

I

Introduction

[O]ne must quest for the historical Jesus by accounting for the interpretations of the Gospels, not by dismissing them and certainly not by fragmenting them.

—Chris Keith¹

Could it be that some of the Matthean “systematizations” (or “nonsystematizations”) of Jesus might be very close to Jesus himself, just because they are constructions of a Jew who was temporally and culturally close to him?

—Ulrich Luz²

In a letter to John Adams dated to October of 1813, Thomas Jefferson writes about his desire to retrieve the “very words only of Jesus” from the gospels.³ Jefferson describes the process of recovering these “genuine”⁴ sayings as picking out “diamonds from the dunghills.”⁵ His selection process is governed by certain assumptions. For one thing, Jefferson is convinced that Jesus’s followers badly misrepresented their master’s

¹ Chris Keith, *Jesus’s Literacy: Scribal Culture and the Teacher from Galilee*, LNTS 413 (London: T&T Clark, 2011), 66.

² Ulrich Luz, “Matthew’s Interpretive ‘Tendencies’ and the ‘Historical’ Jesus,” in *Jesus Research: New Methodologies and Perceptions, The Second Princeton-Prague Symposium on Jesus Research*, ed. James H. Charlesworth with Brian Rhea and Petr Pokorný (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014), 597.

³ Letter to John Adams (12 October 1813); quoted from M. Andrew Holowchak, *Thomas Jefferson’s Bible: With Introduction and Critical Commentary* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2019), 93–94.

⁴ Letter to Francis Adrian Van der Kemp (25 April 1816); quoted from Holowchak, *Thomas Jefferson’s Bible*, 95.

⁵ Letter to John Adams (24 January 1814); quoted from Holowchak, *Thomas Jefferson’s Bible*, 94.

teachings. He talks of “paring off” the material in the gospel narratives that originated from them. In addition, Jesus is understood to be opposed to his Jewish contemporaries; Jefferson says that Jesus came to reform the “wretched depravity” of Jewish morality.⁶ In all of this, Jefferson anticipates, albeit in a crude way, much of what would later be viewed as standard fare in historical Jesus research.

Jefferson’s account of his historical method serves as a helpful launching point for this study. While most of those engaged in the quest for the historical Jesus no longer pit the man from Nazareth against his Jewish heritage, Jesus scholarship is still often conceived of in binary terms that are remarkably similar to Jefferson’s stated goals: the historian typically seeks to sift the “authentic” material in our sources from the “inauthentic.” By means of the “criteria of authenticity,” tools that emerged out of form and redaction criticism,⁷ historians seek to clear away the strata of later interpretive layers from our sources and dig out the “diamonds,” that is, the material that represents the original, uninterpreted Jesus.⁸

The goal of this study is not to argue that traditions formerly viewed as “authentic” should be moved to the “inauthentic” category – or vice versa. Rather, this work makes a bolder claim: Jesus scholarship should rethink the very way it has used the Gospel of Matthew. In particular, this study will ask what a close analysis of Matthew’s⁹ overall presentation might contribute to our understanding of Jesus’s relationship to the temple. The approach taken here reflects certain important developments in biblical studies that represent important shifts in scholarship.

⁶ Letter to John Adams (12 October 1814); quoted from Holowchak, *Thomas Jefferson’s Bible*, 94.

⁷ See, e.g., Chris Keith, “The Indebtedness of the Criteria Approach to Form Criticism and Recent Attempts to Rehabilitate the Search for an Authentic Jesus,” in *Jesus, Criteria, and the Demise of Authenticity*, ed. Chris Keith and Anthony Le Donne (London: T&T Clark, 2012), 3–37.

⁸ For a recent example, see JongHyun Kwon, *The Historical Jesus’s Death as “Forgiveness of Sins,”* WUNT 2/467 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2018), who determines, e.g., that Jesus’s ransom saying (Matt 20:28//Mark 10:45) is “authentic” through the use of the conventional criteria (168–174). Instead of being an “interpretive saying” (quoting Peter Stuhlmacher, *Reconciliation, Law, and Righteousness: Essays in Biblical Theology*, trans. Everett R. Kalin [Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986], 16), Kwon explains that “a good case can be made for its authenticity.” Here, then, “authenticity,” therefore, represents an “uninterpreted” saying.

⁹ This study follows the convention of calling the author “Matthew” without affirming the author’s apostolic identity. For discussion on the authorship of the Gospel, see the Appendix.

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THE CHALLENGE OF A JEWISH JESUS AND
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Critical Scholarship's History of Antisemitism

If there is one thing that all contemporary Jesus scholars agree about, it is this: the historical Jesus must be identified as a Jewish figure. This is a shift in emphasis that should be celebrated. Indeed, many scholars today remain unaware of the pervasive influence that antisemitism has had on modern biblical criticism. For example, it is rarely remembered that Julius Wellhausen, a pioneering figure in modern biblical studies, once made Jesus's un-Jewishness axiomatic, making the following outrageous and despicable assertion: "One may regard the non-Jewish in [Jesus], the human, as more characteristic than the Jewish."¹⁰

It would be a serious error to dismiss Wellhausen's expressions of antisemitism as inconsequential or to think that such attitudes have only been exhibited by those on the margins of critical scholarship. Other figures known for their towering influence on the field could be mentioned.¹¹ For instance, Gerhard Kittel, whose name is inseparable from the influential *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* that he edited, was an active member of the Nazi Party, spoke in defense of Hitler's response to the "Jewish problem," and was even the Führer's guest of honor at a Nazi Party convention.¹² He went on to write a work detailing potential solutions to the "Jewish problem" in which he first considers – in appallingly explicit terms – the possibility of mass extermination.¹³ Though he rejects this as an unviable option, his cold and objective analysis is blood-curdling. Nowhere does Kittel raise a single moral objection to the plan;

¹⁰ Author's translation. Taken from Julius Wellhausen, *Einleitung in die drei ersten Evangelien* (Berlin: Reimer, 1905), 114: "Man darf das Nichtjüdische in ihm, das Menschliche, für charakteristischer halten, als das Jüdische."

¹¹ See the detailed discussions in Anders Gerdmar, *Roots of Theological Anti-Semitism: German Biblical Interpretation and the Jews: From Herder and Semler to Kittel and Bultmann* (Leiden: Brill, 2009); Peter S. Head, "The Nazi Quest for an Aryan Jesus," *JSHJ* 2/1 (2004): 55–89.

¹² See Gerdmar, *Roots of Theological Anti-Semitism*, 417–530; Head, "Nazi Quest," 70–86.

¹³ Gerhard Kittel, "Die Entstehung des Judentums und die Entstehung der Judenfrage," in *Forschungen zur Judenfrage. Sitzungsberichte der Ersten Arbeitstagung der Forschungsabteilung Judenfrage des Reichsinstituts für Geschichte des neuen Deutschlands vom 19. bis 21. November 1936, Forschungen zur Judenfrage* (Hamburg: Hanseatische Verlagsanstalt, 1937), 63.

it is simply deemed impractical.¹⁴ From the outset of his career, it is clear that Kittel's work attempted to cast Jesus as a figure in conflict with his Jewish contemporaries.¹⁵ He would go on to explain that in announcing himself as the fulfillment of God's kingdom, Jesus "*ceases to be a Jew, and his proclamation ceases to be a member of Judaism.*"¹⁶

Wellhausen and Kittel are worth mentioning because their names are still well known in biblical scholarship. Yet many others who were influential in their own day but largely forgotten today could also be discussed here.¹⁷ Suffice it to say, this aspect of the history of the guild is so embarrassing and uncomfortable, it is common for scholars to pass over it in silence. It can be too conveniently brushed under the rug with the term "the No Quest period."¹⁸ The renewed emphasis on Jesus's Jewishness, then, is an important corrective that should be celebrated.

Jesus vs. the Temple?

Nevertheless, on its own, appealing to Jesus as a "Jew" only goes so far. Scholars now recognize that the Second Temple Jewish world was characterized by diverse practices and beliefs. Given this reality, insisting broadly that Jesus was "a Jew" clarifies little. As Simon Joseph explains: "The problem with the rhetorical appeal to Jesus's Jewishness, therefore, is not that it is incorrect. The problem is that it is insufficient: it does not tell us enough."¹⁹ A more penetrating question is: *What kind of Jew was Jesus?*

James Crossley rightly observes that in recent decades the appeal to Jesus's Jewishness has become "arguably the most dominant rhetorical generalization about the historical Jesus," even to the point that it now is "something of a cliché."²⁰ In particular, as Crossley points out, one notes

¹⁴ Gerhard Kittel, *Die Judenfrage* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1933), 14. See also the discussion in Gerdmar, *Roots of Theological Anti-Semitism*, 455.

¹⁵ See, e.g., Gerhard Kittel, *Jesus und die Rabbinen*, ed. Kropatchek, *Biblische Zeit- und Streitfragen*, 7/IX (Berlin-Lichterfelde: Verlag von Edwin Runge, 1912), 3.

¹⁶ Gerhard Kittel, *Die Probleme des palästinischen Spätjudentums und das Urchristentum*, ed. Rudolf Kittel, *BWANT* 3.1 (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1926), 432; trans. in Gerdmar, *Roots of Theological Anti-Semitism*, 432 (emphasis in Gerdmar).

¹⁷ See, e.g., the discussion of Karl G. Kuhn's influence in Jason Staples, *The Idea of Israel in Second Temple Judaism: A New Theory of People, Exile, and Israelite Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), 25–39.

¹⁸ For helpful treatments, again, see the sources in n. 11 earlier.

¹⁹ Simon J. Joseph, "Exit the 'Great Man': On James' Crossley's *Jesus and the Chaos of History*," *JSHJ* 16 (2018): 12.

²⁰ James G. Crossley, *Jesus and the Chaos of History: Redirecting the Life of the Historical Jesus* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 4.

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that many attempts that seek to depict Jesus as “Jewish” end up explaining how he really was not “*that* Jewish” after all. Specifically, Crossley notes that this is often the case in regard to Jesus’s attitude toward the temple.

It is important to recognize that modern biblical scholarship, which has often been dominated by Protestant voices, has typically viewed the ritual dimension of ancient Israel’s faith and life as unpalatable.²¹ Such prejudices can be traced back to the pioneers of the historical-critical methods themselves. For many of them, the liturgical traditions of first-century Jewish practice represented a degeneration of Israel’s religion and formed the very antithesis of the gospel message proclaimed by Jesus. He therefore has been portrayed as bringing about salvation not only from sin but also from sacrifice and priestly authority.²² Jesus’s Jewishness may be celebrated, then, but only so long as he can be distanced from Jewish liturgical beliefs.

The Gospel of Matthew, however, presents a profound challenge to the notion that Jesus rejected the temple. Jesus is remembered there as endorsing the holiness of the temple’s sacrifices. To cite but one example, Matthew contains the following teaching from Jesus:

which is greater, the gift or *the altar that makes the gift holy* [to *thysiaστῆριον* to *hagiazon* to *dōron*]? Therefore, whoever swears by the altar [*en tō thysiaστῆριō*], swears by it and by everything that is on it. And whoever swears by the temple [*en tō naō*], swears by it and by *the one who dwells in it*. (Matthew 23:19–21)

Here the evangelist portrays Jesus as affirming God’s presence in the temple. What is more, Jesus also speaks about worship in a strikingly Jewish way. He affirms that it is the sacrificial altar *itself* that “makes the gift holy” (Matt 23:19; cf. Exod 29:37).²³ As we will see, scholars have often made the case that other statements in the gospel can be viewed as canceling out sayings like this one. We will examine them in detail later

²¹ See the discussions in, e.g., Jonathan Klawans, *Purity, Sacrifice, and the Temple: Symbolism and Supersessionism in the Study of Ancient Judaism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), especially 3–10; Crispin Fletcher-Louis, “Jesus as the High Priestly Messiah: Part 1,” *JSHJ* 4, 2 (2006): 156.

²² See, e.g., Ferdinand Hahn, *Der urchristliche Gottesdienst*, SBS 41 (Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1970), 17–31; John A. McGuckin, “Sacrifice and Atonement: An Investigation into the Attitude of Jesus of Nazareth towards Cultic Sacrifice,” in *Remembering for the Future*, ed. Y. Bauer et al., 3 vols. (Oxford: Pergamon, 1989), 1:649.

²³ All biblical studies and abbreviations in this volume follow the standards found in Billie Jean Collins, Bob Buller, and John Kutzko, eds., *The SBL Handbook of Style*, 2nd ed. (Atlanta: SLB Press, 2014).

and show that they do no such thing. In short, Matthew undermines the conclusion that Jesus rejected the temple's validity *per se*.

Of course, not all Jews in Jesus's day accepted the legitimacy of the temple. The Dead Sea Scrolls, for instance, indicate the existence of a community that withdrew from the Jerusalem cult. Could Jesus have agreed with Jews like them? I will have more to say about this. For now, let us simply make this observation: if Jesus was an Essene, the preceding statement regarding the holiness of the temple and its altar would be difficult to attribute to him. Those who viewed the Jerusalem sanctuary as illegitimate would hardly claim that its altar made sacrificial gifts holy, and that God dwelled in it. Yet this brings us to another key development in scholarship that informs our study: the pluriform nature of Jewishness after 70 CE.

JEWISH PARTINGS AND THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

Jewish Partings after 70 CE

As mentioned previously, the variegated nature of Jewishness in the Second Temple period is well recognized. In the 1980s and 1990s, this represented an advance in scholarship. Previous research had failed to appreciate the diversity that existed in this period. Now, however, another shift is taking place, this time with respect to the post-70 CE period. Shaye Cohen sums up the traditional view: "With the destruction of the Temple the primary focal point of Jewish sectarianism disappeared... For most Jews ... sectarian self-definition ceased to make sense after 70."²⁴ This understanding, however, has been widely abandoned. The assumption that rabbis quickly consolidated power after the temple's destruction in 70 CE and brought an end to Jewish sectarianism²⁵ is now receiving sharp criticism.

Daniel Schwartz writes that the latest research "minimizes rabbinic authority both before and after 70 and tends to leave the priests regnant before 70 – and, the way things are going, may soon enthrone them

²⁴ Shaye J. D. Cohen, "The Significance of Yavneh: Pharisees, Rabbis, and the End of Jewish Sectarianism," *HUCA* 55 (1984): 45.

²⁵ I use the term "sect" and related words (e.g., sectarian) to describe diverse forms of Jewishness without implying a normative expression existed. See the important discussion in Yonder Moynihan Gillihan, "Sectarianism," in *T&T Clark Encyclopedia of Second Temple Judaism*, ed. Daniel M. Gurtner and Loren T. Stuckenbruck, 2 vols. (London: T&T Clark, 2019), 2:718–721.

after 70, too.”²⁶ Likewise, Anders Runesson writes, “There is a growing consensus today that the rabbis did not become dominant until the fourth century, possibly later.”²⁷ Jodi Magness spotlights various references in the rabbinic literature to unsettled sectarian controversies.²⁸ For instance, the condemnation of the Sadducees and Samaritans in the Mishnah suggests ongoing friction between these groups after 70 CE (cf. m. Nid. 4:2). Similarly, the Tosefta speaks of *minim* – a word used to describe Jewish groups – who gather in private houses of worship where improper rites are performed (t. Šabb. 13:5). Joshua Burns shows that some of the descriptions of *minim* bear remarkable similarities to the Essenes, who likely did not simply vanish immediately after the temple was destroyed.²⁹ Regardless of what one makes of Burns’ evaluation of the data, the broader point is hard to dispute: *Jewish divisions were not erased in the final decades of the first century but continued to endure long after the New Testament books were written.*

In addition, it is now widely accepted that the rabbinic literature presents us with an idealized view of the rabbis’ influence over synagogues.³⁰ “Rabbinic Judaism” cannot simply be equated with “the synagogue.” For one thing, synagogues were usually run by synagogue rulers, not rabbis.³¹ What is more, there was no monolithic synagogue network in the late first century. Anders Runesson has shown that while some synagogues served as municipal centers, others involved voluntary associations.³²

²⁶ See Daniel R. Schwartz, “Introduction: Was 70 CE a Watershed in Jewish History? Three Stages of Modern Scholarship, and a Renewed Effort,” in *Was 70 CE a Watershed in Jewish History?: On Jews and Judaism before and after the Destruction of the Second Temple*, ed. Daniel R. Schwartz, Zeev Weiss, and Ruth A. Clements (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 15.

²⁷ Anders Runesson, “Behind the Gospel of Matthew: Radical Pharisees in Post-war Galilee?,” *Currents in Theology and Mission* 37 (2010): 467.

²⁸ See Jodi Magness, “Sectarianism before and after 70 CE,” in *Was 70 CE a Watershed in Jewish History?*, ed. Schwartz et al., 69–89.

²⁹ Joshua Ezra Burns, “Essene Sectarianism and Social Differentiation in Judaea after 70 C.E.,” *Harvard Theological Review* 99, 3 (2006): 247–274.

³⁰ See, e.g., Stuart S. Miller, “The Rabbis and the Non Existent Monolithic Synagogue,” in *Jews, Christians, and Polytheists in the Ancient Synagogue: Cultural Interaction during the Greco-Roman Period*, ed. Steven Fine (London: Routledge, 1999), 57–70; Lee I. Levine, “The Sages and the Synagogue in Late Antiquity: The Evidence of the Galilee,” in *The Galilee in Late Antiquity*, ed. Lee I. Levine (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary, 1992), 201–222.

³¹ See, e.g., Amy-Jill Levine, “Matthew’s Portrayal of the Synagogue and Its Leaders,” in *The Gospel of Matthew at the Crossroads of Early Christianity*, ed. Donald Senior, C.P. (Leuven: Peeters, 2011), 191.

³² Anders Runesson, *The Origins of the Synagogue: A Socio-Historical Study* (Stockholm: Almqvist International, 2001), especially, 213–235. On the positive reception of Runesson’s

For example, Philo says that Essenes gathered in “sacred spots *which they call synagogues* [*hoi kalountai synagōgai*].”³³ Shaye Cohen explains, “Synagogues were not beholden to any central body; every community ran its synagogue in its own way.”³⁴

The primitive Jesus movement should be located within this variegated Jewish environment. There can be little doubt that the earliest believers saw themselves as *Jews*. In his letters, Paul insists that he is a Jew (cf., e.g., Rom 3:9; Rom 11:1, 14; Gal 2:15). Likewise, in the book of Acts, Paul maintains his identity as a Pharisee long after encountering the Risen Lord on the road to Damascus. Before the ruling council, he declares, “Brothers, *I am* a Pharisee” (Acts 23:6). He goes on later to explain that he worships the God of Israel in accord with the Torah and Prophets, “according to the Way, which they call a *sect* [*kata tēn hodon hēn legousin haireisin*]” (Acts 24:14). In Acts, we also learn that early believers were known as “the *sect* [*haireseōs*] of the Nazarenes” (Acts 24:5; cf. Acts 15:5). The same terminology of “sect” is also used in Josephus to describe the Pharisees (*Life* 10; 12; 191) and the Sadducees (*Ant.* 13, 171; 20, 199). All of this indicates that the author of Acts believed the early community was Jewish in nature.

To speak of a “parting of the ways” between “Judaism” and “Christianity” is therefore inadequate. It implies a normative understanding of Jewishness that did not exist in the first century. Even after 70 CE, there were partings *within* the Jewish world. The complexities involved are discussed in a recent collection of essays, aptly titled *The Ways That Often Parted*.³⁵ The editors explain: “The unifying thesis of this volume is that Christianity’s eventual distinction from Judaism was messy and multiform, occurring at different paces in diverse geographies with varied literary resources, theological commitments, historical hap- penstance, and political maneuvering.”³⁶ This has enormous implications for both Matthew studies and Jesus research.

work in recent synagogue scholarship, see Jordan J. Ryan, *The Role of the Synagogue in the Aims of Jesus* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2017), 31 and sources in n. 49.

³³ Prob. 81 [Colson, Loeb Classical Library]; emphasis added. See, however, the discussion in Burns, “Essene Sectarianism,” 261 n. 29.

³⁴ Shaye J. D. Cohen, *From the Maccabees to the Mishnah*, 3rd ed. (Louisville: Westminster, 2014), 225.

³⁵ Lori Baron, Jill Hicks-Keeton, and Matthew Thiessen, eds., *The Ways That Often Parted: Essays in Honor of Joel Marcus*, ECL (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2018).

³⁶ Baron, Hicks-Keeton, and Thiessen, “Introduction,” in *The Ways That Often Parted*, 2.

Matthew as a Jewish Gospel

For some time now, there has been a raging debate in Matthean studies over whether or not the Gospel's original readers viewed themselves as "within Judaism" (the so-called *intra muros* view) or "outside Judaism" (the so-called *extra muros* view).³⁷ David Sim writes that the question of Matthew's social location "is now without question the dominant theme in Matthean studies."³⁸ Yet the developments in scholarship discussed above have unsettled the traditional ways scholars have approached the issue.³⁹ Asking whether Matthew's community is "within Judaism" or "outside of Judaism" tends to ignore the pluriform nature of Jewishness in the first century. So as not to burden the reader, I will offer a very brief treatment of the matter in this section. A more detailed discussion of the Gospel's Jewish character can be found in an Appendix at the end of the book.

To be sure, it is challenging to figure out how to speak of Matthew's audience. Although a growing number of scholars recognize that the gospels were likely written with the hope of wide circulation,⁴⁰ this does not negate the reality that specific readers were probably nonetheless especially in view.⁴¹ In the case of the Gospel of Matthew, the implied reader is expected to possess a deep familiarity not only with the scriptures of Israel but also with Jewish culture broadly.⁴² In addition, the Gospel indicates that the disciples will be punished in synagogues (Matt 10:17). This suggests that members of Matthew's audience would have

³⁷ See, e.g., Anders Runesson, "Rethinking Early Jewish-Christian Relations: Matthean Community History as Pharisaic Intragroup Conflict," *JBL* 127 (2008): 96–98; Boris Repschinski, *The Controversy Stories in the Gospel of Matthew: Their Redaction, Form and Relevance for the Relationship Between the Matthean Community and Formative Judaism*, FRLANT 189 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2000), 1–28.

³⁸ David C. Sim, "Matthew: The Current State of Research," in *Mark and Matthew, Comparative Readings I: Understanding the Earliest Gospels in their First Century Settings*, ed. Eve-Marie Becker and Anders Runesson (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 36.

³⁹ Rodney Reeves, "The Gospel of Matthew," in *The State of New Testament Studies: A Survey of Recent Research*, ed. Scot McKnight and Nijay K. Gupta (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2019), 291; Matthias Konradt, *Israel, Church, and the Gentiles in the Gospel of Matthew*, BMSEC, trans. Kathleen Ess (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2014 [orig. 2007]), 364–365.

⁴⁰ See, e.g., the articles in Richard Bauckham, ed., *The Gospels for All Christians: Rethinking the Gospel Audiences* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998).

⁴¹ See Akiva Cohen, *Matthew and the Mishnah: Redefining Identity and Ethos in the Shadow of the Second Temple's Destruction*, WUNT 418 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2016), 89–99; David Sim, "The Gospels for All Christians? A Response to Richard Bauckham," *JSNT* 84 (2001): 3–27.

⁴² See the thoughtful discussion in Leroy Huizenga, *The New Isaac: Tradition and Intertextuality in the Gospel of Matthew*, NovTSup 131 (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 21–74.

understood themselves to be under synagogue authority and, therefore, as Jewish.⁴³ While Gentiles may be included in the readership, there can be little doubt that the Gospel exhibits a pronounced Jewish perspective. Because of these features, the Gospel “has almost always been understood in both church and academia, in one way or another, as the ‘Jewish’ gospel.”⁴⁴

In particular, Matthew’s strong emphasis on Torah observance seems indicative of Jewish priorities. For instance, Jesus’s insistence on the law’s enduring value in the Sermon on the Mount appears to have programmatic significance (cf. Matt 5:17–20).⁴⁵ Likewise, unlike the other Synoptics, Matthew shows a marked preoccupation with the problem of “lawlessness [*anomia*]” (cf. Matt 7:23; 13:41; 23:28; 24:12).⁴⁶ Anders Runesson is correct – Jesus’s problem with the Pharisees in the Gospel cannot be that they “keep the law or keep it too strictly. On the contrary, they simply do not keep it rigorously enough.”⁴⁷ Jesus says: “Whoever therefore loosens one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do so will be called least in the kingdom of heaven” (Matt 5:19). The implications for Jesus’s stance toward the law in Matthew would seem clear; Jesus kept the Torah in all of its details.⁴⁸ Even ancient and medieval writers such as Thomas Aquinas caught this meaning. Commenting on this passage, Aquinas affirms, “*Christ conformed his conduct in all things to the precepts of the law.*”⁴⁹

Matthew alone reports that Jesus wore a “tassel” (*kraspedon*) on his garment, a detail that suggests his attention to the Torah’s precepts (Matt 14:36; cf. Num 15:38–39).⁵⁰ In addition, in following Mark’s report that Jesus told the disciples to pray that their eschatological flight to

⁴³ Amy-Jill Levine, “Concluding Reflections: What’s Next in the Study of Matthew?,” in *Matthew within Judaism: Israel and the Nations*, ECL, ed. Anders Runesson and Daniel M. Gurtner (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2019), 454; See W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison, Jr., *The Gospel According to St. Matthew*, ICC, 3 vols. (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1988–1997), 2:183.

⁴⁴ Reeves, “The Gospel of Matthew,” 277.

⁴⁵ See, e.g., Donald Senior, C.P., *Matthew*, ANTC (Nashville: Abingdon, 1998), 73.

⁴⁶ John Kampen, *Matthew within Sectarian Judaism*, AYBRL (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2019), 87.

⁴⁷ Anders Runesson, *Divine Wrath and Salvation in Matthew: The Narrative World of the First Gospel* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2016), 76.

⁴⁸ Theodore Zahn, *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus*, KNT 1, 4th ed. (repr., Wuppertal: Brockhaus, 1984 [orig. 1922]), 220.

⁴⁹ See, e.g., Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, III, q. 40, art. 4.

⁵⁰ James G. Crossley, “Matthew and the Torah: Jesus as Legal Interpreter,” in *Matthew within Judaism*, ed. Runesson and Gurtner, 31.