

I. Introduction



Study of a document, whether ancient or modern, is aided by data outside the document that may tell us important things about the circumstances and context in which the document was originally composed, circulated, and read. This is especially so in the case of the New Testament Gospels. Yet, as is almost always the case when we study a document from the distant past, we possess little external data and so find ourselves making educated guesses. The Gospel of Matthew is no exception. Nevertheless, the limited external data we have, when interpreted in the light of the text of Matthew itself, at least give us a general sense of the world in which this Gospel was written and why it was written.

ORIGINS OF THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

Who Wrote the Gospel of Matthew?

Sometime in the early second century A.D. (some say between 130 and 140; others think before 110), Papias apparently linked the apostle Matthew with the Gospel of Matthew, or at least that is how some interpret his comment. Papias also seems to contrast the Gospel of Matthew with the Gospel of Mark, although just how is also disputed. Here is the passage in question (frags. 3.14–16 from Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.* 3.39.14–16):

For our present purpose we must add to his statements already quoted above a tradition concerning Mark, who wrote the Gospel, that has been set forth in these words: “And the elder used to say this: ‘Mark, having become Peter’s interpreter, wrote down accurately everything he remembered, though not in order, of the things either said or done by Christ. For he neither heard the Lord nor followed him, but afterward, as I said, followed Peter, who adapted his teachings as needed but had no intention of giving an ordered account of the Lord’s sayings. Consequently Mark did nothing wrong in writing down some things as he remembered them, for he made it his one concern not to omit anything that he heard or to make any false statement in them.’”

Such, then, is the account given by Papias with respect to Mark. But with respect to Matthew the following is said: “So Matthew composed the oracles in the Hebrew language and each person interpreted them as best he could.”¹

What have just been quoted are extracts from a five-volume work entitled *Expositions of the Sayings of the Lord*, authored by Papias, who for a number of years served as bishop of Hierapolis in Asia Minor (what is now Turkey). Eusebius, apologist and church historian of the early fourth century, says these volumes still circulated in his time (*Hist. Eccl.* 3.39.1). Today we only have some two dozen quotations from this work.

The quoted passage is quite suggestive at a number of points. The “elder” who is mentioned is a Christian who was either acquainted with an apostle or was an apostle (the apostle John?). Either way, we have an early and very important link to apostolic tradition. This elder, according to Papias, tells us that Mark (presumably John Mark, a relative of Barnabas; see Acts 12:25) was Peter’s interpreter (Greek: *hermeneutes*), who wrote down what he learned from Peter. Papias is surely talking about the Gospel of Mark, as implied by the larger context, in which Papias states his preference for the “living voice” over written books; that is, the Gospels (frag. 3.3). Papias says Mark did not write an “ordered account [Greek: *suntaxis*] of the Lord’s sayings.” This lack of order contrasts with what is said of Matthew, “who composed the oracles.” What is translated as “composed” could also be translated as “ordered” (Greek: *sunetaxato*). The verb “ordered” is cognate to the noun “order.” Perusal of the Gospel of Matthew shows how it is indeed a well-ordered account.

Furthermore, Papias says that Matthew ordered the oracles (or sayings) of Jesus “in the Hebrew language,” or, in Greek, *Hebraidi dialekto*. The Greek word *dialektos* can and often does mean “language” or “dialect,” as Eusebius, who quotes this passage, probably understood (see *Hist. Eccl.* 5.8.2, where he quotes late second-century church father Irenaeus: “Now Matthew published among the Hebrews a written Gospel also in their own language [*dialekto*]”). But the word also means “discussion,” “debate,” “arguing,” or “way of speaking” (see LSJ, as well as the cognate Greek verb *dialegomai*, meaning “converse with” or “argue with”). In other words, Papias may be saying that Matthew ordered the sayings of Jesus in a Hebrew (or Jewish) way of presenting material or making an argument. This understanding matches well what we see in the Gospel of Matthew. Of course, the possibility that the evangelist wrote a Hebrew or Aramaic version of his Gospel cannot be ruled out (after all, Josephus wrote an Aramaic version of *The Jewish Wars* as well as the Greek

¹ The translation is from M. W. Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers: Greek Texts and English Translations*, 3rd edition (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007), 739, 741, with Greek text on facing pages (i.e., 738, 740). For an informative discussion of this Papias fragment, see R. H. Gundry, *Matthew: A Commentary on His Literary and Theological Art* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1982), 609–22.

one that is extant today),² but the Gospel of Matthew that we have today is in Greek (and not a Greek translation of a Hebrew or Aramaic text).³

Finally, the Papiian tradition may imply that Mark was written first and that Matthew was written later, a conclusion that has been reached by almost all Gospel scholars. (More will be said on this topic.) It may also imply, with the words “each person interpreted them [i.e., the sayings of Jesus, as Matthew ordered them] as best he could,” that it was Matthew’s Gospel (not Mark’s) that Christian teachers tended to study. As it so happens, this seems to be the case, for in the first century of the history of the church Matthew’s Gospel was clearly the favorite,⁴ and it remained so until the nineteenth century.

To be sure, what survives of the Papiian tradition leaves unanswered many questions, but taken at face value it appears to lend important, early support to the apostle Matthew as the author of the Gospel of Matthew. Not all Gospel scholars accept what Papias has to say and suggest instead that the tradition of Matthew’s authorship arose no earlier than the second century. This may be so, but it is far from evident that the Gospels circulated anonymously for years, even decades, before some imagined ecclesiastical authority assigned authors to them.⁵ There is no evidence that such a body existed or that, if it did, it could exert the influence necessary to produce unanimity. After all, there is no evidence that anyone disputed Matthean attribution (or the attributions with respect to the other Gospels, for that matter). Surely, a late, arbitrary, and (from a scholarly point of view) pseudonymous attribution of authorship could not have gone unchallenged. Yet there is not a hint that anyone claimed someone else as the author of Matthew.

Another point should be made. If attributions were made on bases other than historical ones, then why select the apostle Matthew as the author of this Gospel? All we know of Matthew was that he was a tax collector (Matt 9:9) who invited

² At the opening of his Greek version of *The Jewish Wars*, Josephus explains: “I have proposed ... to translate those books into the Greek tongue, which I formerly composed in my native [language]” (*J.W.* 1.3).

³ On the possibility of a Hebrew version of Matthew, see G. Howard, *The Gospel of Matthew According to a Primitive Hebrew Text* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1987); J. R. Edwards, *The Hebrew Gospel and the Development of the Synoptic Tradition* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2009). There are still a few scholars who argue that our Greek Matthew is but a translation of a Hebrew (or Aramaic) version. I do not agree. The Semitic flavor of the New Testament Gospels is due to the influence of the Greek Old Testament and the way Greek was spoken by Jews who also spoke Aramaic or Hebrew.

⁴ This observation has been ably documented in É. Massaux, *The Influence of the Gospel of Saint Matthew on Christian Literature before Saint Irenaeus* (NGS 5.1–3, ed. A. J. Bellinzoni; 3 vols., Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1990–1993).

⁵ This point has been well argued in M. Hengel, *Four Gospels and the One Gospel of Jesus Christ: An Investigation of the Collection and Origin of the Canonical Gospels* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2000), 48–56. Hengel argues that the four New Testament Gospels never circulated anonymously. See also R. T. France, *Matthew: Evangelist & Teacher* (New Testament Profiles; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1998), 50–60.

friends to hear Jesus (Luke 5:29–32). Nothing is said of him in the Book of Acts apart from his name appearing in a list. Surely, better candidates would have come to mind. Why not Peter or his brother Andrew, or one of the Zebedee brothers? If names were simply picked out of a hat, as it were, then why not select names of apostles who figured more prominently in the ministry of Jesus and in the leadership of the church?⁶ There is nothing in the Gospel of Matthew that rules out the apostle Matthew as its author, and there is nothing in the life of the early church that compelled it to select the apostle Matthew.

When Was the Gospel of Matthew Written?

Related to the question of authorship is the question of date. Many scholars date Matthew a few years after the end of the Jewish revolt in 70 A.D. A few even date the Gospel to sometime in the 80s. The principal argument for a post-70 date is the possible allusion to the burning of Jerusalem in the parable of the wedding banquet (Matt 22:1–14). In the parable, the enraged king “sent his troops, destroyed those murderers, and burned their city” (v. 7). This is taken by many as an allusion to the Roman destruction of Jerusalem and its temple, which eyewitness Josephus describes in very fiery terms (e.g., *The Jewish Wars* [hereafter *J.W.* in citations] 6.165–68, 177–85, 190–92, 228–35, 250–84, 316, 346, 353–55, 407, 434). But the Gospel of Matthew appears to presuppose the continuing function of the temple (Matt 5:23–24; 17:24–27; 23:16–22). Moreover, the detail of fiery destruction in Matthew’s parable may be nothing more than biblical language. Both the narrative books and the prophets repeatedly refer to the fiery destruction of the city of Jerusalem and its magnificent temple (e.g., 2 Kings 25:9; 2 Chron 36:19; Neh 1:3; 2:3, 13, 17; 4:2; Isa 64:11, “Our holy and beautiful house . . . has been burned by fire”; Jer 21:10, “this city . . . shall be given into the hands of the king of Babylon, and he shall burn it with fire”; 32:29, “The Chaldeans who are fighting against this city shall come, set it on fire, and burn it”; 34:2, “am going to give this city into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall burn it with fire”). Of course, it is possible that after 70 A.D. the parable was glossed to reflect the destruction of Jerusalem. Scribes did gloss Scripture here and there, as the discovery of early New Testament manuscripts has shown.

Closely related to the question of the date of Matthew is the date of the Gospel of Mark. Most Markan scholars think Mark was composed and circulated either during the Jewish revolt (perhaps in 68 or 69 A.D.) or shortly after the capture of the city (perhaps in 70 or 71 A.D.). A few scholars have argued that Mark (and Matthew) should be dated much earlier. One scholar recently concluded on the basis of the attitude toward the Jewish law and in comparison to what is said in the Book of Acts about the first decade or so of the early church that Mark was probably not

⁶ On this point, see R. T. France, *Matthew* (1998), 66–74.

written later than the mid-40s A.D.⁷ If so, then Mark's Gospel could have circulated and been read and studied for years before Matthew composed his more Jewish and orderly account well before the 60s A.D. and the agitation that led to the Jewish revolt. It has also been pointed out that the Book of Acts, the second volume in the Luke-Acts work, brings its narrative to an end no later than 62 A.D., before the death of James, the brother of the Lord.⁸ This, too, could suggest that Luke, which also makes use of Mark, could have been written before the outbreak of the Jewish revolt. Thus we see reasonable arguments for the writing and circulation of all three Synoptic Gospels sometime prior to the war of 66–70 A.D. Recent major commentaries on Matthew have reached this conclusion.⁹

Where and in What Setting Was the Gospel of Matthew Written?

A number of scholars have suggested that the Gospel of Matthew was composed in the city of Antioch, a prominent city in Syria,¹⁰ or perhaps in Damascus, much farther to the south. Odessa, also in Syria, is sometimes mentioned. Others have suggested Palestine, perhaps Galilee.¹¹ Admittedly, Antioch was a major center of Christian activity in the early decades of the church (see, e.g., Acts 11:19–27; 13:1; 14:26; 15:22), but the suggestion that Matthew was written there is nothing more than an educated guess. In one place in Matthew, we may have an important clue. The evangelist rewrites Mark's reference to people seeking Jesus (Mark 1:36–37) to say that Jesus' "fame spread throughout all Syria" (Matt 4:24). The reference to "Syria" sticks out like a sore thumb. Matthew did not get this reference from Mark or from any other source we know of. Why not say "throughout all Israel" or "throughout all Galilee"? Matthew may have mentioned Syria because it was in this region that he lived and traveled and by the time he was writing his Gospel Jesus had become well known, even "throughout all Syria."¹² Admittedly, this is not much to go on either.

⁷ See J. G. Crossley, *The Date of Mark's Gospel: Insight from the Law in Earliest Christianity* (JSNTSup 266; London: T. & T. Clark International, 2004).

⁸ See also J. A. T. Robinson, *Redating the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1976), 97–107, who dates Matthew to a time before 62 A.D.

⁹ See J. Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans; Bletchley: Paternoster, 2005), 12; R. T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew* (NICNT; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2007), 19.

¹⁰ Antioch as the place of writing has recently been defended by D. C. Sim, *The Gospel of Matthew and Christian Judaism: The History and Social Setting of the Matthean Community* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1998).

¹¹ B. Witherington III, *Matthew* (Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary; Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2006), 22–28. Witherington plausibly suggests Capernaum.

¹² It is possible, of course, that "Syria" may have been understood from a Roman perspective, as referring to a much larger region, including southern territories such as Galilee and perhaps even Judea (see Macrobius, *Saturnalia* 2.4.11, who calls the kingdom of Herod the Great "Syria," rather than Israel or Judea). If so, Matthew's reference in 4:24 to

Perhaps we should say no more than “Matthew may have been written in Syria” and leave it at that.

Of more pressing importance is why Matthew wrote his Gospel. It has been argued, primarily on the basis of the Great Commission, in which the risen Jesus commands his apostles to convert and teach “all Gentiles” (Matt 28:19), that the Jewish mission had concluded and that Matthew’s interest was oriented exclusively toward Gentiles.¹³ However, this interpretation runs against the strong emphasis on the validity of the Law (cf. Matt 5:17–20), not to mention the critical comments directed against Gentiles (cf. Matt 5:46–47; 6:7–8, 31–32; 18:17). In view of such data, a number of scholars have reached the opposite conclusion, namely that Matthew is still in the Jewish community, struggling to convince a skeptical synagogue that Jesus really is Israel’s Messiah, that his teaching really does measure up to the righteous requirements of the Law of Moses, and that his death and resurrection really have fulfilled prophecy.¹⁴

In my opinion, the latter view is closer to the truth, though it may underestimate the degree to which Jesus in Matthew distances himself from and condemns scribal Judaism, the forerunner in some sense to rabbinic Judaism, as well as the Jerusalem temple establishment, which would still have existed and exerted influence if Matthew wrote before 66–70 A.D. The Jesus of Matthew is sharply critical of the scribes and Pharisees (see especially Matthew 23). The evangelist Matthew seems to have written his Gospel in a time of transition, when he and his primary readers, most of whom were ethnically Jewish but were evangelizing Gentiles,¹⁵ had been driven out of the synagogue and had begun to form a

Syria would not necessarily rule out the Gospel’s origin in Galilee. On Galilee as the place of composition, see B. Witherington III, *Matthew* (2006), 21–28. Nevertheless, I find it unlikely that the evangelist himself would refer to any part of Israel as “Syria,” however Rome may have understood this regional or political reference.

¹³ D. R. A. Hare, *The Theme of Jewish Persecution of Christians in the Gospel According to St. Matthew* (SNTSMS 6; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967); D. R. A. Hare and D. J. Harrington, “‘Make Disciples of All Gentiles’ (Mt 28:19),” *CBQ* 37 (1975): 359–69.

¹⁴ Among the most recent and better argued, J. A. Overman, *Matthew’s Gospel and Formative Judaism: A Study of the Social World of the Matthean Community* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990); J. A. Overman, *Church and Community in Crisis: The Gospel According to Matthew* (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1996); A. J. Saldarini, *Matthew’s Christian-Jewish Community* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994); D. C. Sim, *The Gospel of Matthew and Christian Judaism* (1998).

¹⁵ And here is where I disagree with D. C. Sim (see note 14); Matthew remains committed to the evangelization of Gentiles. See W. Carter, “Matthew and the Gentiles: Individual Conversion and/or Systemic Transformation?” *JSNT* 26 (2004): 259–82. See also D. A. Hagner, “Matthew: Apostate, Reformer, Revolutionary,” *NTS* 49 (2003): 193–209. Hagner contends, against Overman, Saldarini, and Sim, that Matthew’s community should not be described as a form of Christianized Judaism. It is fully Christian but still understands itself in relation to Israel.

community of faith distinct from it.¹⁶ Although estranged from the synagogue, Matthew firmly believed that the followers of Jesus constituted the true “sons of the kingdom” (Matt 13:38), comprising a congregation or assembly (Matt 16:18; 18:17), and that when gathered in the name of Jesus, even if only two or three, the Shekinah, the dwelling presence of God – now experienced in his Son Messiah Jesus – was “in their midst” (Matt 18:19–20; cf. *m. ’Abot* 3:2, “if two sit together ... the Shekinah rests between them”). Graham Stanton has dubbed those who belonged to the congregation of Jesus a “new people,” a people who have left the synagogue and are aggressively evangelizing the Gentiles, in fulfillment of the risen Lord’s command.¹⁷

MATTHEW AND THE OTHER GOSPELS

Matthew is one of the three New Testament Gospels called the “Synoptic Gospels.” They are called “Synoptic” (from the Greek compound word *sunopsis*) because they can be “seen together” (*opsis* = “seen” + *sun* = “with” or “together”) when presented in parallel columns. The other Synoptic Gospels are Mark and Luke. The Gospel of John is not a Synoptic Gospel. Its contents and writing style are quite distinctive.

Almost from the beginning, Christians have wondered how the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke relate to one another. From the great theologian Augustine until the scholars of the early nineteenth century, it was believed that Matthew was the first Gospel written, with Mark seen as an abbreviation of Matthew, or perhaps as a combination and abbreviation of both Matthew and Luke. But, in the nineteenth century, a number of scholars began to suspect that Mark was the first Gospel to circulate and that Matthew and Luke made use of Mark and another body of material, comprising mostly the teachings of Jesus, known today by the siglum Q. Today, most New Testament scholars hold this view because, in the words of one commentator on Matthew, “it provides the framework for what seem to be the most cogent explanations of the similarities and differences of detail among the synoptics.”¹⁸ For most scholars today, the relationship of the three

¹⁶ W. Carter, “Matthew’s Gospel: Jewish Christianity, Christian Judaism, or Neither?” in M. Jackson-McCabe (ed.), *Jewish Christianity Reconsidered: Rethinking Ancient Groups and Texts* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007), 155–79. Carter reminds us that the synagogue was not Matthew’s only point of reference; the difficulties of life in the Roman Empire must be factored in also.

¹⁷ G. N. Stanton, *A Gospel for a New People: Studies in Matthew* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1992; Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox, 1993), 280–81.

¹⁸ R. H. Gundry, *Matthew* (1982), 3. There are, of course, a few dissenters (such as the late W. R. Farmer). For a discussion of Markan priority and Matthew’s use of Mark, see R. H. Stein, *Studying the Synoptic Gospels: Origin and Interpretation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2001), 29–169.

Synoptic Gospels is seen as giving Mark “priority” (i.e., that Mark was written and circulated first) and that Matthew and Luke utilized Mark and Q as their primary sources. This solution does not rule out the possibility of some contact between Matthew and Luke. Indeed, some scholars think that at some point in composing his Gospel the evangelist Matthew may have had access to the Gospel of Luke.¹⁹ Some think Matthew made use of all or some of the *Didache*, an early epitome of Jesus’ teaching (the Greek word *didache* means “teaching”) that today is classified with the mostly second-century writings of those known as the “Apostolic Fathers.”²⁰

THE STRUCTURE OF MATTHEW

Paul Wernle long ago described the Gospel of Matthew as a “retelling” of the Gospel of Mark,²¹ a description with which most Matthean scholars today concur.²² Although Luke also made use of Mark, calling Luke a “retelling” of Mark does not sound quite right. Luke made use of only 60 percent of Mark and freely rearranged the sequence of the narrative. In contrast, Matthew made use of almost 90 percent of Mark’s content and very rarely departed from Mark’s sequence.

I mention this at the outset because it has a bearing on how we understand the structure of Matthew. How did the evangelist arrange and structure his Gospel? Long ago, attention focused on the five major discourses in Matthew (Chapters 5–7, 10, 13, 18, and 24–25), believed to be a deliberate parallel to the five books of Moses.²³ But these discourses do not account for the whole of Matthew’s structure. It has been suggested that Matthew divides into three major parts, 1:1–4:16, 4:17–16:20, and 16:21–28:20, on the basis of the statements “From that time Jesus

¹⁹ For example, see R. V. Huggins, “Matthean Posteriority: A Preliminary Proposal,” *NovT* 34 (1992): 1–21. Huggins thinks Matthew regarded Mark as his primary source and Luke as a supplemental source in that Matthew was informed by but not determined by material in Luke (such as the infancy narrative). Others wonder if it goes the other way, that Luke edited his Gospel in the light of Matthew. See R. H. Gundry, *Matthew* (1982), 5.

²⁰ For arguments on Matthew’s use of the *Didache*, see A. J. P. Garrow, *The Gospel of Matthew’s Dependence on the Didache* (JSNTSup 254; London: T. & T. Clark International, 2004).

²¹ P. Wernle, *Die synoptische Frage* (Freiburg: Mohr Siebeck, 1899), 161.

²² As, for example, in the classic collection of studies by G. Bornkamm, G. Barth, and H. J. Held, *Tradition and Interpretation in Matthew* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1963). See Held’s comment on p. 165.

²³ B. W. Bacon, “The Five Books of Matthew against the Jews,” *The Expositor* 15 (1918): 56–66. Bacon was correct in recognizing the presence of the five discourses and surmising that their number paralleled the number of books of Moses (i.e., Genesis – Deuteronomy). Less convincing was his view that the five discourses of Jesus were somehow “against the Jews” or explained the Gospel of Matthew as a whole.

began to proclaim” in 4:17 and “From that time on, Jesus began to show” in 16:21.²⁴ These three major divisions are labeled the “Preparation for Jesus Messiah, Son of God,” the “Proclamation of Jesus to Israel,” and the “Passion and Resurrection of Jesus Messiah, Son of God,” respectively.²⁵ This division may work for the first two sections, but the third section includes too much material, for some of the material has nothing to do with the Passion. Other structural proposals have been suggested, in which key events or “kernels” are identified.²⁶ But again, nothing approaching consensus has been achieved.

Perhaps it is better to view Matthew’s arrangement and structure as an expansion and adaptation of Mark’s relatively simple outline of a ministry in Galilee, then a journey south to Judea and Jerusalem, and finally the Passion in Jerusalem. Matthew has worked within this framework, prefacing Mark’s Gospel with an infancy narrative, concluding it with an evangelistic commission, and enriching the interior with additional materials, not least five impressive discourses.²⁷

Before concluding this section, a word needs to be said about Matthew’s writing style. The Jewish orientation of the evangelist is revealed at several points. He is acquainted with Scripture (i.e., the Old Testament) in three languages: the Hebrew, the Greek translation, and even the Aramaic paraphrase (the Targum, indicated

²⁴ J. D. Kingsbury, *Matthew: Structure, Christology, Kingdom* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975), 7–17. Kingsbury’s interpretation has been followed and elaborated by two of his students: D. R. Bauer, *The Structure of Matthew’s Gospel: A Study in Literary Design* (JSNTSup 31; Sheffield: Almond Press, 1988); and J. A. Gibbs, *Matthew 1:1–11:1* (Concordia Commentary; St. Louis, MO: Concordia Academic Press, 2006).

²⁵ See D. R. Bauer, *The Structure of Matthew’s Gospel* (1988), 73–108.

²⁶ For example, F. Matera, “The Plot of Matthew’s Gospel,” *CBQ* 49 (1987): 233–53, who identifies a number of “kernels” around which a series of narrative “blocks” (Matt 1:1–4:11; 4:12–11:1; 11:2–16:12; 16:13–20:34; 21:1–28:15; and 28:16–20) are identified, all of which trace Jesus’ movement away from Israel, which has rejected him, to the Gentiles. See the response by W. Carter, “Kernels and Narrative Blocks: The Structure of Matthew’s Gospel,” *CBQ* 54 (1992): 463–83. Carter identifies the kernels and major events (Matt 1:18–25; 4:17–25; 11:2–6; 16:21–28; 21:1–27; 28:1–10) and the corresponding narrative blocks (Matt 1:1–4:16; 4:17–11:1; 11:2–16:20; 16:21–20:34; 21:1–27:66; 28:1–20) somewhat differently.

²⁷ See the succinct summary of views, including a prudent conclusion with which I agree, in D. C. Allison, Jr. and W. D. Davies, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint Matthew* (ICC; 3 vols., Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1988–1997), 1:58–72. Matthew’s structure is “mixed.” It is sometimes suggested that Matthew produced six discourses, not five (the extra discourse is Matthew 23, the denunciation of the scribes and Pharisees). This position is taken in G. S. Sloyan, *Preaching from the Lectionary: An Exegetical Commentary* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2004), 176; B. Witherington III, *Matthew* (2006), 15: “definitely six, not five.” It is not wrong to identify Matthew 23 as a discourse or diatribe, but it is quite different from the five discourses that have been mentioned and does not conclude with the Mosaic phrase, “When Jesus finished . . .” as do the five discourses.

herein by Tg. when citing specific texts), which in the first century was only in its beginning stages.²⁸ Matthew makes extensive use of Scripture, many times citing it as “fulfilled.” Matthew is very concerned with the Law of Moses and how it is to be fulfilled. Related to this is the question of what constitutes righteousness. We find words and phrases that remind us of the way the Rabbis discussed Scripture and debated among themselves. There is little doubt that Matthew was familiar with some aspects of midrash (what in time became standard practice among the Rabbis).²⁹ We see this sometimes in his interpretation of Scripture and perhaps also in ways that revised or supplemented what he inherited from Mark and Q. But I do not think Matthew engaged in wholesale invention or transformation of stories. This matter will be addressed in the infancy narrative and elsewhere.

OUTLINE OF MATTHEW

- I. Birth and Preparation of the Messiah (1:1–4:11)
 - A. Infancy Narrative (1:2–2:23)
 - B. Baptism and Temptation (3:1–4:11)
- II. The Messiah’s Proclamation and Ministry (4:12–11:1)
 - A. Narrative: Beginnings of Ministry (4:12–25)
 - B. Discourse 1: The Sermon on the Mount: The Messiah’s Call to Righteousness (5:1–7:29)
 - C. Narrative: The Messiah’s Ministry (8:1–9:35)
 - D. Discourse 2: The Messiah’s Summons to All Israel (9:36–11:1)
- III. Reactions and Responses to the Messiah (11:2–20:34)
 - A. Narrative: A Mixed Response to the Messiah (11:2–12:50)
 - B. Discourse 3: The Messiah’s Teaching about the Kingdom (13:1–53)
 - C. Narrative: Intensification of the Mixed Response (13:54–17:27)
 - D. Discourse 4: The Messiah’s Teaching on Community Life (18:1–19:1)
 - E. Narrative: The Messiah’s Teaching on the Way to Jerusalem (19:2–20:34)
- IV. The Rejection and Vindication of the Messiah (21:1–28:20)
 - A. Narrative: The Messiah Confronts Jerusalem (21:1–23:39)
 - B. Discourse 5: The Messiah Prophesies Coming Judgment (24:1–26:2)
 - C. Narrative: The Messiah Is Judged but Vindicated (26:3–28:20)

²⁸ The later, fully preserved Targums are not in view here. What we find are verbal, thematic, and exegetical points of coherence between Jesus and other first-century teachers and distinctive readings in the Targums. This coherence suggests that the later Targums in some instances preserve readings and interpretations that reach back to the first century and probably earlier. It was with some of these readings and interpretations that Jesus was familiar. For a discussion of the relevance of the Targums for understanding Matthew as a writer, see C. A. Evans, “Targumizing Tendencies in Matthean Redaction,” in D. J. Harrington et al. (eds.), *When Judaism and Christianity Began: Essays in Memory of Anthony J. Saldarini* (JSJSup 85; 2 vols., Leiden: Brill, 2004), 1:93–116.

²⁹ Midrash (from *darash*, to “search”) means searching, or interpreting Scripture.