that brought disrespect to the Jewish religious leaders and the Roman government.

Matthew has gotten wind of some actual events that took place in the opposition camp after the death and the burial of Jesus. Matthew informs that the chief priests and the Pharisees went to Pilate to request to have the tomb of Jesus secured. Combining the chief priests and

(iii) in none of the Gospels do the holy women show any knowledge that the legionaries either are, or have been, on guard.

⁴⁶⁷ See the work of: Michael R. Licona, *The Resurrection of Jesus: A Historiographical Approach* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2010).

⁴⁶⁸ N. T. Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003), 638.

⁴⁶⁹ Gerd Lueddemann, *The Resurrection of Jesus: History, Experience, Theology* (Minneapolis, Fortress Press, 1994), 125.

Pharisees presents a seemingly united representation⁴⁷⁰ of the Sanhedrin⁴⁷¹ to Pilate. Wright feels that the possibility of the Jewish chief priests and the Pharisees collaborating on something is historically implausible.⁴⁷² However, Craig points out that there are many occasions when the chief priests and the Pharisees are shown to be acting together in John's Gospel (7:32, 45; 9:47, 57; and 18:3).⁴⁷³ As mentioned in chapter one of this research, Matthew seems to have intentionally omitted the scribes from this scheming group to keep them in a positive light and have replaced them with the Pharisees. Lenski shows that the Pharisees are probably taking a lead role in this event as they are the ones who believe in the possibility of the resurrection of the dead. Hence, they would have feared the possibility of people believing in the resurrection as opposed to the chief priests who were Sadducees and did not believe in the resurrection of the dead.⁴⁷⁴ Lenski's argument seems to make sense because the Sadducees did not believe in the resurrection of the dead. However, it is probably not true because one has to consider the fact that the representatives of the Sanhedrin, in this case, were not trying to prevent resurrection. Therefore, they did not have to believe in the possibility of resurrection. They were trying to prevent the possibility of the body being stolen by the followers of Jesus to make any false claim. Moreover, the chief priests who hailed from the Sadducee's camp had a better relationship with

⁴⁷⁰ Lenski, *Matthew*, 1142. Lenski argues that "the High Priests got some leaders of Pharisees to collude with them and some of them were probably members of the Sanhedrin to give a representative look to Pilate."

⁴⁷¹ Ibid., 1143. Lenski points out that "Matthew never designates the Sanhedrin by the terms 'the high priests and the scribes,' or 'the high priests and the elders.' Matthew 21:45 is the only other place where the same expression is used." Which means that the use "the chief priests and the Pharisees" in 27:62 is referring to the Sanhedrin—a surprising coming together of theological rivals against Jesus.

⁴⁷² Wright, *The Resurrection*, 637.

⁴⁷³ William Lane Craig, *The Historical Argument for the Resurrection of Jesus* (Lewiston, NY: 1985), 4.

⁴⁷⁴ Lenski, 1142.

the Roman governor to have easy access to him than the Pharisees. Therefore, though the Pharisees might have taken an interest in the matter, the chief priests were the ones who probably led the team to Pilate to get the tomb sealed⁴⁷⁵ and guarded.

The request of the chief priests and the Pharisees to Pilate is reported as a quote “we remember that while he was still alive, the deceiver said, ‘after three days, I will rise again.’”⁴⁷⁶ They used this claim to request Pilate to get the tomb of Jesus secured with the Roman seal and guards so that any possible attempt to steal the body of Jesus by his disciples could be thwarted. While the chief priests had temple guards in their control, they were probably looking for a few Roman guards so that the tomb could be sealed⁴⁷⁷ with the power and authority of the Roman government.⁴⁷⁸ Lenski argues that the Sanhedrin had to depend on the Roman soldiers to seal the tomb and guard it as the “Temple police had only the temple under their jurisdiction and could

⁴⁷⁵ Culpepper hinted at the possibility of an apocalyptic influence on the passage because Matthew seems to have employed a symbolic parallelism in the sealing of the tomb of Jesus and the sealing of the lion’s den into which Daniel was thrown. See: Culpepper, *Matthew*, 2021.

⁴⁷⁶ Wright, *The Resurrection*, 639. Wright points that the chief priests had no chance of knowing this as Jesus had told the disciples about it secretly. Wrights suggest that they would have probably known about it from the passage Matt 2:61 that speaks about rebuilding the temple in three days. In Any case, Wright argues that, had it not been a true statement of knowledge from the side of the chief priests, Matthew would not have credited them with that kind of a knowledge.

⁴⁷⁷ Levertoff, *A New Commentary on Holy Scripture*, 203. Levertoff argues that Matthew got the idea to make-up the story of sealing tomb probably from Dan 6:17. He says that “Nothing is more common in legends than this repetition of the details of old stories.”

⁴⁷⁸ Wright, 640. NT Wright sees a possible influence of the Book of Daniel on the thought of Matthew while writing this passage. Wright argues that “a parallel can be seen between the Roman Guard Passage and “Daniel 6:17 (6:18 LXX). King Darius has a stone laid over the mouth of the lions’ den, with Daniel inside it, and he seals it with his own seal and that of his nobles, leaving Daniel, overnight, to an apparently certain fate. In the morning, of course, the king returns and discovers Daniel safe and sound; there is no mention of taking away the stone, let alone of angels and earthquakes. But someone as alert as Matthew was for biblical echoes can surely not have missed the allusions. Jesus goes to his grave as one who, like Daniel, has been faithful to Israel’s god despite all the forces ranged against him; and, like Daniel, his god will vindicate him. He is, after all, the true ‘son of man’ who as in the next chapter of the book of Daniel, is to be exalted after being apparently prevailed over by the monsters.”

not be sent anywhere else.”⁴⁷⁹ Lenski’s argument make sense in this case as there was no need for the Sanhedrin to go to Pilate if they were going to use the temple guards to watch the tomb.

There is some disagreement among Matthean scholars about Matthew’s report on the number of Roman guards provided by Pilate. Most translators have opted to translate *κουστωδίαν*⁴⁸⁰ to mean a guard. However, the meaning of the word is open to interpretation. The word ‘*κουστωδίαν*’ can be considered to be a unit of soldiers or a single soldier.⁴⁸¹ On the other hand, Matthew 28:4 informs that there were more than one guard at the tomb. NET Bible seems to make an attempt to reconcile the singular use of “*κουστωδίαν*” in 27:65 and the plural use of “*τινες τῆς κουστωδίας*” in 28:11 by translating the word “*κουστωδίαν*” in 27:65 as a collective noun—“a guard of soldiers.”⁴⁸² On the other hand, as discussed above, scholars have pointed out to the possibility that Pilate provided just one guard and the additional guards were probably temple guards who were under the authority of the Jewish chief priests and reported to them only. This view would make better sense in this context, because in the following passage, Matthew says that, after the tomb was empty, the guards reportedly ran to the Jewish chief priests to inform them about whatever had happened instead of running to the Roman authorities. In any case, Matthew seems to have had access to the specific communication between the chief priests, the Pharisees, and Pilate as they discussed about guarding the tomb.

⁴⁷⁹ Lenski, *Matthew*, 1144.

⁴⁸⁰ Gundry, *Matthew*, 584. Gundry shows that the word is strictly Matthean in the NT, used only in 27:65, 66; and 28:11.

⁴⁸¹ Nolland, *Matthew*, 1138. Nolland shows that the word could be used as a verbal noun to refer to a number of guards who are in the duty of watching.

⁴⁸² See: Matt 27:25 and the footnote on the word “*κουστωδίαν*” in the NET Bible.

However, as stated above, the story is written off by many critical scholars as non-historical fiction created by the imaginative mind of Matthew to make a good defense to refute the allegation of Jewish religious leaders that Jesus's body was stolen by his disciples. The presence of Jewish chief priests is the common factor in all the case studies done above including this one. Therefore, it is reasonable to think that some of the Jewish priests who went to Pilate, or someone else who heard the story from a Jewish priest who was part of the delegation to Pilate, provided the vital information to Matthew. If the narratives about the delegation of Jewish Sanhedrin that went to Pilate was not based on events that happened in history, Matthew would be held accountable for indirectly naming Jesus a "deceiver" in 27:63.

A word study of 'κουστωδίαν' throws some interesting light to help one make some clarification on the nature of guard or guards and the historical reliability of the narrative. 'Κουστωδίαν' is originally a Latin word loaned by Greek and means "a group of soldiers doing guard duty" or "a guard composed of soldiers."⁴⁸³ Before Matthew, the word is found to be used in an Oxyrhynchus papyrus of AD 22 to refer to "a guard of Roman soldiers."⁴⁸⁴ That means, the translation provided by the NET Bible, as mentioned above, stands justified. Since the use of the word 'κουστωδίαν' is exceedingly rare during the time when the NT was written and because it is originally a Latin word, Robertson argues that the word 'κουστωδίαν' refers to "a guard of Roman soldiers" and not temple police. Since Matthew is the only one to use this Latin word in his Greek narrative account and since the first time, he uses the word 'κουστωδίαν' it is coming out of the mouth of a Latin-speaking Roman governor, we can make two plausible conclusions. The first one is that Pilate refers to a guard of Roman soldiers as one unit to provide watch at the

⁴⁸³ BDAG, Κουστωδίαν, 1.

⁴⁸⁴ Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, 239.

tomb. The second one is that the rarely used Latin word ‘κουστωδίαν’ quoted as coming from the mouth of a Latin-speaking Roman governor supports the authenticity of the story in a Gospel written in Greek to target readers of non-Latin speaking community. In addition, the story seems to have come from a direct eyewitness who heard Pilate utter the rarely used Latin word ‘κουστωδίαν’ in a conversation that was made in Greek or Aramaic. Or else, one will have to argue that Matthew went to the extent of carefully planting a Latin word in the mouth of Pilate to make the story look convincing for a critical reader of modern day. Therefore, the use of the Latin word ‘κουστωδίαν’ and the use of the phrase ‘a deceiver,’ seem to support the argument for the historicity of the story as opposed to it being a fictional creation of Matthew.

ii. A Summary of Plausible Sources

This case study shows that the narrated event occurred in the opposition camp to which Matthew and other disciples had no access. Similar to the other case studies above, a common factor we can identify as a plausible source is the presence of the Jewish chief priests as an active party. They probably led the delegation to Pilate and requested to get the tomb sealed and guarded. They belonged to the Sadducee’s camp and might have used their better standing with Pilate and the Roman government to make such a special request. Though the elders from the sect of Pharisees also stand as a possible source⁴⁸⁵ of information for this narrative, they are not seen to be always present in the events described in the special narratives of Matthew. On the other hand, the Jewish chief priests are consistently present in most of them. It is reasonable to assume that if Matthew’s story of guards at the tomb was based on historical facts, which seems to be the case, Matthew might have gotten the details directly or indirectly from some of the

⁴⁸⁵ Nolland, *Matthew*, 1238. Nolland agrees that the passage is based on “a source” without trying to identify it.

Jewish chief priests who later changed sides. Also, it is hard to believe that Matthew would have used the word “deceiver” to describe Jesus if it was not actually used by the Jewish leaders in a conversation that is said to have taken place between the Jewish chief priests, the elders, and Pilate. In addition, a word study of Latin word ‘κουστωδίων’ above has shown that its unique use in 27:65 points to the possible historical reliability of the narrative.

6. Case Study Five: The Report of the Guard and Their Bribing (Matt 28:11-15)

i. A Discussion of the Passage

There are two reports of the guards recorded in the narratives by Matthew. The first is the narrative about the events they reportedly made to the Jewish chief priests. The second one is the report of a lie that the soldiers told the public after the Jewish chief priests allegedly bribed them. The two reports of the guards and their bribing are strictly Matthean. Just like the story of the posting of the guard and the sealing of the tomb, this story also is written off by many critical scholars as the creation of the imaginative mind of Matthew as a polemic against the Jewish claim that “the body of Jesus was stolen by his disciples and that Jesus did not rise from the dead.” For this reason, and because other Gospel writers are silent about it, many critical scholars and even some leading evidential apologists shy away from considering this passage to be based on actual history and avoid using it in their defense of the Resurrection.⁴⁸⁶

On the other hand, Matthew’s passage of the guard’s report has some interesting narrative features. Matthew follows up on the guard’s story and provides his readers with an explanation of what happened to the guards and their seal. Right after talking about the experience of women

⁴⁸⁶ For a list of scholars who overlook the evidence, see the discussion on the Roman Guard passage in case study four above.

(28:1-10) who went to the tomb on Sunday morning, Matthew inserts the story of the reports of the guards (28:11-15) before continuing with the disciples' experience again in 28:16ff.

According to Matthew 28:11, the Roman guards ran into the city when the women were still on their way from the tomb to meet the disciples. The guards reached the Jewish chief priests and reported to them everything as it had happened. It is important to note that the party of Jewish chief priests was the only one to which the guards made this report. No elders and no scribes are involved at this stage. That means, according to Matthew, the first ones to know about the Resurrection of Jesus, after the soldiers and the women, were the chief priests, not the Apostles.

Matthew has an interesting narrative plot in this story compared to the birth narratives in chapter two. According to Matthew, just like the news of the birth of the Messiah was announced to the Jewish leaders first in Jerusalem, the story of the Resurrection of Jesus was also announced to them by some gentile agents in Jerusalem even before the Apostles of Jesus got wind of the news. While the Jewish religious leaders ignored the news of the birth of Messiah, they went an extra mile to prevent the good news of the Resurrection of Jesus from getting to the ears of the public. The Jewish chief priests, with the help of the elders, bribed the Roman guards with a large amount and made them tell a lie to the public. The mention of the amount of bribe being large makes sense as the soldiers were taking a high risk by agreeing to lie about what had happened. The perverted report or lie, doctored by the chief priests and elders, made them accept that they were sleeping instead of watching the tomb. They also had to report that the disciples came and stole the body when they were asleep and were guilty of neglecting their duty.⁴⁸⁷

⁴⁸⁷ Jeffrey L. Seif, *Origin of the Christian faith* (Dallas: JSM Publishing, 1992). 139. Jeffrey shows that, "The leading damning story seems to be that the guards fell asleep and that during that time, the disciples broke the seal, rolled the stone and stole the body. It is hardly convincing, but it is the best they had."

The second report of the guard, doctored by the chief priests, contained some inconsistencies. The story that the public got from the Roman guards was that the disciples of Jesus stole the body when the guards were sleeping. NT Wright points out that in the second century, Justin Martyr speaks about the same story still being spread by some Jewish apologists.⁴⁸⁸ Since we have evidence from history that the report of the soldiers about the stealing of the body of Jesus as an explanation for the empty tomb really existed, one cannot fail to see some inconsistencies in their report to the public. If the guards were sleeping when the theft took place, how did they know that the disciples stole the body and not someone else? If they did see the disciples stealing the body, how could they have been sleeping? Moreover, if they saw the disciple stealing the body, why they didn't take any action to prevent the stealing? Yet, like most other stories, the rumor seems to have sold better than the real news among some Jews as Matthew says that the story was still being told among Jews at the time of writing the Gospel.⁴⁸⁹ If Matthew was not referring to a real story that was being passed around, he would have been responsible for passing on a false theory to his readers that would be used by his opponents to undermine the claim of the Resurrection of Jesus.⁴⁹⁰ Hence, it is possible to argue that the report of the Roman guards did actually happen. While the historicity of the content of

⁴⁸⁸ Seif, *Origin of the Christian faith*, 139. In *Dialogue with Trypho*, Justin Martyr wrote, "after you learned that He rose from the dead, but, as I said before you have sent chosen and ordained men throughout all the world to proclaim that a godless and lawless heresy had sprung from one Jesus, a Galilean deceiver, whom we crucified, but his disciples stole him by night from the tomb, where he was laid when unfastened from the cross, and now deceive men by asserting that he has risen from the dead and ascended to heaven." See: Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho*, 108.

⁴⁸⁹ Ibid., 161. Jeffrey argues that "The prepositional phase "until today" does express that lasting effect, and so it is simply the case that the verb does not have to carry that weight... Matthew brings the story he is telling up to the moment when he composed the account (28:15b)."

⁴⁹⁰ Wright, *The Resurrection*, 638. Wright argues that "It is implausible that the whole story was invented and written down unless there was already a rumor about stealing of body. If not, Christians would be undermining their own belief by throwing a doubt into the heart of people."

their report can be a matter of contest, the fact that they passed on a story to the public is historically true.

Moreover, the story is authentic for the following reasons. First, like other ‘M’ passages listed above, the Jewish chief priests are involved in this incident also and stand as a plausible source of information. The guards went and reported to the chief priests everything that had happened (vs 11).⁴⁹¹ They went to the chief priests first, not to the Roman governor, probably because some of the guards were the temple guards who were reporting to the Jewish chief priests. Moreover, now the guards were dealing with a miracle issue that related to religious beliefs. Also, it is possible that they were hesitant to report the occurrence of a miracle to Pilate. According to Matthew, the soldiers were the first witnesses of the Resurrection, not the disciples. They were also the first communicators of the news of the Resurrection to the Jewish chief priests even before the Apostles were told about it by the women. The chief priests were the first recipients of their testimony, just like they were recipients of the news of the birth of the Messiah through gentile Magi. If it were not for a matter of fact, Matthew would not have conferred such special privileges on the Roman soldiers and the Jewish chief priests. It is possible to consider that the actual report that came from the Roman guards to the Jewish chief priests might have contributed to the conversion of a large number of Jewish priests to the Way a few weeks later in Jerusalem, as reported in Acts 6:7. On the other hand, some of the Jewish chief priests remained totally opposed to the news of the Resurrection and promoted a concocted story to cover up the truth. Again, the primary players in the event are the Jewish chief priests. The elders are

⁴⁹¹ Wright, *The Resurrection*, 638. Wright points out that, “While the historicity cannot be proven, the story necessitates the existence of an empty tomb and a missing body.”

probably just helping them approve funds to bribe the soldiers and provide moral support to the chief priests.⁴⁹²

ii. *A Summary of Plausible Sources*

A critical mind is bound to wonder about the source of information to Matthew regarding a secret deal of bribes and lies that involved the Jewish chief priests, the elders, and the Roman guards in a meeting that took place in the opposition camp. The remote possibility of the Roman guards leaking the news to the disciples of Jesus may be considered. However, that view betrays common sense as the guards who took the money and lied would not dare to tell anyone about it as that would put their jobs and even their lives at risk because the Roman seal and the Roman governor were involved. Clarke and Plummer consider the possibility of the Roman guards leaking out the details to be an irrational view. Instead, Clark⁴⁹³ and Plummer⁴⁹⁴ show that some of the priests who were converted to the Way after the Day of Pentecost (Acts 6:7) may have known and disclosed the truth about this story to Matthew. The likely candidate for the details is one or more of the Jewish chief priests who were part of the camp that were opposed to Jesus and his followers. An insider from the opposing camp had to leak the information for it to become available to the Evangelist. It is also reasonable to think that Matthew had access to one or a few of the direct or indirect witnesses based on whose testimony Matthew developed his narrative. The story needs to be treated as an authentic historical one as Matthew speaks about

⁴⁹² Wright, *The Resurrection*, 639. Wright points out that Matthew was aware of a story being spread by the Jews. Wright argues that, had it not been true, it does not make any sense to believe that Matthew himself would cook up a story to create doubt about the Resurrection of Christ in the mind of his Christian readers.

⁴⁹³ Howard W. Clarke, *The Gospel of Matthew and Its Readers: A Historical Introduction to the First Gospel* (Birmingham: Indiana University Press, 2003), 226.

⁴⁹⁴ Plummer, *Matthew*, 410-411.

the story being in circulation among the Jews during the time of his writing and because we have evidence from history that some Jewish apologists were still using the story during the time of Justin Martyr.⁴⁹⁵ A couple of points can be observed about the historicity of the Roman guards report: (i) a theory existed among the Jewish people which claimed that the disciples stole the body of Jesus, (ii) Jewish apologists used the theory to counter the claim of the Christians that Jesus resurrected from the dead, and (iii) it is unlikely that Matthew cooked up a theory to undermine the claim of the Resurrection and gifted it to the Jewish leaders who would take it up and use it to counter the claim of Matthew and his companions about the Resurrection of Jesus and the empty tomb.

Since the narrative of the Roman guard's report is among the most critiqued of M narratives for its historical reliability, and since even evidential apologists shy away from using them, it seems fitting to draw attention to a possible connection this historical narrative has with a piece of external evidence available to us. A stone inscription discovered by archaeologists known as the "Nazareth Inscription" comes from the mid-first century AD. The inscription is an edict from an unnamed Caesar and states that:

It is my decision [concerning] graves and tombs—whoever has made them for the religious observances of parents, or children, or household members—that these remain undisturbed forever. But if anyone legally charges that another person has destroyed, or has in any manner extracted those who have been buried, or has moved with wicked intent those who have been buried to other places, committing a crime against them, or has moved sepulcher-sealing stones, against such a person, I order that a judicial tribunal be created, just as [is done] concerning the gods in human religious observances, even more so will it be obligatory to treat with honor those who have been entombed. You are absolutely not to allow anyone to move [those who have been entombed]. But if [someone does], I wish that [violator] to suffer capital punishment under the title of tomb-breaker.⁴⁹⁶

⁴⁹⁵ Wright, *The Resurrection*, 638.

⁴⁹⁶ Clyde E. Billington, "The Nazareth Inscription: Proof of the Resurrection of Christ?" (Akron, PA: Associates for Biblical Research, July 2009).

While the Nazareth Inscription does not say anything about Jesus or the story of the Resurrection, the location and time of the inscription came straight from the hand of Caesar himself at a time when the disciples of Jesus Christ were boldly preaching the message of the Resurrection against the backdrop of the Jewish religious leaders' claim that the body of Jesus was stolen from a sealed tomb when the Roman guards were asleep, make it highly possible that the edict was issued as a reaction to the Resurrection story that was being widely preached in that geographical and chronological setting and because the Roman seal and guard were mentioned in the story shared by Christians. Even if the edict had nothing to do with the Resurrection story and the report of stealing the body, the edict shows how serious Romans were against stealing the body from a tomb and the kind of punishment that was meted out to those who involved in any such crime. Moreover, it does not make any sense to believe that the disciples of Jesus who deserted him during his arrest, trials, and crucifixion; would have been bold enough and willing to risk their own lives by breaking the Roman seal under the nose of the Roman guard and steal the body of Jesus from a tomb closed with a rock.

7. A Summary of the Case Studies Regarding Plausible Sources

The five case studies of narrative passages in M materials have shown that in all five narrative passages discussed above, the involvement of the chief priests could be seen to be consistent. It was also observed that all the events discussed took place in the camp opposed to Jesus and were therefore not accessible to the Apostles or other followers of Jesus or any other ordinary person. Most of those were closed-door meetings accessible only to the political powers of the day. In some cases, Joanna, the wife of Chuza, the scribes, elders, the Roman guards, etc., stand as remotely possible informers. However, a common factor that can be identified in all the

five narrative passages analyzed above is the consistent presence of the Jewish chief priests. Moreover, the other possible candidates are shown to be less likely candidates in each case. As mentioned above, scholars like Clarke and Plummer have already pointed out the possibility that some details from the opposition camps would have come from some of the Jewish priests who converted to the Way as mentioned in Acts 6:7. The case studies above have stressed on this aspect and have shown that it is plausible to conclude that one or more of the Jewish chief priests directly or indirectly provided information to Matthew or to an associate of Matthew, who heard the reports and wrote them down. Therefore, the narratives discussed above can be viewed as records based on stories told by people who claimed to be direct eyewitnesses or hearers of reports made by direct eyewitnesses.

The case studies have also looked at some of the literary features and the historical facts to argue that the narratives of Matthew, though they contain seemingly fictional elements, are probably based on reports of true events. The five case studies have shown that there are some good reasons to consider them to be historically reliable facts than to write them off as made-up stories. Otherwise, a substantial portion of Matthew's Gospel would stand on lies, and it would have undermined the authenticity of his Gospel account among his readers, who were primarily Jews. False claims by Matthew, if any, would have undermined his authority even among his own associates and followers who valued truth to such an extent that they were willing to die for holding on to it.

The case studies have also shown that the birth narratives at the beginning of the Gospel and the narratives at the end of Gospel, describing about the plot, arrest, crucifixion, death, and the Resurrection of Jesus, show a careful narrative plot employed by the author. We also saw that these passages have unique Matthean language and thoughts. The noteworthy narrative plots and

uses of unique Matthean words show that the entire body of M narratives came from the hand of the same author and has a unity and purpose in the way they are arranged. Therefore, M narratives could not have been the works of later redactors. If one still holds that M narratives were products of redaction, he or she will have to argue that the entire body of M narratives was the work of a single redactor who can account for its unique language, plot, and unity. Such a view will not be worth considering as Matthew will be left with no contribution of his own as the rest of the work is said to be from Mark and Q. The narrative plot that weaves through the early chapters and later chapters of the Gospel show that, in all probability, the entire work, with possible exceptions of minor editorial comments, came from the original composer of the Gospel account with direct or indirect inputs from some Jewish priests. Matthew might have written what was reported to him by some of them who claimed to be eyewitnesses or hearers of the eyewitnesses. It is historical in the sense that someone did report the story to Matthew. However, it would have been difficult for Matthew to verify the historical accuracy of some of the reports he received from the other side of the camp.

Chapter Four

A Summary and Conclusion of the Findings of the Research

1. Introduction

This chapter will provide a summary of the research findings discussed in chapters one to three with the goal of supporting the main arguments of the dissertation. The first major argument is that it is plausible to identify some Jewish priests as a source of some of the narrative passages in M materials. The second one is that the influence of canonical and non-canonical Jewish apocalyptic literature can be seen in the thoughts and words of M materials and that this influence can be attributed to Matthew's professional background and identity as a scribe. In addition, the dissertation also points out that identifying a possible source for M materials, along with lessons learned from the research, analysis of the text, and literary features of M narratives, strengthens the argument for the historical reliability of M narratives. The literature review in chapter one discussed scholarly views on M materials, their sources, and demonstrated the need for this research.

The research in chapter two agreed with Matthean scholarship on the influence of apocalyptic literature on M Materials. It showed that the influence was, in all likelihood, not due to external involvement, but because of Matthew's own skills and identity as an apocalyptic scribe. Findings of the research in chapter three, through critical analysis of related texts using the tools of Source Criticism, Literary Criticism, Form Criticism, Narrative Criticism, and some exegetical work, tried to point out possible internal and circumstantial evidence and an evidence from coincidence, were used to identify some of the Jewish priests as a possible source of some

M narratives and for making the arguments for the historical reliability of M narratives stronger. The discussion in this chapter will also list some areas recommended for future research related to discussions made in the dissertation.

2. A Summary of Evidence and Arguments from Chapter One on the Scholarly Opinions on M Materials and the Justification for the Current Research

i. Classification of M Materials: Discourses and Narratives

In chapter one, the research surveyed the views of critical scholars on M Materials. The research began with a couple of assumptions, like the Matthean authorship of the Gospel and an early date for its composition before the fall of Jerusalem.⁴⁹⁷ The research, based on scholarly opinions, divided the M materials into two categories—the discourses of Jesus that were probably based on the memory and written records of the Evangelist and the narratives constructed by the Evangelist based on sources other than Q and Mark. The narrative passages were further divided into two groups—the first group consisting of infancy narratives of Jesus when the Apostles were not eyewitnesses, and the second group of narratives dealing with the arrest, the crucifixion, the death, and the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. The dissertation argued that since Apostles were not present in all these events when they occurred, the sources of the details provided in those narratives had to come from some other sources, especially the details of the secret meetings that took place in the opposition camp behind closed doors with no access to the public.

⁴⁹⁷ Rajesh Sebastian, *A Research into the Influence of Jewish Priests, Scribes, and Canonical and Non-Canonical Jewish Apocalyptic Literature on M Materials* (Liberty University, Dissertation, 2023). 11-15.

ii. *The Gap in Matthean Scholarly Literature and the Need of the Current Research*

Chapter one also looked at the scholarly views of Plummer and Goodacre and argued that there are around 250 verses in Matthew that can be considered unique to Matthew in a strict sense. Out of these 250 verses, ninety are passages containing narrative materials, and the rest are discourse materials. Out of the eighty-nine verses to which a source still needs to be identified, six of them are shown to be probably based on the direct report of women who went to the tomb (Matt 28:5-10). The rest of the eighty-three narrative verses still stand in need of a source to be identified. The research also did a literary review of the Matthean scholarship and showed the need for this research as not many scholars have made serious discussion about the possible role of the Jewish priests in the development of M narratives or about them being a possible source of Matthew's special narratives. The literary review also showed that, while a number of scholars have discussed the influence of Jewish apocalyptic literature on Matthew's Gospel as a whole, not much work has been done to discuss the influence of Jewish apocalyptic literature on M materials by treating it as a separate unit with its own narrative plot and purpose. The discussion also pointed out to the indifference shown by some esteemed scholars on the Resurrection who consider some of the post-Resurrection narratives in M to be fictional.

iii. *Scholarly Disagreements on the Authenticity of M Materials*

The research in chapter one also reviewed the opinion of a number of critical scholars who are skeptical about the historical reliability of M narratives due to its legendary nature and also because a source could not be identified for the details provided in the narratives. The views of critical scholars were divided into three groups. The first group, following the ideology of Harnack and Bultmann, Beare, Merz, etc., considered the entire M narratives to be myths or

legends with no historical foundations.⁴⁹⁸ The second group of scholars were a little more tolerant and seemed to have made an attempt to build bridges between those who denied any historicity to the M narratives and the ones who argued vehemently for its historical reliability. Robinson and Brown belonged to this second group that argued for “possible fiction” in M. They suggested that the Evangelist might have inserted some stories to attest deeper truths without being concerned about the factual historicity of the reported story.⁴⁹⁹ Similarly, Hill, Kilpatrick, and Goulder argued that the genre of Matthean narratives is similar to Jewish Midrashic writings that contain comments and stories based on historical facts and imagination employed by their authors.⁵⁰⁰ The third group of scholars that argue for the historicity of entire M narratives includes Goodspeed, Hendricksen, Lenski, etc.⁵⁰¹

iv. Sources of M Materials Already Recognized by Critical Scholars and Their Limitations

In chapter one, the research also provided a summary of scholarly views on the sources of M materials. Four sources suggested by various scholars were grouped follows:

- (i) Oral or Written traditions.
- (ii) A different version of Q that had more data than the version Mark and Luke used.⁵⁰²

⁴⁹⁸ Sebastian, *A Research into the Influence of Jewish Priests*, 22, 25.

⁴⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 29.

⁵⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 34.

⁵⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 34-35.

⁵⁰² *Ibid.*, 41.

(iii) Logia or a specially written source other than Q,⁵⁰³ and

(iv) A combination of oral and written traditions.⁵⁰⁴

Similarly, most of the M narratives are ascribed to ‘P’ or as the ‘Palestinian Source’ by Allen without trying to identify the community behind it.⁵⁰⁵ As mentioned above, all that these scholarly opinions have provided are some comments on the possible nature of those sources without attempting to identify the people behind these sources.

v. *Plummer’s Suggestion on the Possibility of the Involvement of Jewish Priests in Providing Information to Matthew.*

The research paid attention to the suggestion made by Plummer about the possibility of some details in M narratives coming from Jewish priests who later converted to the Way. Plummer also pointed out that Matthew would have used his records, Logia or Q, and OT quotations that were believed to be messianic, and traditions current among the Christians and the family of Jesus.⁵⁰⁶ The mention of Jewish priests as possible sources of M narratives seems to be unique to the work of Plummer. Since not much work has been done on the scholarly suggestion of Plummer, the review has shown the need for further research to argue that the Jewish priests can be identified as a major source of M narratives.

⁵⁰³ Sebastian, *A Research into the Influence of Jewish Priests*, 41.

⁵⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 42-43.

⁵⁰⁵ See the entire work of Willoughby C. Allen, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to S. Matthew*, Third Edition (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1912). Allen puts a “P” as a side-mark to the Narrative materials to indicate that the source of the origin of the material or tradition is Palestinian.

⁵⁰⁶ For a discussion of Plummer’s views on sources, see the discussion in: Sebastian, 44.

vi. *Significance of ‘High Priests’ in M Materials*

The research in chapter one also showed that the title “high priests” is frequently used in Matthew—twenty-five times. The research also pointed out that some leading scholars like Clarke, Barbieri, Brown, and Toussaint have pointed out some direct or indirect connections of Jewish priests in the developing M materials. A discussion of related texts was made to evaluate the attempts of Albright, Mann, and France to attribute such an influence to the Evangelist himself by suggesting that Matthew himself was a Levite who left his priestly profession to become a tax collector.⁵⁰⁷ If it is true, that alone could explain why Matthew alone seems to have had access to some special information from some of the Jewish priests with whom he had family and/or professional connections.

vii. *Significance of the Former Profession of the Evangelist as a Scribe Before He Became a Disciple of Jesus Christ.*

The title “scribes” is used twenty-two times in Matthew. The research in chapter one has also shown attempts made by some Matthean scholars to account for the possibility of scribal influence in M materials being the result of Matthew’s own professional background as a scribe. Arguments based on positive comments about scribes in Matthew, dropping off some unfavorable comments about scribes from the text of Mark, and based on the possible autographical signature found in Matthew 13:52, argued that Matthew, in all likelihood, was a former scribe belonging to the clan of Pharisees and identified himself as a scribe trained for the kingdom of heaven after he became a follower of Jesus.⁵⁰⁸

⁵⁰⁷ For a discussion of the views of Albright and Mann, and France, see: Sebastian, *A Research into the Influence of Jewish Priests*, 45, 48-50.

⁵⁰⁸ For a detailed discussion of Matthean connection with scribes in the scholarly works of Orton, Gale, Hill, Dobschutz, and Goulder, see: Sebastian, *A Research into the Influence of Jewish Priests*, 51-52, 54-59.

viii. *The Importance of Matthew's Autobiographical Signature in 13:52*

The research made an exegetical analysis of Matt 13:52 and discussed scholarly opinions of Brown and Orton to argue that the reference seems to be an autobiographical signature of Matthew that is similar to such signatures found in Mark and John. Moreover, it was pointed out that the Greek word for “disciple,” used by the Evangelist (μαθητευθείς) in 13:52, is identical to the name ‘Matthew’ (Μαθθαῖος). The special use is found only four times in the NT, three of them are in Matthew. The fourth record found in Acts could be accounted to the Matthean influence on Luke as he wrote Acts later.⁵⁰⁹ This unique use in Matthew strengthens the argument for Matthean authorship and help account for apocalyptic scribal influence on M.

ix. *The Self-Identity of the Evangelist as a Scribe of the Kingdom of Heaven in the Jewish Apocalyptic Tradition*

Chapter one also evaluated the validity of scholarly opinions about the nature of Matthew's self-identity as a Jewish scribe of the apocalyptic tradition. The discussion of the five passages on scribes and the opinions of Goulder, Orton, and Markley were summarized to show that Matthew, in all likelihood, saw himself as an eschatological scribe standing in the apocalyptic tradition. Moreover, Matt 13:52 speaks about the special training that Matthew probably received to ‘bring out treasures of old and new’ from his resources, making him a uniquely gifted seer of the apocalyptic tradition.⁵¹⁰

⁵⁰⁹ For a detailed discussion on Matt 13:52 and the possibility of the verse being an autobiographical signature of Matthew, see Sebastian, *A Research into the Influence of Jewish Priests*, 57.

⁵¹⁰ For a discussion on the Matthew's identity as a scribe and the apocalyptic influence, see: Sebastian, *A Research into the Influence of Jewish Priests*, 56-59.

3. A Summary of the Findings in Chapter Two on the Influence of Jewish Apocalyptic Writings on M Materials

In Chapter two of this research, the author has made a case to advance the arguments for the influence of Jewish canonical and non-canonical apocalyptic literature on M materials, with special focus on the discourse materials and a few narrative passages. The research pointed out the following aspects about the Evangelist and his writings:

i. The Jewish Cultural Roots of the Evangelist

The research has pointed out the importance of recognizing the Evangelist's cultural, linguistic, and theological background to understand his worldview and ideas since his thoughts can seldom be separated from the culture and thoughts of his time. The words and thoughts expressed in M discourse materials were shown to be heavily indebted to the background of its author, especially as he seems to have freely used existing Jewish apocalyptic ideas. As the Evangelist puts down his views on theology, messianic hope, angelology, and eschatology into writing, his cultural and religious background seems to have played a crucial influence.

Scholarly views of Scroggie, Goulder, and Toussaint were summarized to show the strong Jewish theological and cultural flavor of the discourse materials in M through the use of themes like, 'Righteous,' 'Son of Man,' 'Law,' 'Temple,' 'David,' 'the Messiah,' 'Fulfillment of Prophecies,' etc. Research showed that this influence could be attributed to the professional background of the Evangelist as a learned scribe without the need for looking at possible involvement of redactions by later redactors of Matthean community or other scribal associates who might have helped Matthew.⁵¹¹ Contributions of Davies and Allison were cited to show that

⁵¹¹ For a discussion of the Jewish theological and cultural influence on the Evangelist, see: Sebastian, *A Research into the Influence of Jewish Priests*, 62.

Matthew was familiar with Hebraism and variant readings of Hebrew Scriptures.⁵¹² The research also has shown that the writings of the Evangelist were consistent with the Jewish worldview of his time.

ii. *Role Matthean Narratives as a Bridge Between the OT and the NT*

The research has shown that the fulfillment theme employed by the Evangelist functions as a bridge between the messianic promises in the Old Testament and the fulfillment of it in the New Testament. Matthew has intentionally provided a continuum to the Old Testament through the birth narratives and fulfillment theme. In that sense, Matthew was shown to be standing with one hand pointing to the Old Testament and the other one to the New Testament.

iii. *Genealogy in M Materials and Possible Connection to the Jewish Temple/Priests*

Matthew's genealogy was shown to be based on the data available to him in the Jewish literature as far as it was available. The genealogy is firmly developed based on the strong Jewish expectations of the Messiah coming through the Davidic line. As mentioned in chapter one, Barbieri has pointed out the possibility that the additional data in the genealogy provided by Matthew might have come from temple sources.⁵¹³ The research argued that if Barbieri is correct, it points to the possible connection that existed between Matthew and some of the Jewish

⁵¹² As mentioned in chapter two, Davies and Allison have listed the following points to show that the Evangelist was well-learned in Hebrew language and its literature: i, Matthew preferred a form of *sema* which stands close to the MT; ii, several Matthean texts stand closer to Jewish tradition or interpretation than the Markan and Lukan Parallels; iii, Matthew and Luke dealt in very different ways with the allusions in Mark and Q. Matthew generally preserved and expanded, Luke often omitted and shortened; iv, several times, Matthew brought his sources closer into lines with the OT; v, Matthew's redactional explanations or changes of allusions and his redactional allusions frequently depart from LXX and often agree with the MT; vi, some of the allusions unique to Matthew but has non-allusive parallel in Mark and Luke show agreement with the MT or Jewish tradition. For details, see: W.D. Davies and Dale C. Allison Jr., *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint Matthew, Vol I* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1988), 33, 73-96.

⁵¹³ Louis A. Barbieri Jr., "Matthew," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: New Testament*, eds. John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck (Colorado Springs: Cook Communications, 1983), 13.

priests or scribes who were active in the Jerusalem temple when the record was accessed. The research has also pointed to the writings of Josephus, who affirmed that such genealogical records existed in Jerusalem.⁵¹⁴

iv. *Fulfillment Theme and Qumran Connection*

Bright has argued that Matthew possibly used special source material from the Qumran community to develop the thirteen fulfillment passages in M. The research showed that, while arguments can be made for and against such a possibility, it is likely that the Evangelist was influenced by the idea of fulfillment theme rather than using a written source. The research argued that the approaches of the Teacher of Righteousness and the Evangelist differed in their hermeneutical style. However, the research agrees that the Evangelist might have used the fulfillment idea due to the influence of literature that existed prior to him. The research also argued that even if Matthew used a fulfillment document of the Qumran community, it only validates the Matthean view and interpretation which held that the passages he quoted from the Old Testament were already considered to be messianic prophecies by the Jewish sect.⁵¹⁵

v. *Influence of Jewish Literary Style that can be Found in Matthean Writings*

The research has reviewed the employment of the Hebraic writing style frequently used by the Evangelist. Thiessen has pointed out that the phrase “then, at that time,” a Hebraic or Aramaic communication style, occurs ninety times in Matthew. Besides, Matthew is shown to

⁵¹⁴ *The Life of Flavius Josephus*, 1: 1-6.

⁵¹⁵ For a detailed discussion of the fulfillment theme and Qumran influence, see: Sebastian, *A Research into the Influence of Jewish Priests*, 84-88.

have used 129 Old Testament passages, of which fifty-three are citations, and the remaining seventy-six are allusions.⁵¹⁶

vi. *The Importance to Recognize the Cultural Setting of Matthean Narratives as Intertestamental Period*

The research accepted the suggestion of Nickelsburg that the story of the Incarnation, fulfilment, messianic king, etc., make sense only in the cultural context of the intertestamental Jewish hopes and beliefs. The research agreed that the seedbed of the early church was the intertestamental Judaism. The disciples breathed its religious and cultural environment and spoke its idioms, and the Evangelist's theology and worldview were immersed in it.⁵¹⁷

vii. *Matthew as an Apocalyptic Gospel*

The research has shown a strong apocalyptic influence on M materials that made some scholars to consider Matthew to be most apocalyptic of all the evangelists and his Gospel to be "the Apocalyptic Gospel." Following the thought of Nickelsburg and Sim, this research also showed some important phrases, titles, and themes used in M materials to show a strong connection existing between Jewish apocalyptic literature and Matthean discourse materials.

Matthean concepts of "the Son of Man" and "the Son of David;" and views on Angelology and Anthropology about the eschaton were shown to be influenced by Jewish apocalyptic writings. The research also discussed some phrases in the Sermon on the Mount to show the influence of Jewish apocalyptic writings in providing the ideological background for the thoughts, values, and principles expressed in it. Scholarly views and passages on scribes in M

⁵¹⁶ For a discussion of the argument of Thiessen and the quotations and allusions from the Old Testament, see: Sebastian, *A Research into the Influence of Jewish Priests*, 79-82.

⁵¹⁷ George W.E. Nickelsburg, *Jewish Literature between the Bible and the Mishnah: A Historical and Literary Introduction*, Second Edition (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005), 2.

were analyzed to affirm that the Evangelist saw himself as a scribe of the Jewish apocalyptic tradition, specially trained to be a scribe of the kingdom of heaven with roots in the old traditions and new insights about the coming age (Matt 13:52). Therefore, it was argued that the strong Jewish apocalyptic influence on M materials could be attributed to Matthew himself without the need for attributing it to possible late redactors or contributors. The research also supported this argument by showing that the M materials can be shown to be the work of one mind because of its style, purpose, language, and unique narrative structure.

4. A Summary of the Findings from the Five Case Studies in Chapter Three

i. Findings from Case Study One: The Visit of the Magi (Matt 2:1-12)

The research, based on the opinion of Hughes, argued that the mention of the appearance of a star cannot be enough reason to suggest that passage is a myth. Because, there is nothing necessarily supernatural or mythological about the appearance of a star.⁵¹⁸ The research also agreed with Hughes argument that, if Matthew made-up the story about the Magi as alleged by some critical scholars, he would have made it more coherent and plausible for his readers to believe.⁵¹⁹ The research also cited Gundry's contention that, Matthew, unlike apocryphal writers, did not invent fanciful stories to bridge the gap between Jesus's birth and public ministry, indicating that the only story that he mentions in the birth narratives is a genuine one.⁵²⁰ Moreover, it was shown that, Matthew, in difference to the patterns found in legends and myths,

⁵¹⁸ David Hughes, *The Star of Bethlehem Mystery* (London: J.M. Dent & Sons, 1979), 195.

⁵¹⁹ *Ibid.* 196.

⁵²⁰ Robert Horton Gundry, *The Use of the Old Testament in St. Matthew's Gospel: With Special Reference to the Messianic Hope* (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 1967), 195.

seems to be providing historical details about the specific time and occasion with reference to particular name of the ruler and some detailed description of the town where Jesus was born in order to avoid ambiguity due to the existence of two towns with the same name, one in Galilee and the other one in Judea.⁵²¹ The Jewish chief priests were shown to be a part of the first meeting that took place in the palace of Herod. Since Herod and the Magi were ruled as potential source, the candidacy was narrowed down to some of the Jewish priests and scribes. However, it was pointed out that Joanna and some family member of Jesus also could be considered as possible sources to part of Matthew's narrative about the visit of the Magi.

ii. *Findings from Case Study Two: Secret Meetings to Plot Against Jesus (26:3-5, 14-16)*

The research has shown that, though Mark and Luke mention the plot by Jewish leaders to arrest Jesus, the Matthean narrative is unique due to the additional details provided in the narrative. According to Matthew, the secret meeting⁵²² took place in the palace of Caiaphas, the High Priest, and only the elders were part of it. Matthew also speaks about a second meeting between Judas and the chief priests in which elders and scribes were not involved. The research has ruled out the possibility of Judas passing on the details about the secret meeting and has singled out some of the Jewish chief priests as the plausible source of information to Matthew.

⁵²¹ For a discussion of the view of Plummer, Morris, and Allen, please see: Sebastian, *A Research into the Influence of Jewish Priests*, 130-131.

⁵²² R.C.H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Matthew's Gospel* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1945), 1004.

iii. *Findings from Case Study Three: The Death of Judas and the Return of the
Betrayal Price (27:3-7)*

The research pointed out that, though Mark and Luke are aware of the plot between Judas and the Jewish religious leaders to arrest Jesus and the ensuing betrayal by Judas, only Matthew reports about Judas's attempt to return the betrayal price. The details of the second encounter of Judas with the Jewish priests and elders seems to have come from a unique source to which the other evangelists had no access. Luke's mention of a similar story in Acts seems to be based on the words of Matthew and Peter. The research has shown that, though the story is slightly different in Acts, they are not mutually disapproving or mutually exclusive, and can be reconciled.

The research argued that Matthew's report about the attempt of Judas to return the money, the throwing of the money into the temple, the collection of the money from the floor of the temple by the Jewish priests after Judas had left, their decision to use that money to buy a piece of land as a burial-ground for foreigners, and the execution of that plan had to come from some eye-witnesses. The discussion of the passage showed that the only party that stands as a possible source of the details narrated to Matthew is some of the Jewish priests.⁵²³

iv. *Findings from Case Study Four: The Guards at the Tomb and the Roman Seal
(27:62-65)*

While acknowledging the critical scholarly view that Matthew has an apologetic motif in his narrative plot, the research argued that accepting such a view does not necessarily negate the

⁵²³ For a discussion of the argument in favor and against the historicity of the story, see: Sebastian, *A Research into the Influence of Jewish Priests*, 158-164.

historicity of the story. The research argued that the story seems to be based on historical facts based on the following factors:

- a. Matthew had to uphold his truthfulness before his opponents and also among his own associates and followers who were committed to truth.
- b. Matthew, who affirmed faith in the Resurrection of Jesus, would not have provided a theory that undermined the belief and provided an alternate explanation for the empty tomb.
- c. If Matthew lied about the involvement of the Sanhedrin, the Roman guards, and the Roman seal, it would have been like giving the Jewish leaders a stick to beat him up.
- d. If Matthew had made-up the entire story about the delegation, he would have been considered responsible for calling Jesus a “deceiver.”

Moreover, the research has advanced an argument for the authenticity of the narrative based on a word study of ‘κουστωδίαν’ mentioned in Matt 27:65. Since the word ‘κουστωδίαν’ is originally a Latin word rarely used during the time of New Testament, is reportedly coming from the mouth of Pilate, the Roman governor of Latin origin, one can argue that the story is based on factual reports. Since the Jewish priests seems to have led the delegation to Pilate and due to their consistent presence at all other passion narratives, they stand as the likely source of details provided by Matthew in his narrative about the Sanhedrin’s visit and request to Pilate.

- v. *Findings from Case Study Five: The Report of the Guards and their Bribing*
(28:11-15)

Writing off this passage as an apologetic motif does not necessarily negate the historical reliability of the report. The research argued that, if the story was not based on facts, Matthew

would not have given the following special privileges to the Roman guards and the Jewish chief priests while depriving the Apostles of such privileges:

- a. Matthew concedes that the Roman guards are primary witnesses of the Resurrection.
- b. The Jewish priests heard about the Resurrection before the Apostles heard about it.
- c. The Roman guards are the first preachers of the Resurrection, not the female disciples of Jesus who went to the tomb on the first day.

The author of this research has already shown in case study four that there are good reasons to believe that the Roman guards were placed at the tomb. If the first part of the guard story is historically true, it necessarily follows that there has to be a follow-up report from the Roman guards after the Resurrection or the claim of it. The research has also pointed to evidence from history to show that the allegation of stealing Jesus' body was prevalent among the Jews even during the time of Justin Martyr. Matthew just wrote about the origin of this theory. The Roman guards cannot be considered as a likely source of this narrative because they would have been risking their jobs and lives for telling an inconsistent story. Since the news was only reported to the Jewish chief priests, some of them stand as the plausible source of this narrative to Matthew. Though intermediaries can be considered, the buck stops with the Jewish chief priests.

5. A Summary of Findings on the Narrative Structure of M Materials

Throughout the discussions in the research that discussed various narratives in M, the research has pointed out some obvious narrative plots employed by Matthew as he carefully arranged the data that became available to him. Looking at M narratives as one unit and considering that Matthew is working backward, tracing the biographical details of Jesus,

Matthew seems to have placed some events in the birth narratives to show some parallelisms to highlight the response of Jewish leaders to the Messiah. The research credited Allen⁵²⁴ and Plummer⁵²⁵, who pointed out some of these narrative plots in M. The current research has pointed out the following narrative plots of parallelism in M narratives:

- i. Supernatural events during the birth and death of Jesus.
- ii. The gentile Magi were initial preachers of the Messiah's birth, and the gentile soldiers were the initial preachers of his Resurrection.
- iii. In the birth narratives and the Resurrection narratives, the early recipients of the news include the Jewish chief priests.
- iv. The confession of the Gentile Magi, declaring Jesus to be the "king of the Jews," is placed at the beginning of his account, and similar confessions coming out of a gentile soldier is placed at the death of Jesus on the cross.
- v. A plot to kill Jesus is mentioned in the beginning of the Gospel, and another plot to kill Jesus is mentioned towards the end of the Gospel.
- vi. Dreams are provided to the Gentile Magi in the birth narratives. A dream is provided to the wife of Pilate in the Passion narratives.
- vii. The gentile Magi joyfully worship Jesus after he was born. The disciples joyfully worship Jesus after his Resurrection.

⁵²⁴ See comments on narrative passages in, Allen, *Matthew*.

⁵²⁵ See comments on narrative passages in, Alfred Plummer, *An Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1962). See the comments of Plummer on narrative passages.

- viii. The Jewish religious leaders are shown to be apathetic to the news of Messiah's birth in the beginning of the Gospel, and they are shown to be antagonistic to the news of the Resurrection towards the end of the Gospel.
- ix. As a contrasting scenario of *life and death vs. death and life*, Matthew states that the birth of Jesus followed the death of some children through the hand of Herod and that the death of Jesus caused the resurrection of some saints. (Matthew 27:52-53).

6. Recommendations for Future Research

This research has not paid much attention to the M materials' textual variations and related issues. Also, more research is needed to show if any possible involvement of Jewish priests can be found in M narratives that were not discussed in chapter two and three of this research. Also, a thorough investigation of the linguistic patterns of M materials in contrast with the rest of the Matthean account could be beneficial to see if M materials provide further insight into the influence of Jewish priests to see any communication style that can be specifically attributed to Jewish priests. Since this research did not deal with rabbinic writings that were produced after the fall of Jerusalem, research on the similarities between the theological and ideological views expressed in M materials and the rabbinic writings produced after 70 AD might throw some light into the worldviews and literary style displayed in M materials. Also, though this research does not consider scribes to be a possible source at par with the Jewish priests, such a possibility can be further researched.

7. Conclusion

The research, through a review of scholarly opinions and discussions of the text, has made a case for the following arguments: M materials, especially the discourse materials, are highly influenced by Jewish canonical and non-canonical apocalyptic literature. The Evangelist seems to have borrowed ideas freely from various Jewish apocalyptic literature, and his worldview reflects the one that is very similar to the views reflected in the writings of the intertestamental period. Hence, the style of Matthew, though it may show some legendary nature, was acceptable to the standards and beliefs of the times in which it was written. The heavy influence of Jewish culture and Jewish apocalyptic literature could be attributed to the self-identity of Matthew as a former priest or scribe before he left his original profession to become a tax collector. If true, such an identity also explains the possible connection Matthew alone had with the Jewish priests who might have provided some vital information about the events that took place in the opposition camp to help Matthew construct the M narratives. Matthew's background as a scribe also accounts for the appreciation Matthew demonstrates towards scribes in his account. The research has shown that Matthew, after becoming a disciple of Jesus, in all likelihood, saw himself as a scribe trained for the kingdom in the apocalyptic tradition of the Jews. Based on the findings in the unique literary style and narrative pattern of Matthean discourse materials, the research also argued that the Jewish apocalyptic literary influence on the Matthean account does not necessarily point to the involvement of some Jewish scribes or redactors but could be attributed to Matthew's self-identity and professional background as a scribe trained for the kingdom of heaven.

Through five selected case studies of M narratives, the research has shown that some of the Jewish priests can be considered as a plausible source to Matthew, who, based on their eye-

witness reports, brought to him directly or indirectly, developed some of the M narratives. The Research also argued that eighty-three of the eighty-nine narrative verses in M materials show some kind of direct or indirect involvement of Jewish Priests in the events narrated by Matthew. Based on the evidence found through the case studies, this research has argued that the some of the Jewish priests can be identified as a plausible source of information to Matthew on the basis of which he might have constructed a good amount of M narratives. After making an argument for a large number of M narratives to be based on factual reports from eyewitnesses in the opposition camps, the research used of some tools of Source Criticism, Form Criticism, Literary Criticism, and Narrative Criticism to support the major argument that the some of the Jewish priest can be identified as a plausible source of a large number of M narratives. The research also used some internal evidence, circumstantial evidence, evidence from coincidence, and the findings of some exegetical work, to support the main argument and also to make the case stronger for the historical reliability of M narratives.

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